



Dear Teachers, Curriculum Specialists, and Superintendents,

How do we create better students, who are also tolerant and compassionate citizens of the global community? Let me introduce you to Elephantanatics and our Humane Education Lesson Plans. Elephantanatics has developed several humane education lessons that teach empathy to students while exploring the fascinating world of elephants and the need to protect these charismatic creatures for future generations.

A 2011 study by led by Sara H. Konrath of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and published in *Personality and Social Psychology Review* of nearly 14,000 students, showed that empathy is declining sharply. Between 1979 and 2009 the average level of empathic concern, the motivation to care for individuals who are vulnerable or distressed, has declined by 48 percent with the steepest decline occurring between 2000 and 2009. So why should we be concerned that our students are becoming less empathetic? Empathy is essential to the development of forming and maintaining relationships both in the classroom and in the larger society. Putting yourself in someone else's shoes or trying to see the world as someone else does, is crucial to understanding the world around us and relating to others. Without this skill, conflict resolution is extremely difficult at best and the reality is not every student is learning this skill at home.

Knowing that empathy is declining, how do we as educators address this? Research shows that empathy can be taught and nurtured though supportive educational environments (McLennan, 2008 p. 454). One way to create this environment is by teaching humane education which connects the dots between human rights, animal protection and environmental ethics. By fostering compassion and respect for all living beings, humane education empowers students by providing them the tools they need to make more compassionate and informed choices in dealing with real-world problems.

The lessons created by Elephantanatics not only provide students with an opportunity to integrate qualities of compassion, understanding, and kindness into their daily lives but also teaches curricular competencies.

In **Canada**, these lessons address Science 4, specifically the big idea that "All Living things sense and respond to their environment" and target the Learning Standards of:

- Questioning and predicting
- Planning and Conducting
- Processing and analyzing data and information
- Evaluating

- Applying and innovating
- Communicating

In the **United States**, these lessons (in combination) could address the following Next Generation Science Standards:

- K-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes
- K-ESS2 Earth's Systems
- K-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity
- 1-LS3 Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits
- 2-LS4 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
- 3-LS2 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics
- 3-LS4 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
- 4-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes
- 5-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity
- 3-5-ETS1 Engineering Design
- MS-LS2 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics
- HS-LS2 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics
- HS-LS4 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
- HS-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity
- HS-ETS1 Engineering Design

All the Elephanatics lessons are free and can be found and downloaded online at www.elephanatics.org. Our hope is you will use these lessons to increase the empathy in your students while at the same time help us protect the world's elephants.

If you would like more information on Elephanatics, our lesson plans, or are interested in a school visit, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Fran Duthie
www.elephanatics.org