

Children are Attracted to TLM as Butterflies to a Garden

By [Learning Curve](#) | Aug 17, 2020

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A child's mind is like that of a butterfly in the garden which gets attracted to flowers of different hues and their enchanting fragrance. Children minutely observe happenings and activities in their surroundings and react to the smallest of change. They try to understand an activity or change on the basis of their perception and prior knowledge and develop their ideas. From here, begins the role of a teacher.

So, among all the other roles and responsibilities that a teacher has, this may be another – that of a gardener who has created a very beautiful garden, bountifully decorated with colours, that attracts everyone. Here, the word 'garden' refers to teaching-learning material (TLM) which encourages students to learn new things both within and outside the classroom. When a teacher enters a classroom, all students look for the material he/she is carrying, and the sight of any new material makes them completely attentive in the class.

I would like to give an example of my classroom experiences with the students of class VI that highlights the importance of teaching aids or TLM to help children learn. Teachers often have to face the problem of lack of concentration among students in this class. Their last period, every day, is of Social Sciences. By that time, almost all the students are tired. As a result, I too would face a lot of problems. Teaching aids came to my rescue by triggering the inclination among students to learn new things and improved classroom activity immensely.

For the topic, 'Major Domains of the Earth' (Chapter 5, Geography, NCERT), I developed some teaching aids to explain to my students the four domains of the Earth. These included:

1. A model of the water cycle.
2. A puzzle on oceans and continents.
3. A beaker, a test tube, coloured water and dropper to explain the global distribution of water.
4. A sheet related to the size of continents.
5. A documentary on water conservation and measures for its preservation; and a worksheet on ways to save water.

All the students actively participated in the class due to these teaching aids, making the process of classroom learning interesting and I was able to easily achieve the learning-based outcomes.

Teaching aids used for learning the topic and the use of the TLMs in classroom activity are explained below in detail with the help of illustrations.

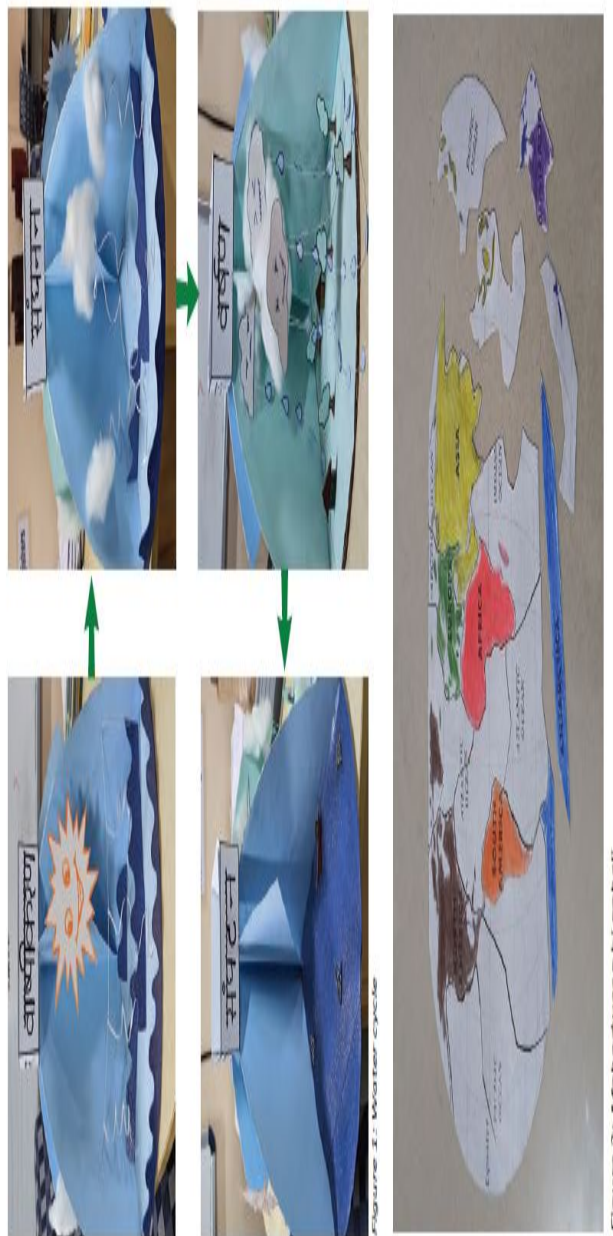
Hydrosphere

a. With beaker, test tube, coloured water and dropper, I explained to the student's total water distribution on the Earth. The students, thus, learned about water distribution and its forms. I took the help of a documentary, 'When Every Drop Counts', (<https://youtu.be/WxdtnswwHAK>) which depicts the shortage of water in the Barmer district of Rajasthan and various water conservation measures to drive home the importance of water and awareness and sensitivity about its use. After this, I gave students a worksheet on how to conserve water and also heard their ideas about water conservation. All students gave their reaction to figures in the worksheet and wrote about methods adopted in their villages and cities to conserve water.

b. Water cycle: I made a water cycle model (Figure 1) to explain to students the changes in water forms and how it rains. Students showed special interest in this model and it left an indelible impression on their minds.

Lithosphere

I created a puzzle (Figure 2) on the continents, their location and a sheet related to their sizes. To begin with, I divided students into five groups. Each group was provided with a sheet related to the puzzle on a continent and its size and they were given time to join the dots of the puzzle. All students enthusiastically took part in the activity and developed their understanding of the continents, their location and size.



Students' reactions and the experience gained from it

Before sharing my experiences, I would like to make it clear that all butterflies do not get attracted to the same type of flowers and, at the same time, even a particular butterfly does not always get attracted to the same flowers. Different butterflies get attracted to flowers of different shapes, sizes and fragrance. Children's minds work in the same manner. All students have different potential to think and understand; different needs and expectations. Learning outcomes cannot be realised by adopting the same teaching aids for all. In such a situation, we should always make efforts to provide dynamic teaching in keeping with students' needs and expectations. In this direction, our actions will strengthen child-based education, a key point of the National Curriculum Framework-2005 (NCF- 2005).

It took me six classes to share with the students all the activities related to the topic. But it gave them a lifelong experience about learning. Students were asked many questions during these activities. Some of the reactions of students are recounted below.

When I gave a demonstration to the children on the distribution of water on the Earth, there were different reactions from the students. For example, some students were surprised over the little quantity of water fit for use (0.0001% or 1 drop of water in 1 litre water); some other students were sad and concerned. In the end, all children promised not to waste water and stop others from wasting it.

Students showed special interest in the water cycle model and they posed interesting questions out of curiosity, some of which are given below.

Question 1: Why were some clouds on the chart seen weeping while some others laughing? Does it really rain when clouds weep?

Question 2: What is the meaning of the terms written on the water cycle model?

Question 3: The water cycle model on the green board is different. Why is it so?

Question 4: Why have you drawn it on a round board? (A student offered an explanation, 'Since rains follow a cycle, perhaps that is why it is made like that.')

This apart, some students asked me to teach them the process of making the model. This experience came as a pleasant surprise to me.

Perhaps all the above questions and curiosity arose because they were enjoying reading and learning in this manner, which is why they were more inclined to learn and could learn something new with greater concentration. The children were so engrossed in solving a puzzle given by me to make them understand 'continents and their location' that they did not even realize that the school time was over. Some students wanted to stay back to solve the puzzle even after I showed them the time. It was a unique experience for me as, usually, some students would want to go even before the last period came to an end. But that day nothing of the sort happened.

The classroom activity taught me one thing: children are like butterflies who get drawn to a captivating view of coloured flowers (teaching aids) and their fragrance wafting across the garden; they gather to suck pollen from flowers.

As a teacher, one of the most pleasant experiences for me is when children of various classes call me to their class to teach them during a free period. For me, it is difficult to describe this feeling in words. But this certainly demonstrates one thing – that they find my teaching processes more appealing. It is nothing short of a great achievement for me and teaching aids have contributed to this in a big way.

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Board: All boards

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