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WHO AM I?

Grades: 2-5

Time: 60 minutes (or can be divided into multiple sessions)

Materials: Information and resources about farmed animal behavior and intelligence (see below); 2 sets of paper slips of different colors with characteristics on them (see below); 4 constructed habitats (see below); art materials

Relevant Subjects: Social Studies, Science, Art, or Language Arts

Pertinent Information: This activity serves as an excellent introduction to considering some of the characteristics and qualities that animals and humans share.

Preparation:

1. Using resources such as those suggested below, find and record interesting facts and anecdotes about cows, pigs and chickens. You may wish to also find relevant film clips, such as this one about chicken and pig intelligence:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOJf_zoPDs
2. Create one set of slips (set 1) with the sample characteristics of humans, cows, pigs and chickens on them, that show ways that each being is unique. (See samples below.)
3. Create another set of slips (set 2) with sample characteristics on them that could be true for more than one of the beings. (See samples below.) Create this set of slips on paper that is a different color from those in set 1.
4. Construct a rough habitat for each of the beings: humans, cows, pigs, and chickens. You might wish to draw the habitats on big sheets of recycled paper, or you might wish to create a more complex habitat. The habitats should be unique enough for students to be able to tell to whom they belong. Set these around the room.

Alternative: Depending on the age of the students, you may want to have materials available and ask students to create the habitats that are natural for these four groups, making this part of the activity.

1. Let students know that you're going to be playing the game "Who Am I?" in which they have to decide who they are and what habitat they belong to, based on the characteristic you give them.
2. Pass out a folded slip from set 1 and set 2 to each student, asking them not to open them yet.
3. When all students have two slips, point out where the different habitats are (not identifying them – unless the students were involved in their construction). Ask students to open their slip from set 1, read it, and, based on the characteristic they read, find the habitat that belongs to them.
4. Once everyone has found their proper habitat (some students may need help finding theirs), ask each student to read their characteristic aloud. (If anyone is in the wrong habitat, give them a chance to determine which habitat is the correct one.)
5. Now ask students to read their slip from set 2 and to find their proper habitat again. ("Where do you belong based on your characteristic?") Ask students who are having trouble choosing a habitat to read their characteristic aloud, and invite their fellow students to give suggestions about where they might belong. As students make suggestions, point out to them the commonalities that the different beings have (many of which they may not have considered). Since all the characteristics are true for multiple beings it won't be possible for students to choose only one habitat. Once they've come to this realization, have them gather into a seated circle.
6. Once students are seated, share additional factoids, anecdotes and, if you have them, video clips about cows, pigs and chickens (and what they have in common with humans). Encourage students to reflect on what they've learned, and to share their thoughts about it.
7. Lead a discussion, asking students to talk about assumptions made about animals like pigs, chickens and cows and why we treat them the way we do. Ask if students share their lives with companion animals such as dogs, cats, etc. Give them (especially young students) time to talk about what they love about these animal friends. Find out if anyone has ever met a pig or cow or chicken? If so, under what circumstances? What were their impressions? What is their favorite fact from what they learned today? If they were a pig (or cow or chicken), what kind of dream might they have?

8. Mention to students that most animals on the earth are counting on us to be kind and careful with them and their lives. Ask students to write and illustrate one thing they plan to do to make life a little happier for a cow, or a pig, or a chicken. After students have completed their work, post the pictures in a school hallway or in the classroom and create an art exhibition based on students' work. Ask students to come up a name for the exhibition, such as "Art for Animals" or "Making a Wish Come True for Animals"....

Extension:

Find out if there is a farmed animal sanctuary nearby and take students on a visit to see cows, pigs, chickens and other farmed animals in person and to learn more about them.

Activity by: Rachel Rettinger (M.Ed. Student)

Sample Resources about Farmed Animal Intelligence and Behaviors

Cultivating Compassion – grades 3-5

<http://farmsanctuary.org/education/assets/FarmSanctuaryElem2.pdf>

This lesson plan from Farm Sanctuary has a variety of activities. Starting on page 11 you'll find "fact" cards and stories about pigs, cows and chickens.

About Farm Animals

<http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/animals/>

The Humane Society of the U.S. has information about the characteristics and behaviors of farmed animals.

The Pig Who Sang to the Moon: The Emotional World of Farm Animals

by Jeffrey Masson

Masson's book includes information and anecdotes about farmed animals.

Sample Characteristics for Set 1

Cows:

I have fur.
I have 4 stomachs.
I have a straight tail.
I eat grass.
I have calves.

Chickens:

I like to roost at night.
I peck the ground for things to eat.
I have wings.
I lay eggs.
I have no teeth.

Humans:

I use a phone to call friends.
I get my food at the grocery store.
I ride a bike.
I wear clothing.
I read books.

Pigs:

I oink.
I have a snout.
I have a curly tail.
I have skin with short, rough hairs on it.
I like to wallow in mud.

Sample Characteristics for Set 2:

Sample characteristics:

I have a good memory.
I know my name.
I have friends.
I talk to my baby before s/he's even born.
I'm a good problem solver.
I recognize faces.
I bathe.
I use sunscreen to help protect my skin.
I have a leader.
I have a good sense of direction.
I can play computer games.
I speak a unique language.
I sleep.
I babysit others' kids.
I get bored.
I will do whatever I can to protect my kids.
I like to swim.
I like to play.

To whom they apply:

(humans, cows, chickens)
(humans, cows, pigs)
(humans, cows, pigs, chickens)
(humans, chickens)
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