Why should I wash my hands?

Lesson plan description

This lesson aims to demonstrate how values education can be applied in the primary classroom using a practical demonstration of hand washing. By reflecting on a technique to wash hands efficiently, students will discover that awareness of and responsibility to others are important values that underpin reasons for washing hands. Students will then demonstrate their understanding by designing a class poster to visually represent the consequences of having both dirty hands and clean hands. This will serve as a reminder for students to take responsibility to wash their hands appropriately throughout the day.

Year levels

Early Years (5–7 years)

Duration

50 minutes

Explicit values focus

• Care and Compassion
• Fair Go
• Respect
• Responsibility
• Thoughtfulness

Key learning areas

• The Arts
• English
• Health and Physical Education
• Mathematics
• Studies of Society and Environment

Lesson plan

Getting started

Activity 1: What does dirty look like?

What is dirty? Ask students to brainstorm ideas. Students reinforce the value fair go by not shouting out answers, and by allowing others to contribute to the class brainstorm.

Students then look around the room and out the window and come up with examples of things that they can contribute to the dirty side of a Venn diagram (such as bins) and the clean side of the diagram (such as a tissue box or a clean whiteboard). Anything that can be considered both dirty and clean by the collective group (such as sandwich crumbs on an otherwise clean table; or the possible germs on a telephone receiver) can be written in the overlapping section of the Venn diagram. Be careful: germs can’t always been seen! Collate answers on the whiteboard.

Ask students to look at their own hands, including fingernails and wrists, and decide whether they are clean or dirty.
Provide some information for students about germs, and explain the difference between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bacteria. Direct a class discussion based either around this information or an appropriate picture storybook, so that students have a thorough understanding of the consequence of poor hygiene. For example, explain that hygiene is important because it helps prevent illness.

**Discovering**

**Activity 2: What do dirty hands feel like?**
It is a good idea to conduct the following activity outside and to make sure students’ clothing is well protected. Prior to this activity get the students to develop a behaviour code. This will reinforce the values of **responsibility**, **thoughtfulness** and **respect**.

Students stand side by side in a single line. Place vegetable oil on the first person’s hand and sprinkle generously with glitter. Explain that this person’s hand is ‘dirty’ and that the glitter represents germs that we sometimes don’t see. That student shakes the next person’s hand and spreads the germs. The handshake continues down the line. All students hold their dirty hand up and observe how the germs have spread. Ask the students why germs are dangerous, and how we can prevent their spread. Students learn to treat others with consideration and regard throughout the activity. All are included regardless of their learning abilities.

Before the students wash their hands let them get their hands dirty. With their oily hand, students scoop up a handful of sand from a bucket, letting it slip through their fingers. Students examine the parts of the hand that are covered by sand.

Students take turns to press their hands within the ‘dirty’ column of the poster, leaving a sand and glitter imprint.

**Activity 3: Let’s all wash hands!**
After observing the distribution of dirt on their hands, students watch the teacher’s demonstration of hand washing. Remind students to enforce their behaviour code for this demonstration, such as listening and allowing everyone to see. To ensure that hands have been washed properly, keep washing hands for as long as it takes to sing (or hum) **Happy Birthday** slowly:

1. wet hands
2. squeeze a little liquid soap onto one hand
3. rub palms together up and down repetitively
4. fold fingers in slightly while palms are together and rub between the fingers
5. roll right palm over back of left hand and then left palm over back of right hand repetitively, until all areas of the hand have been covered with soap. Don’t forget to wash around fingernails and wrists.
6. repeat steps 3–5 under running water to remove soap
7. use paper towel to wipe all areas of the hand, including between fingers.

**Bringing it together**

**Activity 4: What’s the value in washing hands?**
Choose a student to come up the front and press their hand in the ‘clean’ column of the poster. Ask the students if they can see a difference between the ‘clean’ and ‘dirty’ prints.
Discuss which values are reflected as a result of the decision to wash hands. For example, ask the students whose ‘responsibility’ it is to wash dirty hands?. When we wash our hands, do we do it just for ourselves or for others as well?

To finish off the activity, students take turns tracing a partner’s clean hand outline into the clean column of the poster. Laminate or contact the poster and hang it near the door or lunch area.

**Notes for teachers**

Equipment required prior to beginning lesson: a large sheet of poster paper, a thick texta, liquid soap, paper towels, vegetable oil (not peanut or other tree nut oils), glitter, a bucket of sand, access to sink and water taps.

Prior to beginning Activity 2, the teacher will need to draw up two columns on a large sheet of poster paper. One column is to be labelled ‘dirty’ and the other ‘clean’. A large hand could be drawn in the centre, allowing students to draw pictures of times they need to wash their hands. This could be implemented as an extension activity and will later serve as a reminder to students of times they may need to wash their hands.

Birthday stickers could be added to the clean section of the poster to remind students to sing *Happy Birthday* while washing hands.

Allow five to ten minutes before lunchtime every day for the whole class to wash their hands while humming *Happy Birthday*. This will reinforce the technique learned. Students can be given extra responsibility by taking turns to lead the hand-washing session.