
Letter to a Relative

Activity Overview

Students will write a letter to a relative to reflect on why they are doing a native restoration on their school grounds.

Objectives

Students will:

- write an expressive piece employing descriptive detail and a personal voice
- compose a reflective writing that conveys knowledge, experience and insights about past, present and future

Subjects

Language Arts

Grades

3 through 12

Time

50 minutes

Season

Any

Materials

Clip boards, pens, pencils.

State Standards

Language Arts:

Use effective reading strategies (A.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Read, interpret, and critically analyze literature (A.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Read & discuss texts to understand human experience (A.4.3, 8.3, 12.3)

Read to acquire information (A.4.4, 8.4, 12.4)

Create or produce writing (B.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Plan, revise, edit, & publish writing (B.4.2, 8.2, 12.2)

Understand forms, structures, & punctuation marks (B.4.3, 8.3, 12.3)

Conduct then communicate research (F.4.1, 8.1, 12.1)

Background

Why do you want to plant an ecological restoration or native plant garden on your schoolyard? Perhaps you want to make your schoolgrounds a healthier place for wildlife and people. Maybe you are interested in the insects, birds, butterflies and other wildlife you find in a prairie, woodland or wetland and want to attract them to your schoolyard. What do you hope to accomplish for the environment, your school, your community and yourself? Writing a letter to someone in the past or the future will help to focus one's thoughts.

Activity Description

As your class considers creating a native planting, visit an existing restoration or remnant. Reflect on your vision for the future. Why do you want to do a restoration? Why is it important to you? To consider these questions, write a letter to your great grandparent or great grandchild. Tell them what you are doing today to restore native ecosystems and why.

Find a quiet place to think and write. After 20 minutes or so, share some of your thoughts or read your letter to the class.

Extensions

- Create a poster entitled, "Ecological Visions for the Future." Include past, present and future.
- Compile and publish the class letters.
- Create a time-line from "time of settlement" to 2050, approximately 200 years. Have students research pivotal events, including lifespans of relatives. Imagine the changes in landscape in their lifetimes, into the future at 25 or 50 year intervals.

Assessments

- Use a rubric to assess the student's writing quality.
- Before learning about the native ecosystems, ask student to write a personal letter to a relative explaining why they are restoring an ecosystem. At the conclusion of the year, ask the students to write a second letter. Assess changes in their knowledge, insights and attitude.

Resources

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. 1949. Oxford University Press. New York, NY.