

Ocean And You

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Ocean Literacy, EP1: Most of Earth is covered by one large Ocean.

I use these activities to start most of my programs. First, get a whole earth ball – this inflatable globe just shows the earth, no politics. No lat/long, no words, no international boundaries, no religions, no races. Imagine

1. Circle time: Gather the kids around you and hold up the ball. Ask what the colors mean, and which color they see most.
 - a. I like to philosophize a bit about how the ocean connects everyone, and how you can't see differences from space. Explain that white can be clouds, ice on water (north pole) or ice on land (south pole).
 - b. Confirm that the blue represents the ocean and covers most of the earth. Some kids will say that the ocean covers a certain percent of the earth.
 - c. To help make this more concrete, have everyone hold up 10 fingers, and explain that's the whole surface of the globe. Try laying the fingers flat on the ground or your tummy to illustrate covering a surface. Try holding your fingers like they're wrapped around a small ball. Then fold three fingers under, and say that they represent land, while the 7 remaining fingers represent water.

2. Globe catch: Toss the ball in the air and catch it; ask the kids whether you are more likely to touch water or land. Explain one of the following activities. In all cases, keep count of the number of times people touch land and water. At the end, talk about the result – how close to 7/10 of your fingers touched water?
 - a. Small group of adults – stand and toss the ball across the circle. Each person who catches the ball counts the number of fingers on land and on water
 - b. Large group, older kids – stand and toss the ball across the circle. Each person says whether his/her thumbs touch land or water. Kids sit down after throwing the globe. They may enjoy rooting for land or water.
 - c. Younger kids – sit down and roll the ball across the circle. Each person notes whether one thumb touches land or water. Younger kids will often freeze up when trying to decide where to send the ball next, so ...
 - d. Young kids, in a hurry – sit down and roll the ball from one person to the next around the circle.

3. Ocean Trace: this works with only 2 kids at once. Sometimes I have an ocean trace station as part of a rotation. It could work with lots of globes and more teachers. It's worth the effort!
 - a. Ask the kids if they know the names of the different oceans. I like to say, "you know what? Water can't read!"
 - b. Put your finger near your local coast, and demonstrate running your finger across an ocean and around a continent.
 - c. Ask kids to run their finger all the way around the world without touching land. Two kids can do this at once.
 - d. Follow up: could you go all around the world without touching land? Could a water drop go around the world without crossing land? Would a water drop think it was a bunch of different oceans or one big ocean?

4. The water cycle dance – always a huge hit. You can do it running around, but it can get out of control easily. I prefer to do just a hand dance. I always start with the ocean (two hands, palms down, moving in a horizontal circle). When I ask kids what water does when it warms up, they naturally turn their hands palm up and wiggle their fingers while raising their hands, for evaporation. We generally shiver when we reach high altitude and form clouds (act like you're holding a cloud over your head). Then whoosh and blow the cloud around. Remind the kids that the rain falls everywhere, but I like to rain on Mt Mitchell. Allow them one thunderclap, 'cause that's really fun. Then let them rain or snow. The part I used to forget is groundwater, but actually most of the rain soaks in (trickle trickle). Finally, let the surface water run into streams (one, two, three, four fingers wide) and out into the ocean. Do the dance at least twice.

For younger kids, you may want to sing the "itsy bitsy droplet", but it's grossly incomplete. So here's my modified version (contact me for the 3-person water cycle script)

The itsy bitsy droplet rose up into the cloud
 (And the cloud traveled all around the world)
 Down came the rain and washed the droplet out
 (and down the stream into the river and into the ocean)
 Out came the sun, and dried up all the rain
 And the itsy bitsy droplet went through the cycle again.

5. Most of the water is in the ocean. OK everybody, hold up 10 fingers. That's all the water in the world. Can you drink all of it? (no, some is salty in the ocean) Can you drink most of it? What if I folded down 5 fingers – could you drink the remaining water? What if I folded down 9 fingers, leaving only the pinky finger? Could you drink that much? Turns out you can't. See how your pinky finger is in three sections (point to knuckles). The first two sections represent salt water. All the fresh water in the world is just the tip of one pinky finger. And, most of that is ice! (I draw the analogy to a soda at the movie theater, which tends to be mostly ice. Kids look blank, teachers nod) Two thirds of the fresh water in the world is frozen. So look at the very tip of your pinky; that's just 1% of the

world's water, and that's all there is to drink (finger tip in mouth; mumble) not very much, is it? So you look at the globe and you see all this water, but only 1% is the part we use for drinking, washing and flushing toilets. You reckon it's a good plan to let the water run while you're brushing your teeth? (rousing chorus of no's)

6. Wrap up:
 - a. Most of the earth is covered by ocean.
 - b. It's all one ocean – all the water is connected
 - c. We are connected to the water and by the water cycle.
 - d. Only 1% of the world's water is fresh
 - e. We have to protect the ocean.

I just looked for Whole Earth Balls online; the only vendor seems to be “Pretty Like Me”. These balls are often available where you get toys, books or maps. Since they're very PC, you might also check your local organic grocer or hemp store. I use the 16” globes. There is also a really gorgeous 24” one at some stores, but I think it has a different name from Whole Earth Ball.