

Casting our Nets for a Clean Gulf Coast!

Lesson by Nancy Raia, Community Outreach Director, Eastern Shore Art Center (www.esartcenter.com)

1. Have students write the words, water, rivers ,ocean...and freely write whatever comes to mind for five minutes. Share some of these ideas as a group effort thinktank (draw an aquarium on the board to hold their water fed ideas!)



2. Discuss the importance of clean waters. Have the students visualize where rain/water goes (on the roof, down the gutters, in the drain, in the ditch, to a nearby creek, to a river, across the state, and eventually flows into Mobile Bay. Five Rivers from across the state lead into the body of water known as Mobile Bay. Estuaries are an important part of this place, where rivers meet the sea and the biologists actually call them nurseries for the sea life. In this fragile area we need to protect, we find “babies” of all kinds: shrimp, fish, crabs, plankton, jellyfish, among many other species that fill up the oceans. *Water going to the Gulf must be clean!
Water from the Gulf can hurt the ecosystem (think oil spill)*
3. Pass out some reference materials that show images of species that live along our Gulf Coast. References/images can be found online. (Weeks Bay Estuarine Reserve, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Alabama Marine Life, are prompts I begin with)
4. Pass out watercolor paper, and have them draw a few images of the marine life with ultrafine Sharpie, or crayon. Next, have them draw their feet at the bottom of the page (this helps them visualize being in the water with the creatures). Older students, have them draw two poles on each side of the page, and then fill in with netting going behind the fish and species drawn, connecting the nets to the poles and explaining how cast nets are used. Younger students can simply fill in colors within the fish, using different colors for the background. Older students have them lightly fill in the sea creatures caught in the net first with a gentle hand. They can later add lots of water to the background to “float” the color of the pigment chosen for the water, allowing it to glide across the paper in varying values of color, just like real water.

