

River Observation

Overview: Students observe life on the Chao Praya River and gain understanding of the systems at work, making connections through the Compass.

Grade: 5 - 12

Estimated duration: 40 – 60 minutes depending on age

Unit: Sharing the planet

Topic: How people use water

Resources/ Materials/Setting required: Access to a river (or video of a river)
Colored raffia string or yarn
Laminated cards and dry erase markers (optional)

Outline:

1. Students are grouped into the four Compass points.
River observation is carried out with each Compass point observing through their particular lens.
2. Each group identifies assets and concerns, and selects one issue to focus on.
They brainstorm/discuss various aspects of the issue.
3. Each person writes one aspect of their chosen issue on a laminated card. (This could be done on paper if not repeating the activity often.)
4. All groups come together in a circle and share the issues and aspects they have discussed.
When someone notes a connection between Compass points, colored raffia string is stretched between those two people, and students comment whether it is a positive or negative link.
5. As the system(s) starts to emerge, students are asked to consider where we might make a change to improve the efficiency of the system.

Leader perspective:

“We have tried different ways of using Compass to maximize river observation.

“We like doing the activity this way because it is tactile, and empowers each student to share rather than being teacher directed.”



What the compass does:

- Focuses observations
- Simplifies entry to understand a complex system
- Encourages deeper thinking and connections
- Highlights connections between discreet observations

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