Be Aware! Be Prepared!

Fourth Grade unit of study based on Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and the Next Generation Science Standards

A research project on natural disasters and their impact on our lives

Welcome to the County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services' unit of study on natural disasters!

This fourth grade unit of study is based on a multi-faceted design that directly reflects the overarching intent and goals of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The unit will focus on teaching students how to conduct an inquiry, or research project, using informational text and synthesize their notes into usable information to present to others. At the end of the unit, students should have the skills of researching information on a topic, taking notes, and writing about what they have learned using their notes, and orally presenting their information to others. In this unit, students are supported to build knowledge about the geological systems of the Earth, natural disasters and disaster preparation through print and technology sources, and collaborative research. The culminating performance task gives students a purpose and audience for their research, and asks them to use it to impact their world in a real way! The task is completed over three phases, which build upon one another, to support students' understanding and research skills.

REAL WORLD APPLICATION!

Culminating Performance Task: Your class has been hired to conduct a Safety Fair for younger students and the community to teach them what it means to "Be aware! Be prepared!" in case of a natural disaster emergency. In order to do so, the class will engage in collaborative inquiry to discover what makes a natural disaster, how scientists and engineers are trying to lessen their impact and what we need to do to be safe.

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Structure of the Unit

The instructional sequence of this unit of study begins with the end in mind. A final, authentic performance task was created that requires students to creatively transfer and apply the learning of the unit. It also provides context and motivation for the sequence of instruction that proceeds, since students will need the information they are researching for use in their final project.

Essential Questions

The inquiry process begins with an Essential Question. This question is open-ended and overarching so that it will sustain many weeks of inquiry and investigation. Throughout the unit, the activities flow from the Essential Question to the Culminating Event. The Culminating Event gives students the opportunity to synthesize and apply what they have learned. The unit tasks always have the overarching Essential Question in mind and give students the opportunity to gather information and prepare for the final event.

Phases of Learning

Instruction is built around three phases of specific inquiry. The phases, as well as the unit tasks, are arranged as learning progressions to develop and support learning during the entire research process.

1. **Phase 1**: *Initiating Inquiry*: Students will be introduced to the research process and tools they will use. Teachers will model the use of materials as the investigation begins, looking at the difference between hazards and disasters, and background on the Earth's natural processes.

2. **Phase 2:** *Gathering Information*: This phase is all about research. Students will work both independently and collaboratively in their learning during this phase. Learning is interactive and is both modeled and facilitated by the teacher. Skills are learned and practiced in order to by applied in phase 3.

3. **Phase 3:** *Applying Our Learning*: The culmination of the unit is an opportunity for students to apply their skills, both of the content learned and the research process. In research teams, students will collaboratively investigate one natural hazard to develop a PSA for the Safety Fair presentation.

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Designed to guide students through research about the Earth's systems, disasters that can occur and disaster preparation, the unit aligns to segments of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for fourth grade. It also integrates the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Language strands of the **CCSS for ELA/Literacy.**

The unit is designed to be highly interactive and collaborative for students. In addition, the designs of the reading and tasks are meant to support a variety of instructional models, allowing teachers to choose the amount of support students need. Reading segments are within the Lexile band for fourth-fifth grades. Those in the first three sections are chunked into shorter segments to allow greater modeling of reading practices, monitoring and adjustments. The last three are longer, asking students to apply learned skills. Tasks allow students to apply and deepen their understanding of content.

Free CCSS aligned Curriculum!

Student learning is enhanced when students explore, organize, connect and apply information and ideas. The culminating project is about transfer - giving students the opportunity to use their knowledge and skill in a meaningful way.

G. Wiggins & J. McTighe (2011)

readysandiego.org/getprepared