Life stages - plants, animals, humans

Year: R

Subjects and Issues

Age (protected characteristic)

About the Growing and Changing Unit

This unit provides the initial building blocks for learning about reproduction in plants and animals, including humans. Please review the material to decide whether it's appropriate for the needs of your children. If you don't have nursery age children in your school you can also draw on the SCARF nursery plans for Growing and Changing for extra/different foundational material.

Introduction - whole class

Talk to the class about cycles - how things go round and round. Can they think about things that go round and round? Take ideas from the children. Explain that things that live - like plants, animals and people - also have cycles; these are called life cycles.

Show them a film clip of a life cycle. Suggested examples include a frog, seed or butterfly.

Here are some links to YouTube videos and which show a variety of life cycles (please check in advance that these links are still active):

Frog **view film here**

Seed growing **view film here**

Butterfly **view film here**

Depending on the time of year you may have a hatchery with eggs, or for butterflies, or a tadpole pond in your

school to which you can also refer.

After watching the clips and ask the children:

- What happens at the beginning of the cycle? (egg/seed comes from a mother or adult plant)
- What happens next (it grows and changes)
- Does it keep on growing? (If using a frog or butterfly)
- Does it change its name? (Yes. Tadpole now a frog. Caterpillar now a butterfly)
- What does it do once it stops growing? (Flies away/jumps away/leaves its home)
- Why do you think that happens? (Hungry/needs food/to meet friends/meet another frog or butterfly to make more frogs or butterflies and then the cycle begins again.)

Ask the children if they can name any other animals that this might happen to. Can they name the baby? E.g. lamb to sheep, puppy to dog, calf to cow, piglet to pig.

Adult-guided activities (individual or small groups)

Life Cycles

Choose and draw a life cycle (either frog, butterfly or chicken). Name each picture/stage and label this, with help if needed.

Write a book about how to care for a tadpole/caterpillar/egg (or chick). The children can write about what they need to eat and drink, and what their home should look like.

Have a class diary for recording changes in the animal they are looking after.

Growing

If you choose to grow beans or sunflowers, the children could think about what the plant needs to grow. You could do an experiment by placing seeds in various environments to learn what plants need (water, sun, soil).

Outdoor life cycle hunt

This will depend on the time of year you do this activity.

Go on a nature walk in your outdoor area, school field or a local park/wooded area to find signs of growing and life.

You could provide notepads, clipboards, cameras or voice recorders for the children to document what they find.

Ask the children to think about these questions:

- How do the animals/insects protect themselves?
- How do they grow?
- What do they need to survive?
- How will they change?

Enhancements for continuous provision

Outdoor or indoor play to explore planting and growing seeds.

If you do decide to grow any flowers/plants or vegetables then you could assign responsibilities to the children, e.g. watering, weeding, picking (if applicable).

Have chicks in an incubator.

Have tadpoles in a tank.

Have butterflies in a hatchery.

Observing/drawing pictures/handling/caring.

Puzzles, games or activities that involve matching baby animals/insects to their mothers. If you don't have such a resource you could use images sourced online.

Library/book corner

Monkey Puzzle by Julia Donaldson.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle.

The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle

The Growing Story by Ruth Krauss

Talking points

If you choose to have an animal/insect to observe a life cycle this will provide a fantastic talking point.

Alternatively, you could use small world figures or pictures of the different stages of a butterfly.

SCARF Time

Use SCARF time to explore the SCARF values of Achievement and Resilience - animals often have to struggle as they grow from helpless babies into creatures that can look after themselves (e.g. the butterfly coming out of its chrysalis). This also happens with humans, but it takes quite a lot longer. Celebrate each person's resilience and achievement with a circle where they think about something that they used to need help with but that they can now do for themselves.

Share your ideas

We'd really like to hear - and with your permission, share - any other ideas for enhancements for continuous provision that have worked well for you.

Please email us at CLE@coram.org.uk with your ideas if something has worked well and you think other teachers would like to try them.

Learning Outcomes

Overarching learning intentions across this unit

Children will be able to:

- Understand that there are changes in nature and humans.
- Name the different stages in childhood and growing up.
- Understand that babies are made by a man and a woman.

- Use the correct vocabulary when naming the different parts of the body.
- Know how to keep themselves safe.

Learning outcomes specific to this plan

Children will be able to:

- To understand that animals and humans change in appearance over time.
- Use relevant vocabulary such as egg, seed, baby, grow, change, old, young (and the names for young animals).
- Make observations and ask questions about living things.

Key Vocabulary

growing
life cycles
seed
egg
baby
grow
change
old
young

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- Relationships Education Families and people who care for me 1. That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability.
- Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing (Health Education) Changing adolescent body 1. Key facts about puberty and the changing adolescent body, particularly from age 9 through to age 11, including physical and emotional changes.

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements (2025)

- Developing bodies 1. About growth and other ways the body can change and develop, particularly during adolescence. This topic should include the human lifecycle, and puberty should be discussed as a stage in this process.
- Developing bodies 2. The correct names of body parts, including the penis, vulva, vagina, testicles, scrotum, nipples. Pupils should understand that all of these parts of the body are private and have skills to understand and express their own boundaries around these body parts.