



Beluga Balancing Act

DAYS 1-2: INTRODUCING BELUGA WHALES AND THE PSA PROJECT

Use a KWL chart to introduce the topic of beluga whales with students and prepare them for the project. Students also conduct research on a specific population of beluga whales.

KWL Chart

Use a KWL chart with your students to brainstorm what they know about beluga whales and the Arctic.

1. Hand out copies of the KWL chart to students.
2. Individually or in small groups, have the students list in the "K" column of the chart everything they know about belugas. What are they? What do they look like? Where do they live? What do they eat? Who are their predators?
3. Ask the students to share their lists with the class while you record their ideas on a poster or chalkboard.
4. Next, tell the students to write down questions they have about belugas in the "W" column of their charts. What do they want to know about beluga whales? Explain that through this lesson and by doing research, they will be able to answer their questions.

Explain PSA Project

1. Tell students, "Congratulations! You have been selected by the Beluga Whale Alliance to study the history and background of a population of beluga whales. You'll look at past and current issues that affect belugas and their ecosystem. Your assignment is to create a public service announcement, usually just called a PSA, that informs the public about your population of beluga whales, explains the issues and provides a recommendation to help your beluga population."
2. Explain to the students that they will be working in small groups to research and create a 30- to 60-second PSA.
3. Place students in groups of two to four. Assign or have each group choose a population of belugas to study from the following:
 - Cook Inlet, Alaska
 - St. Lawrence River Estuary, Canada
 - Somerset Island, Nunavut, Canada (Cumberland Sound)

Conduct Research and Answer Questions

1. Explain to the students that they are to conduct their research by using the handout provided. The handout includes Web sites for each population, general questions about belugas, and more in-depth questions about the threats to each population of belugas and their ecosystem. You may choose to have students conduct their research together, on their own, or by dividing questions among their group members. The *Sea Ghosts* glossary sheet may be helpful to students during their research.
2. Once their research is complete, students should meet with their group and share what they have learned.
3. (Optional) As a class, watch the Web video "Beluga Whales," (4:28) about the beluga whales in the St. Lawrence River estuary. You can view the video at <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/oceanadventures/video/belugas>. Discuss what is threatening the belugas living in this region and how humans are involved.

For the complete lesson of "Beluga Balancing Act," handouts and additional resources, visit <http://www.pbs.org/kqed/oceanadventures/educators/seaghosts/belugabalance.html>

CREDITS

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