



Bees Matter

Kindergarten - Second Grade
Science, Language Arts, and Art
California

You know those rare moments in teaching that stick—really stick—with you? In 2016, I was walking my kindergartners to lunch when I noticed a bee crawling on the ground. This was nothing unusual, as I teach in California’s rural Central Valley. Our beautiful school is surrounded by almond and cherry orchards and grape vineyards. But as we walked, I noticed dozens of bees on the sidewalk crawling or spinning. I wasn’t then a bee expert or lover at the time, but as a human, I felt they were suffering and wanted to help them. And I wasn’t alone. The kindergartners wanted to help them, too.

Together, we started to research bees. Bees around the world are dying, but there isn’t a consensus on the reason why. Experts blame parasites, chemicals, poor nutrition or pathogens. Some blame droughts. Regardless, we have a crisis. I wanted to do something, and the something that I can do is educate... and plant flowers. Turns out, kids also enjoy helping pollinators.

Primary teachers often focus lessons on their local community, so (in my opinion) climate justice is best taught through local issues. Most of my students’ parents are migrant farm workers, so my students are familiar with farming. And with a beehive in a tree on the playground, they know to not upset the bees. What they didn’t know is the importance of our fuzzy friends to us.



Student collecting pollen

Through [art](#), science experiments, [dramatic play](#) and writing, I teach about pollination in my classroom. My hope is by understanding the importance of pollinators, they are enthusiastic about promoting pollination through growing their own flowers at home. And they do—I've been sent many photos of students' sunflowers (I provide seeds in my treasure box) in their own yards. I get it. It's some sunflower seeds in some little hands in a tiny town in Central California. But, just like those seeds, big, beautiful ideas started small.



Student art depicting Super Bee