EXPLORING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH WE VILLAGES

LESSON PACKAGE FOR GRADES 4 TO 6

THEME: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | SUBJECTS: SOCIAL STUDIES, LANGUAGE
WE LEARNING FRAMEWORK SKILLS LEGEND:

THEME: Sustainable Development

SUBJECTS: Social Studies, Language

GRADE LEVEL: Grades 4 to 6

LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW:

In this package, students will learn the concept of sustainability locally and globally. They will read a story of a young person who has been helped by sustainable development through Free The Children’s WE Villages model. Students will research the WE Villages model and then brainstorm how they can get involved in sustainable development efforts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

► What role will you play (individually or as part of a group) in helping make communities—locally and internationally—more sustainable?

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS:

Students will:

• Understand sustainability as it relates to both local and global communities
• Explore their role in helping to work toward sustainable development

WORD BANK

Barrier—a circumstance or obstacle that keeps people or things apart or prevents communication or progress.

Developing country—a poor agricultural country that is seeking to become more advanced economically and socially.

Sustainable—able to be maintained at a certain rate or level, conserving a balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources.

Sustainable development—economic development that is conducted without depletion of natural resources.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

• Chart paper and markers
• Computer with Internet connection
• Projector and speakers
• Blackline Master 1: Story of Sustainable Development

Recommended Assessment for Learning:

You know your students best—their learning styles and preferences, skill levels, and knowledge. You are also best positioned to anticipate the habits of mind that will make this lesson package successful.

In this lesson package, teaching strategies include collaboration, visualization and reading. Suggestions for demonstration of learning include small group and large group discussions, options for role playing, sketching, drawing and written reflection. Please make any accommodations or modifications that serve your students.
LESSON 1:
DISCOVERING SUSTAINABILITY

SUGGESTED TIME:
75 minutes

Investigate and Learn

1. Guide students to an understanding of sustainable development by having them think about how they keep something living over time in different environments. Divide students into groups of three to four. Distribute chart paper and markers. Give each group one of the three following examples:
   a. Fish tank
   b. Campsite for a family
   c. Vegetable garden

2. Instruct students to list examples—by writing or with pictures—of what their needs are to survive short term and do well in the long term. For example, a new kitchen may be stocked with disposable dishes and cutlery that would serve the family that uses it, but it is not sustainable. A kitchen that is stocked with reusable dishes and cutlery will serve a family for many years.

3. Debrief the exercise with students and ask students what they included on their lists. Review the items to ensure that there are long-term, sustainable solutions.

4. Write the word “sustainable” on the board. Create a class definition of sustainability.
LESSON 2:
THE MAKINGS OF A COMMUNITY

SUGGESTED TIME:
75 minutes

1. Now that students are thinking about sustainability, guide them to think about components of their communities that make them sustainable. For example, having schools close to family neighbourhoods makes a community sustainable because children are able to go to school and learn without spending a lot of time travelling to the school. This is much different than putting a school in an industrial area. At school, students learn different ways to serve themselves and the community.

2. Divide the class into groups of three to four students. Distribute chart paper and markers. Have groups draw an example of a community that is sustainable. Assume that there is a mix of families as well as young professionals, post-secondary students, retired couples, etc., living in a range of homes (e.g., houses, townhouses, apartments). Drawings may include, but are not limited to, the following:
   a. Schools (all levels)
   b. Housing (multiple types)
   c. Grocery stores
   d. Factories
   e. Public transit
   f. Transportation infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, bridges, etc.)
   g. Recycling plants
   h. Energy production plant
   i. Shops (all types)
   j. Banks
   k. Hospitals
   l. Post offices
   m. Libraries
   n. Parks or green spaces

   EDUCATOR’S NOTE: Leave the task open-ended at first to gauge the level of understanding. See what items from the list students generate, then ask them questions that may expand their list.

3. Debrief with the class by having groups present their communities. As students point out the different parts of their communities, ask them: What value does it add to the community? What would happen if it was missing from the community? Would their community be sustainable? Encourage students to think of examples in their community. Discuss similarities and differences between communities.
LESSON 3:
INTRODUCING WE VILLAGES

SUGGESTED TIME:
75 minutes

1. Now that students understand what makes their communities sustainable, introduce the concept of sustainable development in communities around the world. Read students the following paragraph:

Sustainable development means creating ways for people to take care of themselves and meet basic needs, such as food, clean water and shelter—in ways that also protect the environment. This is why development projects that help people living in poverty can’t just be good for today. They have to be good for the future as well. Our world still has a long way to go toward meeting this goal. Our consumption of natural resources also has to be more equitable. Right now, about 20 percent of the world’s richest people use almost 80 percent of the world’s resources, such as crude oil, energy and clean water.

2. Show students a video about WE Villages to reiterate what they have learned about sustainable development so far and help them see how WE Villages works player.vimeo.com/video/174570410?title=0&byline=0&portrait=0&autoplay=1 (2:15).

3. To help students further understand sustainable international development, distribute Blackline Master 1: Story of Sustainable Development. Have students read independently, with a partner or as a class. Ask students to highlight, circle or underline anything they believe helps or prevents sustainability in the community.

4. Ask students to get into pairs and draw a chart in their notebooks, with “Prevents Sustainability” on the left and “Helps Sustainability” on the right. Get the students to compare the answers they highlighted in the previous step and fill out the chart. Ask them to further brainstorm other things that prevent and help sustainability in communities that they can add to their chart. Invite them to share with the class, and build a master chart together on the front board, taking the opportunity to further discuss how these elements prevent or help.
LESSON 4:  
GET INVOLVED IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SUGGESTED TIME:  
150 minutes

Action Plan and Take Action

1. In pairs, have students brainstorm ideas on how they can get involved in sustainable development efforts individually or as part of a group. Put forth to the class a few of the best ideas to take action on. Have students vote on one to use. For more information and activities on creating action plans, taking action and service-learning, check out the resources on your USB or online at WE.ca.

Your class can also take action with a WE Schools campaign, designed to raise awareness or funds for WE Villages. Check out one of the following campaigns and get involved. Each campaign comes with resources like lesson plans to help students through action planning, raising awareness, taking action and reflecting.

WE Are Rafikis—Sell handmade Rafiki Bracelets to help Kenyan artisans earn a living, and raise funds for community-led development projects through WE Villages.

WE Bake for Change—Come together for a bake sale to raise money for WE Villages.

WE Create Change—Collect coins to create change for developing communities through WE Villages.

WE Are Silent—Plan a day of silence to raise money and/or awareness for children whose voices go unheard.

WE Walk for Water—Raise money and/or awareness for communities who must travel to access safe, clean drinking water by arranging a walk of solidarity to fetch or carry water in your own community.

Report and Celebrate

2. Have students reflect on their learning and experiences. In a reflection response, ask students to use specific examples to answer the essential question: What role will you play (individually or as part of a group) in helping make communities—locally and internationally—more sustainable?

3. Encourage students to go deeper by using the following questions:

a. As a young Canadian, what have you learned about sustainable development?

b. How can you continue to apply and share what you have learned about sustainable development?

c. As a young member of society, what is your role locally, nationally and internationally to promote sustainable development programs like WE Villages?

4. Post stories and promote them through social media to share the impact students are having. Use #WEVillages to connect with the larger WE Movement toward sustainability. Find more information and resources at WE.org/we-villages. Collect completed media release forms from students when necessary, available at WE.org/we-at-school/we-schools/educator-resources.

EDUCATOR’S NOTE: This reflection can take many forms e.g., writing, drawing, role playing or public service announcement that is recorded or presented.
My name is Yuzhuo Nan and I am 10-years-old. I live in Nanjia, a small town in Gansu province, China. This is a story about how “sustainable development” changed my life.

Community profile:
- Community name: Nanjia, China
- Population: 5,300, including 910 families
- Ethnicity: Han
- Language: Mandarin
- Literacy: 25%
- Main source of income: agriculture
- Average income: $12 per household per month

Yuzhuo’s unsustainable situation:
- Both parents work in the fields, leaving Yuzhuo at home to take care of her brother and do chores
- Fetching clean water is a one-hour walk each way
- School is far away from home

My broken dream
My heroes are my teachers because they give me knowledge about China and the world. My biggest dream is to be a teacher so I can give knowledge too. But two years ago my dream started falling apart. My parents told me that I had to stay at home instead of going to school.

I was angry and sad. I didn’t understand. My father explained, “Yuzhuo, we are sorry. To eat we must work, but we cannot work and care for your brother also. School is far and there are many chores. Daughter, you must stay at home.” Back then my family was only earning $12 each month by farming. They needed me to watch over my little brother, Jian, while they worked in the fields. I wasn’t happy but I did as I was told.

Every morning I woke up at six o’clock. I walked one hour to the well to fetch water and one hour back. Then I helped my mother cook breakfast before she went back to the fields with Father. They put lunch in a bowl to bring with them. After I fed Jian, I washed clothing, cleaned pots and started making dinner. Some afternoons I helped my parents farm with Jian sitting on my back. Every day was hard work, and I felt worried. I knew I couldn’t be a teacher if I didn’t go to school.

Social and economic support to the rescue
A new school was built in my village not long ago. I suddenly felt hope. Now that my school was close I thought maybe I could go to class again. I asked my parents, but they said they still needed me to work at home.

But soon after the school was ready, a clean water well was also built in our village. Now I only walk five minutes to fetch water, not one hour. Also, each family got piglets to make money. My family got three! I learned that these are a couple of ways to do “sustainable development.”

After the piglets started to grow, my father told me they could get by without me at home and that I should go back to school. My dream came alive again. It was one of the happiest days of my life. A couple days later I was sitting in class very happy. Looking around, I noticed many kids I didn’t recognize. I was confused at first, but then I realized: before now they must have been stuck working at home, too!

My future
Life is much better now. I still help my family but I spend more time playing Chinese badminton, talking with my best friend Jia and doing homework. My grandmother calls these things “being a kid.” But I like to study more than play games. Now that I am back in school learning, I know I will be a teacher.