

LESSON PLAN 32: LIFE EXPECTANCY

Objective: Identify and discuss factors that affect age, and calculate how long you will live

Age range: 10-18

How long will we live? How can we live longer? These are questions we all ask – and life expectancy is a topic that can come up for debate and discussion in the classroom, especially improving and lengthening life through healthier lifestyle choices. In fact, try finding a mainstream topic of higher interest for students than learning how long they're going to live!

YOU WILL NEED

Computer and Internet access.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Understanding health and nutrition, lifestyle choices, biology, statistics, problem solving, debate and discussion, reasoning, geography, social awareness, self awareness.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

How different lifestyle factors impact on life expectancy, and how to make healthier lifestyle choices.

METHOD

1. Talk to your class about life expectancy. Discuss the factors that impact on a person's lifespan. How and why has it changed through history? Why does it vary from person to person, or between different groups (ethnic, socio-economic, gender and age) and geographic regions?
2. Visit the Life Expectancy Calculator (<http://tinyurl.com/lifeexpectancycalculator>) and complete the quick test to determine your virtual age, which the site describes as "a reflection of your health and vitality". The lower your virtual age the better shape you're in. Watch the ages change with every answer. Nearly all answers should be known by students.

The site (which is one of many such sites – others you could try are listed opposite) is mainly for fun. However, you could use the results as part of research into life expectancy or simply to spark further discussion on the subject.

Please note: Obviously, these calculators are far from precise. Check out this *Wall Street Journal* article on the subject <http://tinyurl.com/calculatorarticle>

3. Challenge your students to reflect on some of their lifestyle choices. Discuss how someone can change their life expectancy and add more years to their life.

INTRODUCING POODWADDLE

While we were exploring the Life Expectancy Calculator we noticed that the site itself was made using Poodwaddle.com. This is a free tool for creating a home page with a search engine, dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopaedia, maps, calculator, games, and more. Not only is it a great name it certainly looks the part – if you feel like checking it out, let us know how you go. www.poodwaddle.com

OTHER LIFE EXPECTANCY CALCULATORS YOU COULD TRY

Living to 100

<http://calculator.livingto100.com/calculator>

The Longevity Game

www.nmfn.com/tn/learnctr--lifeevents--longevity

MSN Money

http://moneycentral.msn.com/investor/calcs/n_expect/main.asp

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Compare how and why life expectancy was different for students' grandparents or other relatives;
2. Compare life expectancy between New Zealand and other countries;
3. What are the social and economic implications of ageing populations?
4. Analyse how these life expectancy calculators work and how accurate they are;
5. The Government's recently raised the issue of what kids eat at school and the impact it has on their health. Look at the proposals and discuss the issues involved;
6. You could even use this project as the starting point for starting a campaign to increase the health of those in your family, school, or community.

