

Tracking the Weather

Submitted by Dan Swift, Kae Avenue Elementary School, Whitehall, Ohio

Grades: 4-5

Time required: 45 minutes to 1 hour

Requirements: Writing implements, newspaper

Have students watch the newspaper for a month, keeping track of wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, air temperature, and precipitation. Discuss their ideas of possible range of data within an entire year, rather than for just one month. In other words, perhaps their temperature range was only between 47* and 73* because they were only observing during April. Ask them to speculate what the lowest temperature/highest temperature might be for the entire year. Have same discussion about barometric pressure, etc.

Have students form groups of 2 - 3. Each group is "in charge" of one aspect of the weather. One group is the "Wind" group, and another is the "Temperature" group, etc. Each group has five index cards. The group writes on each card, one weather factor. The weather factor should represent a range. "Barometer Bunch" might have five cards that read 28.8 and rising, 31.6 and falling, etc. while the temperature group might have cards that say: "-4*, 18*, 40*, 72* and 97* .

Have each group (at random) pull a card, and reveal to the group all the factors. Have children write / discuss what their weather would be like that day, if all those conditions were present. After that, have each group shuffle their cards, and repeat.

The activity (initial) would take 45 minutes to an hour, preparing cards, etc. but then could be ongoing. Follow up exercises could be done in 15 - 20 minutes. After cards were prepared, students could do this individually and use it as a writing prompt. You could periodically have the class write a story, or at least begin by describing the setting based on the weather conditions you "draw" as a prompt.

As a follow up, for those students who are more interested in this, you could then ask them to think about other parts of the world, such as South America, Egypt, India, etc. Would enlighten them as to range of factors such as rainfall, in other places.