Plant In a Cup

When considering what to do for our curriculum project, our main goal was to create a stimulating lesson that any kindergartner could partake in. Being that our lesson would be designed around the Hartford Public School system we found it critically important that a project for kindergartners be as neutral as possible in regards to language and ability level. We decided for our project to have each child plant and take care of their own green bean plant. Not only will the children be responsible for growing and watering their plants but they also will each have a “Plant In a Cup” booklet. This book will serve as a way to look back and revisit the different stages that their plants have gone through. Our project combines creativity, responsibility, learning and writing all into one Styrofoam cup of a package!

Our objectives are slightly broad for we wanted them to be doable for such young children. Throughout the five weeks that the children are growing plants every Friday for about an hour will be dedicated to the maintenance as well as the different lessons we have put together to correspond with planting. Our objectives including: students learning about the basic life cycle of a plant, learning responsibility in caring for their plant, being creative through illustrations, using sight words they have been working on and also be able to revisit their plant books and explain the different stages the plant went through. We chose these objectives
for most of them can be accomplished just through participation in the lesson, which we believe will be able to hold the interest of the kindergartners therefor they will want to be apart of it.

On the first day of our lesson we would introduce the task at hand, which is growing the plant in a cup! A demonstration would be done for the children on how to plant the seeds and then we would have a already grown plant to show them what they have to look forward too! After we demonstrate the process of actually planting the seeds we would go through the different criteria’s that are mandatory in growing a healthy plant. The four categories are water, sunlight soil and love. We would express the important of watering the plants and keeping them in sunlight so they can grow strong and healthy. We would also show pictures to the students of roots growing into soil so that they understand why the soil is important and also hit on the responsibility and love that goes into growing a healthy plant. The students would then be supervised in putting together their plants in cups and they would be put on the windowsill.

The following Friday would be day two of the lesson, the children would all water their plants in small groups of three and then return to the rug for the lesson that focuses on water and why it is so critically important to our plants. We would show them pictures either on the smart board or on posters of the difference water can make in a environment. We would help them to compare and contrast a rainforest from a desert for example. We would explain to them that water is what keeps the plants health just like food and water does for us. This day would also be when we introduce the “Plant In a Cup” book and explain to the children that they
will be drawing their plants at its different stages of growth. We would also show them that they will be completing the sentences in the books using sight words from the word banks provided to them. Each student would then carefully bring their plant to their seat and begin the illustration of it in that stage it is in as well as writing the first sight word sentence.

Day 3 the students will be studying how sunlight affects the plants. We will start the activity how we have for the past couple weeks. When the clock strikes 2 pm, the students will get rowdy and excited about their plants. Once they have calmed down, we will run over the lesson and explain what we are doing today. After our explanation, the students will get up in groups of three to water their plants and place them in the sun. While the students are doing that, the other students will be sitting on the rug casually talking about their plants to us and answering some of our questions. Once everybody has watered and placed their plants in the sun, we will start the lesson on sunlight.

Our lesson on sunlight will be interesting because we are going to really get the students involved and answering questions. Their previous knowledge from the past couple weeks will hopefully have warmed them up for these next couple lessons. We will have our poster board up in the front of the classroom and the bright colors on the board will definitely draw them in. We will ask the students the question, “How does sunlight affect plants?” Most of them will be stuck when we first ask the question but once we get the answers rolling, they will understand. There are many answers to our main question, but a lot have to do with photosynthesis and oxygen, which is far too complex for kindergarteners so we will
focus on the survival. We will also explain how the different amounts of sun and the
temperature outside call for different flowers and plants to bloom at different times.
The students will understand this because they definitely notice when the new
“pretty purple” flowers bloom or the leaves fall of the trees and make them bare.
Once we believe that the students have grasped the concept of the effect that
sunlight has on plants, we will move onto the book.

The students will again move from the rug to their desks in groups of fours
because that is how their desk is situated. We will ask the groups that are being the
quietest to move first so they feel satisfied for following the rules. Once everybody is
at their desk, we will ask them to take out their book and turn to Week 3. We will
then go around and pass out one box of crayons to each table and reinforce that
everybody has to share the crayons and if there is any fighting we will stop
wherever we are and not finish the lesson. We will pace around the classroom as the
students color the picture of what their plant looks like and fill in the blanks of what
they did today. If a student is having trouble with fill-in-the-blanks, we will try and
help them figure it out, but never give the direct answer. After about 20 minutes of
the students working on their book, the day will be over and that will complete
Week 3.

Day 4 the students will learn about why plants are important to us. We will
start the day just as we have for the past three weeks by everyone coming together
on the rug. When everybody is quiet, we will let the first three people go water their
plants and move them to the sunlight. We will continue to let groups of three people
work on their plants until everyone has finished. While we are sitting on the rug, we
will ask questions like, “What do you think your plant is going to look like today?”
“Are you happy with the way your plant is looking?” “Are you going to continue to
plant flowers when this class is over?” etc. We will give everyone in the class a
chance to chime in on the conversation. This conversation will be a source of
evaluation.

Once everybody is sitting at their seats, we will draw our attention to the
colorful poster on the board that is labeled “Week 4.” The students will all have to
pay close attention or they will be penalized. We will ask the question, “Why are
plants important to us?” There will be various answers that most likely won’t make
sense, but we will start to write the right reasons and they will understand. First we
will write, “Eating healthy.” After stating that, we will go in depth about how
important eating healthy is and how much plants help us with that. Most of them
will understand that most vegetables are plants. After talking about the importance
of eating healthy, we will put up the next bullet point that will be, “Allows animals to
survive.” This answer will reflect back on Week 3 in a way because the students are
able to link together that animals need plants to survive and plants need sunlight.
We will try to explain this by drawing a “food chain” on the board next to the poster.
Lastly, we will add that the plants make the word a beautiful place! This will
definitely excite some of the students in the class because especially during a time
like now because the bright colors after a dull winter excites many.

Once we believe that everybody has a full understanding and agrees that
plants are important, we will ask them to take out their books. When the class quiets
down and everyone is paying attention we will hand out one box of crayons to each
table based on who is the quietest and reinforce the sharing rule. We will give the students around 20 minutes to draw the picture of what they see and complete their sentences with the fill-in-the-blank word box. Once the students have finished up their books after 20 minutes, they will clean up their area and get ready to pack up to go home.

Day 5 will be the last day of our project and the most exciting day because the parents get to come. We are labeling this day Green thumb Day because the objective is to spread the word about taking care of plants to the students and their parents. We are going to start our lesson today earlier than most and have the class gather on the rug at 1:00 pm rather than 2:00. We will do the normal routine and the class will start to water their plants in groups of 3 until everyone has finished. Once everyone is cooperating and sitting at their table, we will begin our lesson. It will be harder than most weeks to keep everyone quiet because of how excited the students are going to be to see their parents. Our lesson today is going to be on the results of our plants through the past five weeks. We will ask the kids questions like, “If they are happy with the way that their plant turned out?” and, “Did they treat their plant with respect?” After we recap the past month, we will relate the significance of taking care of plants to taking care of ourselves. Since the students cared so much about their plants living a healthy life and surviving, hopefully that message will be remembered when having to take care of themselves.

After the lesson, the students will be able to finish their booklet by completing the last page and then properly tying it together with green ribbons. We will ask the students to read it over in they're head and then to their partner and if
they have any questions to ask us. This is because we want them to be very prepared to read it to their parents.

At around 2:00 pm, all of the parents and guardians will enter the classroom. Once everyone is settled and comfortable, we will reintroduce ourselves to the parents and give a little introduction about what today is going to be about. We will explain that we have been planting these plants for the past five weeks while simultaneously creating a book with illustrations and sentences about how the plant looks on each specific Friday. There will be each of the posters that we have presented to the class through the past five weeks posted up on the board in the front of the classroom incase any of the parents are interested in exactly what we have been teaching. We believe it is so important to improve family-school connections in the Hartford area because it will promote a better sense of community involvement among student’s families. Getting parents involved with their child’s school as early as kindergarten will hopefully start a new trend for years to come of parents being more comfortable interacting with teachers and school officials for years to come.

After the parents have a clear understanding of what has been happening in the class, we will begin to show them our books. Each student will read their book to their parents and if a child does not have a parent or guardian there, he or she will latch on with a friend. We, as the teachers, will circle the room to make sure everyone is reading their books properly. After all the students have finished reading their books, they will have the chance to show their parents which flower is actually theirs, but they cannot take it until the day is over.
To conclude the day with the parents, we will provide a vegetable tray to try and promote healthy eating. As we are snacking on the veggies, we will explain our lessons that we taught every day and present to them our poster boards so the parents can follow along. When we are finished explaining everything that we have done for the past five weeks, the students will be able to give their plant to their parents to take home. The books will stay at school and be on display for the next couple weeks so the students can show off their work.

Working with Kindergarteners and trying to fill the objectives through an evaluation is hard because of the little knowledge that they can really obtain at such a young age. The book would be our method of evaluation. Since they are so young, it would be hard for them to recall what they worked on five weeks back; that is why a journal of each week will remind them. If they have completely filled out their book with the right words and pictures and can talk about it with confidence, then we know that we have succeeded in our work. We will ask them to talk to us about it every Friday and then we will watch them as they read it aloud to their parents. We understand that this is not the most effective evaluation, but for students are only five years old, we figured this would work best. We think that if we were really adamant throughout the process that our goals for the students would be met.