

CONNECTION

Here's a fun game to play in the gym or on the playground to help your students see how each member of an ecosystem has an important role to play. These roles are interrelated and each part of an ecosystem is dependent upon the rest of the ecosystem.

Goal

To help students see the importance of the basic food chain and to imagine what would happen when this is disturbed.

Set up

Divide the students into three groups.

- Decomposers (Note - for the purposes of this game, there are fewer decomposers, when in reality there may be more decomposers relative to the others)
- Consumers (Double the number of decomposers)
- Producers (Double the number of consumers)

Ask students to generate a list of animals and plants that they have encountered in ***Maggie's Earth Adventures*** that fit into each of the categories. This will help the game have more meaning for them. Each group could then make signs that identify them. Use items such as beanbags or student constructed symbols to represent organic material, solar energy, and soil.

Put these abiotic (nonliving) representations in several piles in the playing area.

Rules and Procedures

1. Establish a playing area with an "out of bounds" territory.
2. Establish a free zone (or safety zone) around each pile of organic material.
3. When the whistle blows, producers race to collect organic material.
Seconds later, consumers rush to tag and collect material from producers.
Finally, decomposers try to tag and collect material from consumers.
4. Only producers may enter the free zone and get organic material. They may not be tagged when they are in the free zone.
5. Producers take the organic material from the pile in as great a quantity as possible.
6. Consumers tag the producers and take the organic material. A producer may throw his/her material to another producer if s/he is in danger of being tagged.
7. Decomposers tag consumers to get organic material. Consumers may also pass material to other consumers if necessary.
8. Students **MUST** give up their material if tagged. Note: getting tagged is like being eaten!

Follow up

Discuss with the students the principles displayed in the game. You may want to have each group write a paragraph about their importance to the game (food chain). Talk about what would happen if one group was disturbed.