

What is a Scientist?: An Introductory Activity

For the past thirteen years, I have taught Kindergarten. This year, with just one class of Kindergarten at my school, I was also assigned to teach grade 2,3, 3/4, and 4 science. I was excited about this change, but also a little scared, since I hadn't taught it before. I began to ask around, looking for some good science ideas. My husband teaches high school science, and I remember that he would always start his year out by having students draw a picture of a scientist. He said that without fail, the students always drew men wearing lab coats. Women were never depicted in the drawings. I decided that for my introduction to science for each of my four classes, I would do this same activity. For each of my four classes, I began my first class of science by giving each child a piece of blank paper and asking them to draw a picture of a scientist. I told them that I wasn't going to answer any questions about the activity. This was a pre-assessment and I wanted to know what they thought a scientist was. Many students started to put up their hand, but I stopped them and said again that I wasn't answering questions. If the students didn't know what a scientist was, then they were to draw their best interpretation of what they thought it was. I gave the students about 10 minutes to draw their picture. When they finished, it was interesting to view the results. My students had no problems with female scientists. There was a mix of both males and females. But, what each of the drawings showed was wild eyed, crazy haired people. Many wore lab coats. Lots held potions in their hands. Some were exploding. Some had evil laughs.

I had the students work in groups of four and share their pictures with one another, describing what made the person in their picture a scientist. When they were done sharing, each group was given a small piece of paper. Groups were asked to choose a recorder, and then write down a list of



Artwork by Seamus, Grade 2

words that describe scientists. The group had to come to a consensus on the words. I gave them five minutes to work on this.

I brought the group back together and had a reporter from each group share the list. They came up with words like: evil, crazy, lab coats, smart, nerdy, potions, exploding things on themselves, inventions, etc. I googled images of scientists and showed them on the projection screen. I started by showing them pictures of the type of scientist that they described. We talked about what the scientist looked like and how it fit the image they told me. Then, I showed them a few pictures of real men and women, doing scientific activities. We talked about who they might be, what they might be doing and how they didn't fit the students' image.



Artwork by Arianna, Grade 2

The students were very excited to learn that we would be scientists this year during science class. I think it was an eye opening activity for them. They left the class enthusiastic, and eager to learn more about science.

Submitted by Karen Hadwen