



Tool 5.4

Mobilizing through art and dialogue

CLARITY Competence Area:

Taking collective action for climate resilience, ecosystem regeneration, and societal transformation

GreenComp Competence Area:

Acting for sustainability

Why use this tool?

This tool is about communicating about climate change and climate resilience, as well as engaging with a diverse audience, in ways that feel exciting, fulfilling and enriching for all parties involved. Some activities mobilize the arts to make environmental issues and climate change tangible, as well as encourage creativity and connection (with each other and with nature), so as to foster local action among the wider community. Other activities acknowledge the difficulty of tackling climate change in a polarized world, with multiple simultaneous constraints weighing on us.

Activity 5.4.1

Art made of trash

Overview

This activity is about cleaning a beach while having fun, tuning into the coastal environment, and reflecting on collective change. It consists in using the plastic trash you remove from the beach to make an art installation that you can exhibit in the local community.

Curriculum linkage

Science, Physical Education & Health, Arts and Mathematics.

Competences built

Innovation, collaboration, accountability, care, originality and interconnectedness thinking.

Prep Work

Locate a beach that needs to be cleaned. (Or any other nature area with a lot of trash, as long as it is a safe space for the learners.)

Competences/activities to practice first by the teacher

Creativity

Steps in the activity

1. Cleaning a beach and becoming ocean
2. Making an art installation inspired by the ocean



BASIC INFO

Age range:

6+

Duration:

1,5 days

Group size:

Flexible. Could be a project for a class or the whole school

Level of difficulty:

Basic to intermediate

Materials/space required:

A weight, tarpaulin, rope, chicken wire.

Location:

Beach + outdoor space at school

Engagement of external stakeholders:

Working with a local artist could make the art-making exercise more exciting



Step 1: Cleaning a beach and becoming ocean

1. When you arrive at the beach, do an exercise to tune into the environment by breathing in the same rhythm as:
 - a. the waves hit the shore,
 - b. a bird beats its wings.
2. Ask the learners to pay attention to what goes on in the environment, and to search the environment carefully for trash. They need to look under rocks. Plastic that has been in nature for a long time starts to resemble natural formations, so there is a need to be thorough.
3. Clean the beach. While cleaning, allow for free play and fun. After cleaning, weigh the trash. It is always interesting to see the number on the scale, and for younger learners, guessing the weight before weighing, helps them develop an idea of scale.
4. Before leaving the beach, do a movement exercise to become part of the environment and reflect on collective action. Move from one side of the beach to the other like a:
 - a. sea bird (select a local bird)
 - b. an ocean animal (select a local animal)
 - c. a plastic bag moved by the wind
 - d. a drop in the ocean
 - e. the ocean
5. Reflect on the movements with the learners. Ask them how it was to move as the different objects/subjects.
 - a. How did they feel moving together?
 - b. How was it to be a bird, a drop, the ocean?
6. End with this line from the Persian Poet Rumi: "You are not a drop in the ocean, you are the ocean in a drop", meaning what we do matters, because we are all connected.

Step 2: Making an art installation inspired by the ocean

1. Find a suitable outdoor spot close to the school where you have running water available and enough space to dump all the collected trash onto a



tarpaulin. Invite the learners to sort the trash into usable art materials and unusable trash.

- a. **Unusable:** trash that is disintegrating, harmful, or too disgusting.
 - b. **Usable:** Anything that can be transformed into useful shapes/parts of an art installation. Bottles are nice for making arms or legs, corks are nice for decorating, plastic bags can be used in braids...
2. Clean the usable materials.
3. Brainstorm what kind of installation you can make with the materials. The installation should somehow be inspired by the ocean or other aspect of the environment you cleaned. If the learners are young, you should prepare a realistic idea that you can pitch to them and get them excited about, like making an ocean animal for example.
4. Make the art installation using rope and chicken wire to attach the materials and shape them into whatever the group collectively decided to make. Allow for creativity and fun. How the end result will look is not really important, the creative process is the important part.
5. When the installation is finished, find a place to exhibit the art work, either in the school or in a public place where the local community can view it.
6. *Optional:* If you want to integrate more natural science into this activity, you can add assignments such as:
 - a. taking water samples in polluted ponds and looking for micro plastic under a microscope.
 - b. researching the direction and speed of ocean currents, drawing a world map with the ocean currents, and using this map, in combination with the level of decay of a specific item of plastic trash, to determine from where this particular piece of trash could have originated from.
 - c. researching how much plastic pollution is in the ocean and how much (in kg) each person on earth would have to clean up if every person on the planet helped out.

Dos and don'ts



Do:

- Take safety precautions and cancel the trip if the nature area is unsafe due to bad weather.
- Make enough time for free play while you are in nature.



Adaptations:

- Choose the beach (or other cleanup location) based on what is suitable for your particular group and mobility options.
- Bring trash grabbers for learners who cannot easily bend down to the ground to pick up trash.
- We invite you to adapt this activity to the specific needs of your learners, including by taking into account their neurodiversity. When adapting tools and activities for neurodivergent learners, please note it is not about treating others how you want to be treated, but how they want to be treated. Ask, listen, and stay open to different ways of learning and engaging.

References

This activity was designed by Climate Creativity.

Art inspiration:

- Ethan Estess, marine scientist and artist, <http://www.ethanestess.com/>
- Gertz, M. (2016, June 8). 13 artists who turned ocean trash into amazing art. TIME. <https://time.com/4358434/world-oceans-day-art-marine-plastic/>

School projects:

- *Elmwood Students Transform Trash into Artistic Treasures, Embracing Indigenous Perspectives.* (2024). <https://www.winnipegssd.ca/ci/p/30532>
- Alaba, I. (2024, April 14). *These Bell Island students are turning trash into art — and learning about sustainability.* CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/recycling-art-children-1.7157510>
- *From waste to wonderful: UK primary schools transform plastic into life-sized art* | Primary Times. (2021). <https://www.primarytimes.co.uk/news/2021/10/from-waste-to-wonderful-uk-primary-schools-transform-plastic-into-life-sized-art>



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

This Clarity Project Resource © 2024 by the Clarity Project Consortium is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

