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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2012 Volume VI: Asking Questions in Biology: Discovery versus Knowledge

Using Biology to Teach Children to Think Like a Scientist

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by Emily Dentel

Getting students to ask questions can be a challenge all in itself. This unit utilizes student natural curiosity about life cycles to encourage student's scientific thinking and questioning skills. The flexibility of this unit allows for use in a variety of grades and time schedules. It can be used with Kindergarten to study butterflies or upper elementary grades with a focus on scientific notebooks and the scientific method. I will be utilizing this unit throughout the school year or it could be used for a specific topic in just a few weeks. If you wish to bring an animal into your classroom there are several insects whose life cycles can be observed in a matter of weeks. I understand not all districts will allow animals into the classroom. Many of the websites provided in the resource section have videos and activities that would be sufficient for students to gain knowledge and understanding of various life cycles. The science notebooks can be used with all age groups to link literacy and science. I intend to use the science notebook with all of the science topics we study this year, and not simply for the life cycle lessons outlined here.

(Developed for Science and Reading/Writing [Language Arts], grade 2; recommended for Science and Language Arts, grades K-6)

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