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Joint press release with the German Federal Ministry for Environment

Experiencing environment and health with all the senses

New educational materials from the Federal Ministry for Environment

The Federal Ministry for Environment has expanded its free service for teachers: new educational materials on the environment and health are now available on the Internet. The materials, developed with the cooperation of the German Federal Ministry for Environment (BMU) and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), are intended for use at primary schools.

“It means a lot to me that children be taught early about the connections between health and the environment and what measures they themselves can take to avoid environment-related health risks. These educational materials will help to raise their awareness of the issues surrounding the environment and health, and we also hope to address pupils’ parents in this way”, said Federal Minister for Environment Sigmar Gabriel. “Is there anything more important to us than happy and healthy children living in an intact environment?”

UBA Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann adds, “We all need a clean environment that we can live in care-free. Clean air and intact nature are just as important as uncontaminated food and pure drinking water. The new primary school materials will teach children what they need to know in order to protect their health against environmentally influenced health risks. What we have here is hands-on environmental protection.”

The intricate interdependencies of environmental and health protection are illustrated age-appropriately in the materials package provided by BMU and UBA. Worksheets on subjects covering indoor air, noise, bathing waters, radiation, global warming, and chemicals teach the material realistically—through experiments, play, and observation. Pupils thus use all of their senses to experience the topic of environment and health.

Some of what the materials help the pupils learn is how the sense of smell works and what can be done to get good air in the classroom. They learn how noise can harm their hearing and how sound insulation works. They learn how to prepare for summer by protecting themselves from solar radiation, heat and ticks, and to swim in clean bathing waters. The pupils get advice on how to handle their mobile phones and on chemicals in the home. The worksheets emphasise what they can do personally for the environment and their health.

The educational materials are also available as classroom sets. Didactical advice and tips on methodology as well as background information are available to teachers. These tested materials for science and interdisciplinary instruction are available in both German and English.

The materials may be downloaded from the Internet free of charge at www.bmu.de/bildungsservice and www.umweltbundesamt.de/gesundheit/index.htm. The BMU Education Office offers more free educational materials for primary school in the subject area of water and biological diversity, and eight modules for classroom instruction at the secondary school level.

UNESCO has declared the BMU Education Office an official project in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

As part of World Environment Day, information on the educational materials is also available at the Federal Environment Agency Booth 23 of the environment festival sponsored by the GRÜNE LIGA in Berlin on Sunday, 7 June 2009. Address: Straße des 17. Juni (www.umweltfestival.de/).

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