



## Nurture the Wonder

### Preschool Inquiry Lesson Plan

#### Elephant Food

**Lesson Summary:** This is a preschool inquiry lesson that utilizes exhibits found within African Elephant Crossing at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. The lesson pairs observations and experiences that students had at African Elephant Crossing with classroom materials and inquiry skills to capture the curiosity of young learners to understand the natural world around them.

**Goals and Objectives:** Students will use observational skills to explore African Elephant Crossing exhibits, record data on elephant eating habits, and use critical thinking skills to come up with predictions and further inquiry investigations.

#### **Cleveland Metropolitan School District Scope & Sequence:**

##### **Pre-kindergarten**

**Strand:** Science Inquiry and Application

**Topic:** Inquiry

- Explore objects, materials and events in the environment.
- Make careful observations.
- Engage in simple investigations.
- Describe, compare, sort, classify, and order.
- Share findings, ideas and explanations (may be correct or incorrect) through a variety of methods (e.g., pictures, words, dramatization).
- Record observations using words, pictures, charts, graphs, etc.
- Make Predictions
- Make inferences, generalizations and explanations based on evidence.
- Pose questions about the physical and natural environment.

**Strand:** Life Science

**Topic:** Explorations of living things

- With modeling and support, identify and explore the relationship between living things and their environments (e.g., habitats, food, eating habits, etc.)

- With modeling and support, recognize similarities and differences between people and other living things.

## **Kindergarten**

**Strand:** Life Science

**Topic:** Physical and Behavioral Traits of Living Things

**Content Statement:** Living things are different from non-living things.

- They are found almost everywhere in the world. There are different kinds of living things that are found in different places.
  - There are different kinds of living things.

## **Materials:**

- Elephant Food record sheet (provided)
- Crayons or pencils

**Possible Comparative Questions:** How is an elephant's diet different, or the same as a human's diet?

## **Questioning and Predicting**

Pre Field Experience Procedures:

- In the classroom before coming to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo ask students what they think elephants eat. Have they seen elephants before (zoo, television, movies, books, etc)? What was the elephant eating if/when they saw it?
- Now ask students to share the foods they like to eat, or that their parents/school serves them every day.
- Make a list of these foods that students have shared.
- Ask students to look at the list of foods they eat. Do they think elephants eat the same things? Different things? Why or why not?
- Share the comparative question (ex. Do elephants eat the same foods as humans?)
- Ask each student to share their prediction to that question (record their responses if possible)

- Explain to the class that they will be doing an investigation at the Zoo to come up with an answer to that question.

### **Observing and Investigating**

Visit African Elephant Crossing at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo:

- If possible, break students up into smaller groups with an adult leader.
- Hand out the Elephant Food record sheet when you arrive at the viewing area at African Elephant Crossing.
- Explain the directions and tell students that the pictures on both sides of the chart are foods that humans and elephants eat.
- Students should circle all the foods humans eat on the left of the chart.
- Let students freely observe the elephants at the exhibit and take note of things they are eating (hay/straw, tree branches/bark, grains, fruits and vegetables). Teachers/adults might have to explain the items they see the elephants eating.
- Students should circle the pictures on the right side of the chart that they see elephants eating during their observation at African Elephant Crossing.
  - Note: Elephants might not been seen eating ALL items during the visit esp. fruits and vegetables. As a class you can discuss that elephants do eat those foods and they can circle them on the elephant side of their sheet.
  - There is information inside African Elephant Crossing showing pictures and explaining a typical Elephant diet. Class discussion could be had there during the field experience while making observations and filling out the elephant food record sheet.

### **Communicating**

Post Field Experience Procedures:

- As a class, go over the pictures that students circled on the left of the Elephant Food record sheet that humans eat.
- Next go over all of the pictures they circled on the right of the Elephant Food record sheet that they observed or learned about elephants eating. Were some of the same foods circled on both sides?

- Discuss student predictions prior to the field experience at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Were predictions the same as observation results? Different? Remember there is no wrong answer!
- What are the differences in things humans and elephants eat? What foods do both humans and elephants eat that are the same?
- Let students freely ask questions about what they discovered through observations at African Elephant Crossing and this investigation. Encourage even more inquiry questions.
  - Possible extension: Discuss the amount of food humans and elephant eat. Do students think it would be the same or different? Do they think elephants might need to eat more food every day than humans? Why or why not?