

Observing Lifecycles in the Classroom

Between pet stores and mail-order kits there are many, easy ways to bring nature into your classroom and watch a life cycle unfold. By observing the stages of the life cycles of plants and/or animals, students build their understanding of basic concepts of biology, as well as connection to nature.

GRADE: 3rd

INTENDED OUTCOMES: Head, Feet

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:

- Plant or animal of your choice
- A space for it to grow (cage, soil and pot, etc.)
- Food and water
- Paper, pens, markers, or camera and bulletin board space to record and display changes

STEPS*

3rd GRADE:

- Decide on the animal or plant that you want to grow or raise in the classroom. Some, like butterflies, can be ordered from the internet in kits that include paper cages and instructions on how to feed and care for them. Others, like meal worms or radishes, you can get at a local pet store or hardware store.
- When and how often will you check on them and/or record observations? Build this into your daily schedule – perhaps even your chore chart.
- Remember this activity is about more than caring for the plant or animal – it is about the life cycle. Focus on this by tracking observations through drawings or photos hung on a bulletin board. This is a great vehicle to reinforce names of days, months, and seasons, ways of notating these, to show what a timeline looks like, etc.
- You can show students ahead of time what the phases will be, or make guesses together and see what the outcomes are!

*For more detail on the grade-level focus for natural and social concepts and sense of place, please refer to the Guidelines

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Consider ahead of time what you will do with the plants or animals once they are grown. If they are not native to your area, you should not release them into the environment.

- To make this activity more “heart”-centric, compare the life cycle of the plant or animal you are observing with the life cycles of humans.



Relevant Standards

SC09-GR.3-S.2-GLE1