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Assessment / Evaluation of Oceanwise on-line Module

Oceanwise Secondary Level Ocean Literacy Course

Summary

The following is an assessment and evaluation of the Oceanwise Secondary Level Ocean Literacy Course. Oceanwise touts this course as an international course based on 7 key principles. These principles are intended to help high school students form a deeper understanding of our impact on our oceans and our oceans' impact on us. The principles for this course are categorized as follows: One Big Ocean, Ocean Shapes Earth, Weather & Climate, Ocean Made Earth Habitable, Supports Diversity of Life, Oceans and Human Connections, and Oceans Unexplorer. Each assignment concludes with a short quiz and upon successful completion the student earns a badge: Ocean Pal, Geologist, Weather Survivor, Great Kelp, Rainbow Fish, Ocean Wise, and Ocean Explorer.

Evaluation

The Oceanwise Secondary Level Ocean Literacy Course is intended for grades 10 to 12 (or ages 15 to 18). However, some of the experiments within each principle struck me as somewhat elementary for the targeted age group - for instance, the "Properties of Water" experiment is one I would expect to introduce at a grade 4 or 5 level. For a course provided as an online format, the content was relatively engaging with the inclusion of concise YouTube videos and activities that are accessible while also allowing students to learn away from the screen, though not necessarily outside.

The “Curriculum Achievements” page is quite valuable for the way that it connects directly to B.C.’s New Curriculum, while also providing direct links to the content within the Module. However, I do wonder how up-to-date this list is. It would be helpful if it was categorized by subject, and if the Big Ideas were taken verbatim.

Although the Final Written Assignment provides a choice of topics for the 500 word essay, I think there would be some benefit in providing additional choices in order to cover a wider array of student interest. Perhaps a topic that directly relates to food choices and another that relates to water recreation and sport.

As a former web designer, there are some aspects of the module’s layout that I found left room for improvement. The Frequently Asked Questions section should have each question numbered off and different header sizes for questions as opposed to headers within an answer. A collapsible list of questions might be more effective. Visually, this just makes it easier for the user to locate their question. Additionally, in the menu on the left side of the page, “Complete the Course” and “Frequently Asked Questions” should be listed under a separate header from “Principles”. I would also list “Curriculum Achievements” under “Teacher Resources”.

Although the content with “Maps” under “Classroom Tools” was quite useful, I wonder if the heading should be given a name other than “Maps”. I understand that the content is created using <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>, but linguistically, this does not make sense to me; therefore, I wonder if there might perhaps be a better way of categorizing this content, such as “Ocean Stories” or “For Further Reading”.

In the “Badges” section, the site indicates that “you can learn more about the various Badges that you can earn for your participation.” However, I was unable to click on any of the badges for further information.

Curriculum Analysis

Despite the importance of the content contained within this course, there is still much that it lacks. The article, *What is a Curriculum?*, highlights the way in which “Western nations

have adopted a relatively unquestioned worldview that the only valid way of solving problems of nature and man is through science and the scientific method,” and “intuitive knowledge is ignored and often actively discouraged.” This, partnered with the notion that educators only teach and emphasize the parts of the official curriculum that resonate with them the most, creates a bias in each student’s learning process. Looking specifically at this course, I do note that it barely scratches the surface of the connections between human food consumption and its impact on ocean species populations. In particular, neither the food web, nor the trophic pyramid used in the “The Ocean Supports Diversity” module address the role of humans within those connections. Without taking a thorough and deep dive into the human impact on oceans as well as a deeper look at the inaccessibility of making smarter choices with regards to plastics, this course only teaches that, as pointed out in *What is a Curriculum?*: “as individuals, they are relatively unimportant in the scheme of things.”

Ultimately, if we are to expect students to develop into humans that care for the places we inhabit and utilize (i.e. oceans), then we need to demonstrate that in our behaviours, which most certainly includes what we choose to teach. While reading *What is a Curriculum?*, I was reminded of a conversation I had recently with my 15 year old neighbour. We were discussing their surprise over the fact that I typically spend a good chunk of my day on schoolwork. I told them that “teachers work hard. Student teachers work even harder. Be nice to your teachers!” They responded by saying “treat other how u wanna b treated, I get a mean teacher, they get a mean student.” This conversation is a fantastic demonstration of the teenage mindset and how much of an impact our behaviour has on students. Given that students “learn about respect for others from the teacher's own demonstration of respect or lack thereof,” it seems imperative to me that we as teachers hold ourselves to the highest standards of respect for ourselves, our colleagues, those in our communities and most importantly, our students. I would further suggest that we cannot show respect for our students if we are not first respecting the places that we also inhabit.

Moving forward, into a time when learning will take place online at an increasing rate, courses such as the Oceanwise Ocean Literacy Courses will become much more the norm. Therefore, it seems to me that more effort must be placed on creating space for students to get outside independently and encouraging them to do so. I believe that education should take place outside as often as possible in order to foster a deep connection with the outdoors and our planet, ultimately teaching children to look out for all living things and see themselves as part of a much bigger picture; however, I'm not convinced that the Oceanwise Ocean Literacy Courses make the greatest effort to shift its corresponding activities outside as often as possible.

Work Cited

"Ocean Literacy Secondary - Ocean Wise - Tigid". *Education.Ocean.Org*, 2020,
<https://education.ocean.org/oceanlitsec>.

Yero, Judith Lloyd. "What Is A Curriculum?". *Teachinginmind.Com*, 2020,
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