Microhabitats

Objectives:
Students will compare data that they gather about plants and animals in various parts of their school campus.

Introduction
All plants and animals need a space in which to live. Fish need water. Deer, birds, squirrels, and people need land on which to build their homes. The place where a plant or animal has its home is called its habitat. Even on land, different living things have particular areas that provide their homes, food, water, and other requirements of life. A squirrel can live in and around the trees in your back yard but a deer needs some land in a forest. A lizard might be at home in a desert while a rabbit needs the fresh grass of a meadow. All of these specific places are called microhabitats.

Today we are going to explore one of the microhabitats in the school yard. Each one of you will look for the plants and animals that are in one of these small areas (1-2 sq yards):

- around a tree
- near a pile of rocks
- under a bush
- on the grass of a field
- near a stream or pond

We will make a list and maybe draw some pictures. Be sure to replace everything the way you found it when your done. Then you will talk about the organisms you found in your microhabitat with the class.

Research Question
What organisms live in your selected microhabitat?

Materials
For each group of 4 students:
- magnifying glass
- scoop or spoons
- plastic sample bags
- pencils
- worksheet, clipboard

Activity procedure
Decide on a specific microhabitat such that the different groups from the class have different locations. Have the children explore the area for ~15 minutes. They should list all of the plants and animals that they find and show them to each other. If they don’t know the names, they can draw pictures. Insects and other invertebrates may be below ground. Students can dig for them. All organisms should be returned to their microhabitat at the end.
Inside the classroom, have each group of students tell about their microhabitat and the types of organisms that live there.

**Summary and discussion**

1. What kinds of microhabitats are found around the school?
2. What makes one microhabitat different from another? (sunlight, water, etc)
3. Why do different animals live in these different environments?
4. Do you think that water-filled places (ponds, rivers, ocean) have microhabitats?
5. What is your microhabitat?
Microhabitats

The place where a plant or animal lives is called its habitat. Sharks, crabs, and sandworms all live in the ocean but they live in different parts of the ocean. Woodpeckers, deer, and beavers all live in the forest but they live in different parts of the forest. The specific part of a place where a plant or animal lives is called its microhabitat.

The land outside your school is a habitat for a surprising number of creatures. Today we will look at some of the microhabitats on the school grounds.

What is the microhabitat of your group? _______________________________

List the plants and animals you find. Draw a picture if you don’t know the name.

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________

________________________