

What's the Big Idea?

A Big Ideas of Sustainability Activity

Estimated time for activity ~45 minutes

Objective

Students will be able to identify and apply the Big Ideas of Sustainability in their place to help develop a sustainable mindset.

Essential Questions

- How can the Big Ideas shift our thinking?

Materials

- [*Big Ideas of Sustainability*](#) poster
- Pictures that exemplify various *Big Ideas* around your school campus or community (Can be added to a slide deck for the class to view)
- *Each Big Idea* is written out separately on bigger paper (11"X8.5" construction paper or card stock; 1 Big Idea card per student or all mixed on table available for students to choose)

Background

This activity can be used to introduce each of the Big Ideas of Sustainability in a real-world context. It is intended to be two parts: first part takes place in the classroom with pictures shown to represent the Big Ideas and the second part takes place outside in a "neighborhood walk" or "campus walk." Recognizing and understanding these Big Ideas forms the foundation of understanding sustainability.

GRADE LEVEL



3RD - 12TH
GRADE

CONNECTIONS TO THE BIG IDEAS OF SUSTAINABILITY



PLACE



SYSTEMS



Interdependence

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS



SCIENCE:
PATTERNS



SOCIAL STUDIES:
PEOPLE, PLACES, &
ENVIRONMENTS



ELA:
SPEAKING &
LISTENING

Activity

Part 1: Classroom (20-30 min)

1. Pass out or display the Big Ideas of Sustainability poster.
2. Hand out one Big Idea card to each student or place a set of all Big Idea cards on the tables.
3. Tell the students that they will be shown a series of pictures and if they see their Big Idea being represented in the picture they should hold up their card. Or if a set of cards is on their table, they should select the appropriate Big Idea(s).
4. Start the slideshow. After viewing each image, students who raised their Big Idea card share the connection of their idea to the picture.
5. Repeat step #4 through all slide pictures.

Now take it outside...

Part 2: Neighborhood Walk/Campus Walk (20-30 min)

1. Split into groups of 4-6 students with one set of Big Idea cards for each group.
2. Walk the students through the neighborhood or campus, stopping every now and then to look around for the Big Ideas in action. If you know your neighborhood or campus well, you should pre-select particularly rich spots to investigate.
3. When you get to each spot, ask the groups what Big Idea(s) they see in action and discuss.

Optional Extension:

- Challenge each group to find a spot where they can see 6+ Big Ideas in action. Ask them to take a picture of the spot and write down all their connections to each Big Idea and present it to the class.

Reflection Questions

- Which Big Ideas of Sustainability were easy to identify? Why?
- Were there any Big Ideas that were hard to identify? Why?
- What Big Ideas are you most connected to? Why?

