

GRADE 5 PREPARATION FOR CAMP

Submitted by Rónán Donohoe, 2025, while serving as Homeroom Elementary Teacher at UWC Thailand



LEARNING PLAN OVERVIEW

Subject(s)	• Health and Wellbeing • Environmental Education • Outdoor Education
Grade Level (s)	Upper Primary (ages 8-11)
Systems Tool(s)	Sustainability Compass
Purpose of Using Tool	• Critical Thinking • Action Planning
Summary	This lesson plan introduces 5th-grade students to sustainability concepts using the Sustainability Compass tool, focusing on practical applications through kayaking and tent camping scenarios in preparation for an upcoming 5-day camp. Through guided discussions and group work, students explore different aspects of sustainability while developing actionable plans to minimize their environmental impact during their camping experience.

Learning Objectives

- Define sustainability and explain its importance
- Identify specific sustainable practices for kayaking and camping activities
- Collaborate with peers to develop solutions to environmental challenges

Material and Settings

- Whiteboard or projector
- Markers or pens
- Sustainability Compass tool (digital and physical versions)
- Student handouts with activity-specific guiding questions

- Timer for activity management

Learning Context

Grade 5 Students in a class set of 20. Lesson conducted 1 week before camp. Students are 50/50 mix of boys and girls with mixed ability.

Purpose of Using the Systems Thinking Tools

I choose the Sustainability Compass tool to help students identify and discuss the impact their camping will have on the environment but on one another too. I feel like the Sustainability Compass tool is an ideal thinking tool to guide students through this process.

Impact on Participant Learning

The introduction of the Sustainability Compass tool had a meaningful impact on students' understanding of sustainability and their ability to apply these concepts to real-world situations.

Initially, students demonstrated basic knowledge of environmental terms through the vocabulary sort activity, but their understanding deepened significantly when applying the Sustainability Compass framework to camping scenarios. For example, when analyzing kayaking activities, students moved from simple observations like "don't litter" to more complex connections, recognizing how proper equipment maintenance (East) directly relates to environmental protection (North) and group safety (West). This growth in systems thinking was particularly evident during group discussions, where students began independently identifying connections between different Sustainability Compass points – a key shift from their previous linear thinking about environmental impact.

Students' behavior changes were reflected in their camping pledges, where they articulated specific, actionable commitments such as proper gear maintenance and wildlife protection, demonstrating their ability to translate learning into practical sustainability practices. Their engagement with the Sustainability Compass tool also enhanced their collaborative skills, as shown by their active participation in group discussions and ability to build upon each other's ideas when brainstorming sustainable camping practices.

Learning Plan Step-by-step Description

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Sustainability Compass Overview:

- Explain that Sustainability Compass is a tool for thinking about sustainability

- Demonstrate how the Sustainability Compass directions represent different aspects of sustainability
- Connect the tool to the upcoming camping experience

Sustainability Discussion:

- Ask: "What does sustainability mean to you?"
- Record student responses for reference throughout the lesson

2. Teacher-Guided Compass: Kayaking Activity (10 minutes)

Setup:

- Project the Compass Education rose diagram
- Introduce the kayaking scenario: "Let's think about our upcoming kayaking experience"

Guided Discussion Questions:

- North (Nature): "What wildlife might we see in the lake? How can we avoid disturbing them?"
- East (Economy): "How can we properly maintain our equipment (kayaks, paddles, life jackets)?"
- South (Society): "How can we support and help each other while kayaking?"
- West (Wellbeing): "How can we stay safe while respecting the environment?"

Students and teachers fill out a compass together.

3. Group Work: Tent Camping Activity (15 minutes)

Organization:

- Divide class into groups of 4
- Distribute handouts with guiding questions
- Assign roles within groups (timekeeper, recorder, presenter, facilitator)

Group Discussion Topics:

- North: How can we minimize our impact on the campground?
- East: What can we reuse instead of throwing away?
- South: How can we be good neighbours to other campers?
- West: How can we keep our tent area clean and comfortable?

4. Class Sharing and Connections (10 minutes)

- Each group presents their key ideas (1-2 minutes per group)
- Facilitate cross-group discussion using prompts:
 - "What common themes do you notice?"
 - "How do these ideas connect to sustainability?"
 - "Which solutions could we use in other situations?"

5. Camping Pledges (5 minutes)

- Students write individual pledges for sustainable camping practices

- Encourage specific, actionable commitments
- Collect pledges for reference during the camping trip

Reflection: Plusses

Context and Prior Knowledge:

Before this lesson, students had one introductory session with the Sustainability Compass tool where they learned basic terminology and visual organization. The vocabulary sort activity for each compass section proved particularly valuable, as it helped establish a foundation for understanding the tool's different components. This prior knowledge significantly influenced how students engaged with today's more complex application of the Sustainability Compass framework.

Lesson Implementation and Student Response:

The lesson's progression from teacher-guided practice to independent group work proved effective. Starting with the kayaking activity as a whole-class example allowed students to see how the Sustainability Compass tool could be applied to real-world scenarios. The guiding questions I provided for each Sustainability Compass point were essential scaffolds, particularly given the students' limited life experience. For example, when examining the "North" direction (Nature) in the kayaking activity, having specific prompts about wildlife and environmental impact helped students focus their thinking.

Student Understanding and Engagement:

It was particularly interesting to observe students making connections between different areas of the Sustainability Compass. They began to recognize how actions in one area (such as proper equipment care - East) could impact another (such as environmental protection - North). These interconnections led to rich discussions about our upcoming camp and our responsibility to minimize environmental impact. Students showed enthusiasm in considering how their actions at camp could contribute to sustainability.

Areas of Success:

- The structured progression from whole-class to group work helped build student confidence.
- Guiding questions effectively supported student thinking and discussion.
- Students demonstrated understanding by making cross-compass connections.
- The real-world application to their upcoming camp experience increased engagement.
- Prior vocabulary work helped students articulate their ideas more clearly.

Areas for Improvement

The most significant opportunity for enhancement would be diversifying the group work portion. Rather than having all groups examine 'tent living', I would assign different aspects of camp to different groups, such as:

- Tent living
- Tie-dye T-shirt making
- Meal preparation and cleanup
- Hiking activities
- Campfire management
- Water usage and conservation

EVIDENCE



