



CHILDREN IN
PERMACULTURE

Session Plan

SHARING IS CARING

September 2017

C. Furlan

Children in Permaculture (CiP) is an Erasmus+ project in which seven European organisations are working together to improve the education of children in formal, informal and non-formal settings through the development of resources such as case studies, curricula, session plans, films and other resources. These resources will enable kindergarten and school teachers, permaculture practitioners, parents and other educators to engage in holistic, sustainable education with children based on permaculture ethics and principles.



Erasmus+

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Content

1. Short description	3
2. Objectives (eyes, head, heart, hands)	3
3. Preparation of materials and resources	3
4. Content of Session	4
5. Permaculture ethics and principles	6
6. School theme.....	7
7. Setting.....	7
8. References	7
9. Inspiration	7
10. Ideas for extending the learning and experiences	7

1. Short description

The overview is to explore and understand the three Permaculture Ethics in an experiential way, through finding connections and sharing them in a circle.

Duration: approximately 1,5 hours.

Age: 7 - 12 years

Group size: 6 - 10 children

2. Objectives (eyes, head, heart, hands)

EYES

Observe elements in nature while looking for a natural element to share with the others.

HEART

Have experienced the meaning and feeling of giving and receiving. Know how to share within a talking circle, share gifts with one another and take care of one another. Learn to express their feelings for nature and speak from the heart.

HANDS

To practice being in a group deliberately expressing the permaculture ethics.

HEAD

To know that the permaculture ethics are earth care, people care and fair share.

To know how other cultures (in this case indigenous people) live closer to nature and share her gifts.

3. Preparation of materials and resources

Required Materials and Tools:

- A “talking piece”: stone or piece of wood that can be passed to the children as a “talking piece” (whoever has the piece in their hand can talk from the heart and the others listen deeply).
- A bag full of “gifts” that the children can pick and then give away. It’s better to use natural items (such as shells, pine cones, pretty stones) so that no unnatural items are lost in the woods (as they become litter). Otherwise you could use a healthy snack (e.g. dried fruit).
- All the names of the children written on a small piece of paper which is folded and placed in a hat for them to pick up randomly the name of another child.

How to prepare space and/or people:

A diverse forest or woodland (but it can also be a meadow or beach, the important thing is that the place is rich in things to observe and pick up) with a clear area or two for seating and making the circle happen. Check the area in advance to remove dangerous litter (e.g. syringes) and do a risk assessment. Ask participants to bring water in a bottle.

4. Content of Session

Sowing

Bring the children outdoors. Sit in a circle and in the form of storytelling describe how people used to live on the land, their way of living in harmony with the earth, taking care of one another and sharing the gifts of nature. Make the connections between what you just described and the fact of sitting in a circle outside like a tribe. Tell the children that we are now pretending to be such a tribe. Take out a “talking piece” and explain that only the person who has the “talking piece” is allowed to talk. The way to talk is from the heart. It is better to always put a clear question for each circle. For example if it's the first circle you do together you can pass the stick around and the children can introduce a bit themselves: say their names and how they feel in that moment. If it is not the first circle to start the activity they can talk about feelings (perhaps in relation to the weather/colour etc) or about anything that feels important to share within the circle. All the others are listening silently, with kindness and in a deep way without interrupting the person that holds the “talking piece”. Every child will have the opportunity to talk with the “talking piece”.

Growing

You can say “People haven't always had separate bands and specialist musicians to entertain us - people made their own music and sang songs. This was they the people could connect to each other and give thanks to the earth for 'her gifts'. Let's sing a song together.” You can sing whatever song you want, even improvise one. You can also improvise some dancing for the song. This is a nice example, it's called “Song for the Earth” and it's African:

Aye

Kerunene

Keranio

Keruna

Keranio Eia Eia Eiae

Aie

Kerunene

A video of a children's choir singing this song can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0S6I2PVAFIE>

The notes and a recording of the music can be also found from this page:

<http://www.waldorfschoolsongs.com/song/ayekerunene-1-2st/>

Now invite the children to sit in a circle again to pick a “gift” from the “gift bag” you have brought with you. Ask them to pick one gift without too much lingering nor looking into the “gift” bag (in the bag possibly it’s more or less the same kind of gifts in the bag so that the kids don’t fight over one or the other). Now they will have to pick secretly (without telling anyone) from the hat the name of another child. The name they pick is the child to which they will give the gift they picked from the bag.

Show them a little ritual on how to give the gift they have chosen to the person they secretly picked in the hat. Invite them to stand up and tell something they appreciate about the thing they picked and how it can be useful or beautiful to the child they are giving it to.

After the “gift” circle is over ask them to put the little papers with names back into the hat.

Ask the children to pick up another name always secretly (without telling anyone).

Explain that the name that they picked is the person they will secretly take care of for the rest of the day (or the hours till the end of the school time, or if there is no more time it’s for the day after) by bringing them water, singing a song, giving them a gift or a kind word... anything where one shows you care.



Picture 1 - A mandala made on a beach in Scotland. Copyright Lusi Alderslowe.

Harvesting

Ask if everything is clear and thank the children for having experienced the three permaculture ethics of care for the earth, fair share and caring for people. Ask the children to pass once again the talking piece and tell what they liked about this experience together and how it could become even better if we did it again.

Close the circle with a big “thank you”. Hold hands, bend all together to the ground, all together saying “thaaaaaank” more and more intensely and starting to stand up again until throwing the hands to sky and saying “youuuuu”.

The three moments of this “circles” connected to earth care, fair share and people care always have a moment of sharing and harvesting from the children.

5. Permaculture ethics and principles

How this session relates to the ethics.

Earth care: Emotional connection to what the earth represents for the children can be a means for them to develop a sense of belonging and caring. This may later bring more awareness on deciding what to eat or how to cultivate what is more regenerative and sustainable for mother earth (organic food, regenerative agriculture, animal care etc). Also, taking care not to damage plants or trees is a way of taking care of the earth.

People care: Behaviours or actions that convey positive feelings or kindness towards your fellow human being can bring the children to feel how beautiful and worthwhile it is to take care of one another. It is important for both children and adults to know and feel what companionship and collaboration are about by experiencing it.

Fair share: Learning to give and to receive in early age can develop a sense of abundance that can bring towards developing a deeper sense of being satisfied by what we really need and sharing the surplus.

To which principles does it relate:

Holmgren principles:

- Observe and interact
- Design from patterns to details

Attitudinal Principles (from Bill Mollison):

- Work with Nature (rather than against her)

Explain how this session uses /explains permaculture principles:

This session plan particularly relates to the principle: “Observe and interact - beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. This session plan helps the children to observe nature and feel, understand and process what they feel about her.

6. School theme

Relates to:

- Language
- Art

7. Setting

Season:

- *European Spring*
- *European Summer*
- *European Autumn*

Place: Forest, Mountain, Beach, Meadow, Garden

8. References

“The Joy of Caring for Children in The Circle Way: It Takes a Child to Raise a Village”, by Manitonquat (Medicine Story), Paperback, 272 pages (April 15, 2015)

9. Inspiration

Sometimes the children had so much to share that this session plan had to be separated into more than one session and done on different days because the time was not enough to hear everybody.

10. Ideas for extending the learning and experiences

There is another version where the children can craft simple dream catchers with the material found in the place, or make a painting with natural colours as an alternative to a “ready made” gift to give away.