NAEP

Adopt an Animal

Purpose

Students will begin to evaluate information and hypotheses by testing them against known ideas and information.

Materials

For the teacher: chalk, chalkboard, book with questions and answers about an animal (e.g., *Sharks: Challengers of the Deep* by Mary M. Cerullo), slide or large picture of an Aye-Aye or other rare animal (possible sources: *Endangered Wetland Animals*, *Endangered Ocean Animals*, or *Endangered Wetland Animals*, all by Dave Taylor)
For each student: paper; pencil; photocopied picture of a rare, unusual, or endangered animal

Activity

A. Pre-Activity Preparation

1. Make photocopies of animal pictures with the animals' names or set up slides for class presentation. Choose one animal for each student plus one extra for your presentation.
2. Select a few questions and answers from *Sharks: Challengers of the Deep* or the book of your choice for your presentation.

B. Tracking a Hypothesis

1. Tell students the following situation:
   Imagine that you are a scientist walking alone in a lonely area overgrown with bushes and tall grass. Suddenly, an animal you have never seen darts across your field of vision. On returning to your camp, the few people who live in this area tell you that they have occasionally seen this animal and that they call it a [*insert name of animal you have chosen*].
2. Show students the slide or picture of the rare animal. Tell them that this is what it looks like.
3. Point out several features of the animal (e.g., ears, eyes, fur, tail, paws/fingers).
4. Ask students if they can figure out anything about the animal from these features. Have them guess what the animal eats, how it moves, where it lives, when it sleeps, etc.

(continued)

EXTENDING THE ACTIVITY

Have each student write a story or draw a setting in which the animal that the student researched plays a key role. Have the student do more research on the animal's environment for the piece.

connecting across the curriculum

Social Studies
Have each student research the people in an animal's area of origin and share the information with the class.

Standards Link
4.7.12

Activity (continued)

5. Write and number students' guesses on the chalkboard, making a chart labeled "Hypotheses about [*insert animal name*]." If you like, add other hypotheses to the list that the class will attempt to prove or disprove (e.g., Aye-Ayes must use their big eyes to see in the dark).
6. Tell students that they have assigned their helpers to research the animal and will now be sent on other missions. Their job is to make a set of at least two hypotheses about the next rare animal they find and research their animals in books or on the Internet to find out whether their hypotheses are true.
7. Have students select animals from the labeled pictures you have prepared.
8. Have them make a two-column chart on their papers, labeling the left column "Hypotheses" and the other column "Research."
9. Have students look closely at their animals and write their predictions about their animals. Make sure that each student has written down at least two hypotheses.

C. Closing the Activity

1. Give students independent research time to learn more about their animals and to discover whether or not their hypotheses are correct.
2. Have them write their notes in the research column of their charts.

Questions for Review

Basic Concepts and Processes

When they are finished with their research, check students' understanding by asking the following questions:

📖 What is a *hypothesis*?

 How did you make guesses about your animal?

 How did you find out more about your animal?

📖 Why does this new answer make sense?