

SCoPE Site Lesson Plan

Title: Lesson 5–Natural Features of Our Community (SS020205)

Abstract : In this lesson, the children define and describe the features of the local community. Guest speakers, field trips, children’s literature, maps, and photographs assist the children to organize a list of natural features found in their community, such as lakes, mountains, animals, plants, and the climate. The children create a classroom exhibit of natural items found in the local community providing a tangible understanding of natural features.

Subject Area: Social Studies

**Grade Level and
Course Title:** Second Grade/The Local Community

Unit of Study: The Geography of Our Community

Benchmark: Describe natural features of the local community (II.1.EE.2).

Key Concept: natural features

**Instructional
Resources:** Equipment/Manipulatives:

- Camera –photograph, video, or digital
- Chalk/White Board
- Chart paper/Markers
- Drawing paper
- Overhead Projector/Transparency
- Tables for the nature center

Teacher Resource:

- Rand McNally. *What Changes Our Earth?* Skokie: Rand McNally, 2000.
- Rand McNally. *Forest, Grassland, Desert.* Skokie: Rand McNally, 2000.
- Spizzirri, Linda., ed. *An Educational Read and Color Book: Wildlife of the Midwest.* Rapid City: Spizzirri Publishing, Inc., 1998.
- Wargin, Kathy-Jo. *The Legend of Sleeping Bear.* Chelsea: Sleeping Bear Press, 1998.

Sequence of Activities:

1. Define the word “natural” to the children as something in nature, not manufactured or made by humans. It includes such things as, plants, insects, animals, rocks, water, and weather. Read *What Changes Our Earth?* with the children. Bring the children’s attention to the photographs of the natural features in the book. Read *Forests, Grasslands, Deserts* with the children and lead a discussion about climate as a natural feature of the community. Begin a list of natural features of the community, posted in the classroom and added to as new features are discussed. The following steps may be done in any order or overlapped, depending on the availability of speakers and scheduling.
2. Invite a park naturalist or park ranger, a zookeeper, an entomologist, a botanist, or a farmer to speak to the class. Generate interview questions with the children such as, “What kind of animals live in our community?” or “How was our local lake formed?” or “How does our weather affect the plants in our area?” Guide the children in a discussion about how the features are connected, such as, Michigan has many lakes and rivers. The rain and snow we have in Michigan is how the water in our lakes and rivers is supplied. Our lakes and the rain and snow are natural features of our state. Add the terms lakes, rain and snow to the natural features list made on chart paper and posted in the classroom.

3. Arrange one or more field trips to a local nature center, zoo, botanical garden, a museum of natural history, or science center. Focus on the wildlife, plants, water, land, and weather of the local community. Encourage the children to take notes during the trip. Have a parent volunteer record the trip by taking photos. After each trip, instruct the children to review the notes and the photos taken. From this data and information, add more items such as deciduous trees, coniferous trees, hibernation, etc., to the natural features list.
4. Use children's literature as another resource for gathering information on natural features. For example, *Wildlife of the Midwest* introduces a variety of animals in a non-fiction format, while *The Legend of Sleeping Bear* offers a different perspective on land formation. Read the selections to the children. Have them identify pertinent natural features from the selections and add them to the natural features list.
5. Using the maps and photos already in the classroom, have the children gather further information about forests, lakes, mountains, and rivers, etc. individually or in small groups. Guide their exploration with questions such as, "How many lakes are in our area?" or "How large is the forest in our region?" Have the children report their findings to the class. Add this information to the natural features list.
6. Distribute drawing paper to each child. Have them fold it in half two times to make four boxes. Ask them to draw a picture for each of the four seasons, summer, fall, winter, and spring, incorporating natural features, such as animals, plants, and weather. Have each child share his/her drawing with another child. The children may take a picture of the same scene during each month of the year and develop a photo line (similar to a timeline) of how the scene changes with the seasons, and under different weather conditions. The entire photo line of 9 or 10 photographs may be discussed at the conclusion of the school year.

7. Set up a nature center in the classroom. Work on the nature center may be done throughout the lesson or as a project at the end of the lesson. Ask the children to bring in actual specimens such as, rocks, sand, pond water, and leaves for the display. Label each of the items and identify where they came from. Stuffed animals, drawings, or pictures provide evidence of wildlife. Add books, maps, and photographs to the display. Invite another class to come visit and view the display. Use this as an opportunity for children to assume the role of a naturalist as they explain the natural features of their community to the children of another class.

Assessment:

The interviews, discussions, and explorations offer opportunities for informal assessment. The drawing of the four seasons may be used as an performance assessment of basic knowledge of climatic elements and their effects on other natural features. Being able to tell someone else about the natural features, as a naturalist at the nature center, is a valuable check for mastery.

Application**Beyond School:**

Encourage families to go on a field trip to a nature center or park and discover natural features in their local community.

Connections:

Arts:

- The four seasons drawing provides an opportunity to use graphic examples to express knowledge of natural features.

English Language Arts:

- Interviewing guest speakers offers opportunities for concise writing, as well as listening and speaking.

The children's literature in this lesson provides informational reading in the content field and the use of a traditional legend presents two different perspectives on a similar topic.

Science:

- Exploring natural features through speakers and books, creating the nature center, and visiting a museum are all part of the study of science.

Social Studies:

- The guest speakers and field trips give children an opportunity to know about career possibilities.