

My Weather Journal

Climate Literacy in Dual Language Elementary Classrooms

Gisela Santiago, Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion, Eden Prairie, MN, USA

Abstract

This 1st grade climate literacy lesson, designed for bilingual or dual-language classrooms, introduces young learners to foundational weather concepts through literature, observation, and personal reflection. Centered around the Spanish-language picture book *¿De qué color es el cielo?* by Mandie Davis, the lesson invites students to explore how the sky and weather change, and how these changes affect people's daily lives. Aligned with Minnesota academic standards in science and language arts, the lesson engages students in describing current weather conditions, collecting simple observational data in a personal weather journal, and discussing emotional and sensory responses to weather patterns.

Keywords

Weather, nature, observation, seasons, environmental awareness, climate change

Overview

This 1st grade lesson introduces students to basic weather observation and environmental awareness through the Spanish-language picture book *¿De qué color es el cielo?* by Mandie Davis. Designed for bilingual, dual-language or immersion classrooms, the lesson blends science and literacy by encouraging students to observe the sky, identify weather patterns, and reflect on how weather affects their daily lives.

The lesson begins with a whole-class weather discussion and charting activity, followed by a read-aloud of the book. Through guided questions, students connect the imagery and feelings in the story to their own experiences with weather. Students then collect simple weather data using a “My Weather Journal” worksheet, drawing and labeling current sky conditions, temperature, clothing, and emotions. To close the lesson, students express their understanding through drawing, writing, or sharing with a partner.

Aligned with Minnesota academic standards in both science and language arts, this lesson fosters curiosity about the natural world, builds vocabulary, and lays the foundation for future climate literacy. It encourages students to notice, describe, and care about the environment in meaningful, age-appropriate ways.

Dual Language Instructional Context

I teach first grade at a suburban Spanish Immersion school in Minnesota, where students develop both their academic knowledge and their Spanish language skills. Teaching in an immersion setting requires me to provide students with repeated opportunities to hear, practice, and apply new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Young language learners are more confident and successful when new concepts are introduced gradually and reinforced through consistent daily routines.

One of our daily morning meeting activities is discussing the weather. We use a daily weather chart with colorful illustrations representing different weather conditions in Spanish, such as ‘sunny’, ‘cloudy’, ‘rainy’, ‘snowy’, ‘hot’, ‘cold’, and ‘humid’. Every morning, students observe the weather outside and describe what they noticed using the target vocabulary. We also talk about how the weather affects our daily lives by discussing appropriate clothing choices and the types of activities we could do in different weather conditions. These conversations encourage students to make connections between classroom learning and their own experiences while naturally developing their oral language skills.

Lesson Framing

In early spring, first grader students come to school with lots of curiosity. They notice everything: the way the wind blows harder than yesterday, the clouds that cover the sun, the puddles that weren't there last week. They look up at the sky not just to see it, but to wonder about it. This lesson begins with that wonder.

Using the poetic Spanish-language book *¿De qué color es el cielo?* As our guide, we invite students to slow down and truly look at the sky. Through colors, feelings, and observations of the sky students begin to connect what they see outside with what they feel inside. The story opens a space for curiosity and conversation: Why is the sky different today? What does it tell us about our world? About ourselves?

As we move through the lesson, students collect simple weather data—drawing, coloring, and talking about what they notice. These early acts of observation are more than academic skills—they are acts of care. Students begin to understand that weather affects the way we live, how we dress, what we do, and how we feel. These conversations plant the seeds of climate literacy not with fear, but with connection. By observing shifts in temperature, cloud coverage, breezes, and moisture, students develop second-language vocabulary that helps describe their surroundings.

A fundamental aspect of this instruction is for students to tell the difference between weather and climate. While weather pertains to our immediate, daily experiences, climate reflects the enduring patterns of our environment, such as the characteristic seasonal cycles and temperatures documented in Minnesota over decades. Helping students learn this distinction (that sometimes even adults can struggle to do successfully) helps young learners to recognize that a single day's event is merely weather, whereas long-term observations tell the story of our climate.

These dialogues help students learn climate literacy. Initially, students engage by documenting the current season through sketches, symbols, or reflective journals. As the academic year progresses, they can revisit these records to contrast their observations and experiences with what would be expected for that region and time of year. This comparative process invites them to ponder: What trends emerged in our data? How did reality align with our expectations? In what ways does our daily weather similar to or different from the overarching climate patterns?

In a world where our climate is changing, and children will inherit both those challenges and that beauty, this lesson helps students develop their environmental awareness with

both joy and with scaffolded language they understand: stories, drawings, feelings, and the shared experience of looking up at the same sky.

The sky belongs to everyone—and noticing it is where learning begins.

At a Glance

Title	The Sky and Me: Observing Weather Through Story
Unit Time	1 lesson, approximately 60 minutes (can be split into two 30-minute sessions)
Grade Level(s)	1st Grade (bilingual, dual-language, or immersion classrooms)
Core Text	<i>¿De qué color es el cielo?</i> by Mandie Davis
Supporting Texts	• <i>Come On, Rain!</i> by Karen Hesse (English) • Weather poems or simple picture books on seasons and sky
Objectives	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: • Observe and describe daily weather conditions using age-appropriate vocabulary. • Identify how weather affects people’s feelings and activities. • Collect simple weather data in a Weather Journal. • Retell key details and express understanding from a literary text related to the environment.
Materials and Resources	• Copy of <i>¿De qué color es el cielo?</i> • Weather chart or large anchor chart for whole class • “My Weather Journal” worksheet with icons and drawing space • Crayons, markers, or colored pencils • Thermometer or weather app (optional) • Standards alignment document (Minnesota Science and ELA standards) • Optional: Slide deck with visuals and vocabulary

Going Forward

When I implemented this lesson, I realized that students' previous exposure to weather vocabulary through our daily routine made a significant difference in their confidence and independence. Because the concepts were already familiar, students were able to focus on applying their knowledge rather than trying to learn entirely new vocabulary. They independently completed weather journals by recording observations, writing simple sentences, drawing pictures, and coloring illustrations that represented the day's weather. Watching students confidently use the language they had practiced over time reinforced for me the importance of building background knowledge before introducing more structured learning activities.

One of the most valuable lessons I learned from teaching this unit is that vocabulary instruction should be introduced before students are expected to use new concepts independently. Using visuals, drawings, gestures, and repeated discussions provided students with the support they needed to understand and retain new words. I also found that connecting weather concepts to students' everyday experiences made the learning more meaningful. Discussing the clothes they wore, the activities they enjoyed, and how weather influenced their daily decisions helped students see the relevance of what they were learning and increased their participation during lessons.

If I were implementing this unit again or recommending it to another teacher, I would emphasize the importance of intentionally building vocabulary over time instead of introducing all of the concepts at once. Daily routines, visual supports, and opportunities for discussion allow students to develop confidence before being asked to complete independent tasks. I would also encourage teachers to differentiate support based on students' language proficiency by providing sentence frames, picture supports, or opportunities to work with partners when needed.

Reflecting on this experience has strengthened my belief that meaningful learning occurs when instruction is connected to students' lived experiences and when teachers intentionally scaffold learning over time. Rather than viewing the weather lesson as a single activity, I came to see it as the result of many small, consistent learning opportunities that helped students build language, confidence, and independence. This experience reinforced the value of thoughtful planning, routine, and meaningful connections in supporting both content learning and language development in the elementary classroom.

References

Davis, M. (2020). *¿De qué color es el cielo? [What Color is the Sky?]*. Ediciones.

Minnesota Department of Education. (2020). Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Science and English Language Arts. Retrieved from <https://education.mn.gov>.

Appendix I: My Weather Journal / (Mi Diario del Clima)

Date / Fecha: _____

1. How is the sky today? (¿Cómo está el cielo hoy?)

(Students circle or color one or more)

☀ Sunny / Soleado

☁ Cloudy / Nublado

☔ Rainy / Lluvioso

❄ Snowy / Nevado

🌫 Foggy / Brumoso

2. How is the temperature? (¿Cómo está la temperatura?)

(Students circle one)

🔥 Hot / Caliente

☀ Warm / Tibio

🧊 Cool / Fresco

❄ Cold / Frío

3. What clothes are you wearing today? (¿Qué ropa usas hoy?)

(Draw or color your clothes)

[Space for drawing]

4. What do you like to do when the weather is like today? (¿Qué te gusta hacer cuando hace este clima?)

[Space to draw or write a sentence]

5. How does this weather make you feel? (¿Cómo te hace sentir este clima?)

😊 Happy / Feliz

😐 Okay / Bien

😞 Sad / Triste

(Circle one or draw a face)