

School: Blanchet Catholic School
Grade(s): 8th, 9th, 10th
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Project summary:

Explore Your World, At Home

Distance learning presents a new challenge and opportunity for science teaching. With students in diverse homes and neighborhoods, assigning a specific outdoor task seems nearly impossible. The opportunity, then, arises to allow students to design their own investigations in their specific locations.

The grant funds would be used to purchase items for students to use at home for outdoor explorations. When we are able to return to the school building, students will bring these tools back to the classroom. The activities listed below are examples of the activities we would use the supplies for during our distance learning time. The tools would be further used in the classroom for other activities, when we return, though those activities are not presented here.

8th grade students (approximately 50 students) will use handheld lenses to explore aspects of the world around them, including rocks, soils, insects, and plants. They will be guided through their explorations looking for specific details in order to identify specimens. As a class, we will create a map of our locations and compare and contrast the items found in our own backyards.

The items provided to the students will be useful for a variety of activities. Simply having access to a hand lens provides opportunity to explore the immediate world. Exploration and curiosity will guide the students to learning and further exploration. The activity listed above is a jumping off point for the students.

For Biology students (9th and 10th grade; approximately 50 students), we will use handheld microscopes to provide an opportunity to explore specimens under greater magnification. This device will allow students to begin understanding the use of microscopes with the added benefit of accessibility and portability. Students will explore their backyards with an eye toward habitat characteristics. They will look closely at insects, including microscopic insects, as well as plants. We will make comparisons across observations as a class. We will discuss options for improving the habitats in their backyards based on these observations. When we return to campus, students will have a chance to use these tools and skills to explore our outdoor learning environment (OLE) and design a plan for improving the habitat of the OLE. Students will also use the tools to look at cells, plant leaves, invertebrates, and other specimens as we continue through our curriculum.

For all of the classes, students will receive a journal and colored pencils to make observations and illustrations as they explore. They will also receive a whiteboard to use during our class discussions and brainstorming. Whiteboards provide students an opportunity to take risks in sharing their ideas without the permanency of pen and paper. These will be used during the sharing and brainstorming sessions of class, and the journals will be for permanent records of their experiences.Â

Budget â€“ explain the dollar amount and item:

Handheld microscopes for students (\$650)

Hand lenses for students (\$450)

Digital, handheld microscope for teacher demos (\$200)

Journals, journal supplies, and colored pencils (\$200)

Whiteboards and markers (\$500)

*If I can bring prices down by finding discounts, I would like to add storage boxes or bags for students to keep these items organized, or items to further their explorations as identified by the students after initial observations.Â