There is No Such Thing as a Perfect Pumpkin

Overview:

Students hypothesize and determine what the optimal size would be for a jack-o-lantern and estimate its circumference. They discuss the importance of being fair in not judging others by their physical characteristics.

Objectives:

1. Explain qualities of an object using descriptive words.

2. Acquire data through measuring the circumference of an object.

3. Compare measurement values by creating a graph.

4. Support conclusions in a reflective paragraph integrating the ethical value of fairness.

Materials:

*   Examples of different-sized pumpkins

*   Ball of string

*   Scissors

*   Ruler

*   Writing paper

*   Pens

*   Orange construction paper

Procedure:

1. Show students images of pumpkins (or bring in real ones). Ask the class to describe their features (color, shape, texture, and size).

2. Ask students to define jack-o-lantern. Explain when and why these novelties appear.

3. Describe the following scenario to your students:

    We are going on an imaginary field trip to visit a pumpkin patch. Your task is to pick the perfect pumpkin to carve into a jack-o-lantern. Yours will be on display to celebrate Halloween.

4. Introduce the term "circumference." To introduce this concept to younger students, draw a diagram of a pumpkin pie to demonstrate the relationship between a circle and a round object.

5. Pass the ball of string to each student. Tell them to cut a length of string they feel is the perfect-sized pumpkin. Ask students to predict the length of their piece of string.

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6. Using rulers, have them measure their length of yarn and record this number in their writing journals. Introduce various units of measurement to older students.

7. Compare these measurements by asking students to lay their yarn pieces on the floor. You may wish to create a graph of these results with students' names on the x-axis and measurements on the y-axis. Younger students can create an ordered list of their names according to the size of their strings.

8. Ask students to vote for the length they feel best represents the perfect pumpkin. When students have voiced their opinions, discuss the impossibility of forming such conclusions. Say: There is no such thing as a perfect-sized pumpkin. All pumpkins, big or little, are ideal for celebrating Halloween. A pumpkin patch needs all sizes.

9. Explain that an important part of being fair means keeping an open mind and not judging people by their differences. To reinforce this concept, have students write a reflective paragraph on what they learned about fairness.

10. Encourage students to create a pumpkin of any size from construction paper. Have students cut out their pumpkins and paste their paragraphs inside.

11. Create a class pumpkin patch with these cutouts on the wall or bulletin board. This will stand as a fun fall reminder that fairness means appreciating everyone's unique qualities.

This lesson is from Josephson Institute's Foundations for Life essay-writing program. For more details on this maxim-based program, visit our website: http://www.ffl-essays.org/

McREL standards

Mathematics

Standard 5. Understands and applies basic and advanced properties of the concepts of geometry.

Level I Benchmark 3. Understands that geometric shapes are useful for representing and describing real-world situations

http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/