



ELEPHANATICS.ORG

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Dear Teachers, Curriculum Specialists, and Superintendents,

How do we empower students to become compassionate and tolerant citizens of a global community? I would like to introduce you to Elephanatics Conservation Education Lesson Plans that use the world of elephants to foster empathy and inspire action. Our lessons empower students to become compassionate global citizens dedicated to protecting these charismatic creatures and their environment for future generations.

Research demonstrates that empathy is not a fixed trait; it is a vital skill that can be nurtured and developed. A well-known 2011 study led by Dr. Sara H. Konrath of the University of Michigan, which analyzed data from nearly 14,000 students, found that empathy had declined significantly between 1979 and 2009. However, subsequent research shows that empathy is a fluid trait that can fluctuate and has, in fact, been on the rise again since 2009. This research confirms that a supportive educational environment can play a crucial role in strengthening a student's capacity for empathy.

Why is this so important? Empathy is essential for forming and maintaining healthy relationships, both in the classroom and in the larger society. The ability to understand another's perspective is crucial for understanding the world and resolving conflicts. Given that this skill

is not always learned at home, educators have a unique opportunity to help students develop it.

One of the most effective ways to nurture empathy is through compassion education, which connects the dots between human rights, wildlife conservation, and environmental ethics. The lessons created by Elephanatics not only provide students with an opportunity to integrate qualities of compassion, understanding, and kindness into their daily lives, but also teach core 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 following Learning Standards:

British Columbia (B.C.) Curriculum

- **Science 6:** Our lessons on keystone species, ecosystems, and rewilding fit perfectly with the Big Idea that “biotic and abiotic elements of an ecosystem are interconnected and interact to form a unique environment.”
- **Science 7:** The lessons on human impact and the ivory trade align with the Big Idea that “**The theory of evolution by natural selection explains the development of biodiversity.**” Our lessons provide a clear example of how human activity can impact biodiversity.
- **Social Studies (Grades 6-12):** This is a strong fit. Our lessons on wild vs. captive elephants and the ivory trade address the key themes of “**Human and environment interactions have consequences for diverse people and environments.**” They also touch on the curricular competencies of “**making ethical judgments about actions in the past and present.**”
- **Philosophy 12:** The advanced lesson on Anthrozoology, which explores sentience and human-animal relationships, is a direct match for a senior-level **Philosophy** course, addressing topics like ethics and moral responsibility.

Ontario Curriculum

Our lessons align with science, social studies, and humanities subjects across different grade levels.

- **Science and Technology (Grades 5-8):** Our lessons on biodiversity and human impact align directly with the “**Ecosystems**” and “**Habitats and Communities**” strands. The content on keystone species and conservation provides excellent real-world case studies for these topics.
- **Social Studies (Grades 6-8):** The lessons on the ivory trade, poaching, and animal welfare connect to the “**Global Human Rights and Global Citizenship**” strand. They give students a tangible example of a complex global issue and the importance of social responsibility.
- **Canadian and World Studies (Grades 9-12):** In courses like **World Geography**, our lesson plans can be used to explore human-environment interactions and the impact of the global economy (e.g., the ivory trade) on specific regions and ecosystems.
- **Social Sciences and Humanities (Grades 11-12):** The lesson plan on Anthrozoology is an ideal fit for senior courses in **Sociology** or **Anthropology**, which examine culture, human beliefs, and social relationships with other species.

In the United States, these lessons address the following **Next Generation Science Standards**:

Elementary Grades (K-5)

- **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

Middle School

- **MS-LS2** Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

High School

- **HS-LS2** Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

- **HS-LS4** Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
- **HS-ESS3** Earth and Human Activity

All the Elephanatics lessons are free and can be found and downloaded online at 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.

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