

INTERACTIVE METHODS OF DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN CHILDREN

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Abstract: Developing environmental awareness in children requires interactive and engaging educational approaches beyond traditional teaching methods. This article explores experiential learning, technology-based tools, play-based strategies, and community involvement as effective ways to foster sustainability consciousness. Hands-on activities, digital simulations, storytelling, and real-world applications help children internalize ecological values and take responsibility for protecting the environment. By integrating these interactive methods into education, children develop a deep connection with nature, enhancing their commitment to sustainable practices and environmental conservation.

Keywords: environmental awareness, interactive learning, sustainability, child education, experiential learning.

Developing environmental awareness in children is a crucial aspect of education in the modern world. With increasing global environmental challenges such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution, it is essential to cultivate a sense of responsibility in young minds toward protecting nature. Interactive methods are particularly effective in engaging children and making environmental education more impactful. Traditional teaching methods that rely solely on lectures and textbooks may not be sufficient to instill a deep and lasting understanding of environmental issues. Instead, interactive approaches that encourage hands-on learning, critical thinking, and personal involvement help children internalize ecological values and apply them in their daily lives. By incorporating experiential learning, technology, play-based strategies, and real-world applications, educators can foster a sense of environmental responsibility in children from an early age.

One of the most effective interactive methods for developing environmental awareness in children is experiential learning. This approach involves direct engagement with nature, allowing children to learn through firsthand experiences rather than passive observation. Outdoor activities such as nature walks, gardening, and wildlife observation provide children with opportunities to explore their surroundings and develop an appreciation for biodiversity. By touching plants, feeling the texture of soil, and observing animals in their natural habitat, children gain a deeper connection to the environment. School gardens, for example, serve as excellent learning spaces where children can plant seeds, watch them grow, and understand the importance of sustainable agriculture. Through activities like composting and recycling projects, they learn about waste management and the impact of human actions on the planet. These hands-on experiences make environmental concepts more tangible and memorable, fostering a lifelong commitment to sustainability.

Technology plays a significant role in interactive environmental education. Digital tools such as educational apps, virtual reality experiences, and online games help children learn about environmental issues in an engaging and dynamic way. Interactive simulations allow children to explore ecosystems, experiment with different conservation strategies, and understand the consequences of human actions. For example, digital platforms that simulate climate change scenarios enable children to see the long-term effects of pollution and deforestation, helping them grasp complex environmental concepts more effectively. Augmented reality applications can provide

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immersive experiences, such as virtual visits to rainforests or coral reefs, allowing children to witness the beauty of nature even if they cannot access these environments physically. Additionally, social media and online campaigns encourage children to participate in environmental challenges, share their eco-friendly initiatives, and connect with like-minded peers worldwide. By integrating technology into environmental education, educators can enhance children's learning experiences and inspire them to take meaningful action.

Play-based learning is another powerful interactive method for fostering environmental awareness in children. Games, storytelling, and role-playing activities make learning fun while instilling important ecological values. Board games and puzzles that focus on sustainability, conservation, and wildlife protection encourage children to think critically about environmental issues. Role-playing activities, such as pretending to be environmental scientists, activists, or conservationists, allow children to explore real-world challenges and develop problem-solving skills. Storytelling is particularly effective in making environmental education relatable and emotionally engaging. Stories featuring animals facing ecological threats or communities working together to protect nature can inspire children to become active participants in environmental conservation. By incorporating elements of play into environmental education, educators can capture children's imagination and encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility toward the planet.

Community involvement and real-world applications further enhance environmental awareness in children. Organizing clean-up drives, tree-planting initiatives, and recycling programs allows children to take direct action in protecting their environment. These activities not only educate children about environmental issues but also empower them to make a positive impact in their communities. Schools can collaborate with local environmental organizations to provide students with opportunities to engage in conservation projects, such as restoring damaged ecosystems or advocating for sustainable practices. Field trips to national parks, eco-friendly farms, and renewable energy facilities expose children to real-world environmental efforts and inspire them to contribute to sustainability. Additionally, involving families in environmental initiatives strengthens children's commitment to eco-friendly practices. Parents can encourage habits such as reducing plastic usage, conserving water, and using energy-efficient appliances at home, reinforcing the lessons learned in school. By participating in hands-on environmental activities, children develop a sense of agency and realize that their actions can contribute to a healthier planet.

Inquiry-based learning is another interactive approach that promotes critical thinking and deep understanding of environmental issues. Instead of simply providing information, educators encourage children to ask questions, conduct research, and explore solutions to ecological challenges. This method fosters curiosity and independent thinking, allowing children to develop a scientific approach to environmental issues. For example, teachers can present real-life environmental problems such as air pollution or habitat destruction and guide students in investigating their causes, effects, and possible solutions. Science experiments related to water filtration, renewable energy, and biodegradability allow children to test concepts and understand the principles of sustainability. By actively engaging in problem-solving, children become more invested in environmental conservation and develop the skills necessary to address ecological challenges in the future.

In conclusion, developing environmental awareness in children requires interactive and engaging teaching methods that go beyond traditional classroom instruction. Experiential learning through direct interaction with nature fosters a deep appreciation for the environment, while technology-based tools provide dynamic and immersive educational experiences. Play-based

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strategies, community involvement, inquiry-based learning, and real-world applications empower children to take an active role in sustainability. Integrating eco-friendly practices into school life and incorporating storytelling and creative expression further reinforce environmental consciousness. By adopting these interactive approaches, educators can instill a lifelong commitment to environmental protection in children, ensuring a more sustainable future for the planet.

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