

FACTivity

In this activity, students will explore their schoolyard at different scales. The question students will answer is:

What are the similarities and differences of the schoolyard ecosystem at different scales?

Materials Needed:

Yarn/string, scissors, clipboard, paper

Examining Scale in the Schoolyard

Procedure:

Split students into 10 groups of three students each. These groups will study the schoolyard at different scales. Each group will measure an amount of string and cut it. Two groups will cut a 4 foot length of string or yarn. Two groups will cut an 8 foot length of string or yarn. Two groups will cut a 15 foot length of string or yarn. Two groups will cut a 30 foot length of string or yarn. Tie the ends of each length together, so that each group has a circular piece of string or yarn. You may need to adjust the sizes depending on the amount of outdoor area you have at your school.

Assign each group a notetaker and give them each a clipboard and paper.

Before heading outside, tell the students that they are to examine an area of land in the school yard that fits within the circle their yarn makes. Ask them to brainstorm categories of things they might find in the schoolyard. Examples include insects, plants, animals, nonliving natural things, and nonliving man-made items.

Each group will have 20 minutes to explore their area and make notes.

Once students have had time to gather their information, they will present to the class what they found.

As a class, create a four-column chart to write down what students found at different scales. Discuss the chart once all the columns have been filled in. Some discussion questions might include the following:

1. **What do you notice about the items that were found in the different scales?**
2. **What are some similarities and differences between what people found?**
3. **How do you think this activity represents what scientists did in the article we just read?**



If you are a Project Learning Tree-trained educator, you may use PLT Activity #88, "Life on the Edge" as an additional resource.

Additional Web Resources:

Zebra Mussel Distribution Map: http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/biology/a_zm.html

Forest Service Ecosystem Services Page: <http://www.fs.fed.us/ecosystemservices/usgs.gov/>

USGS Zebra Mussel Information Page:

http://www.gls.usgs.gov/main.php?content=research_invasive_zebramussel&title=Invasive%20Invertebrates0&menu=research_invasive_invertebrates

