



PopEd Goes to Preschool

by Amber Johnson, Population Education Fellow

Resource scarcity, consumption patterns and preservation may seem like weighty issues for a group of five-year-olds. Just ask those five-year-olds to divide and share a bowl of Goldfish™ crackers, however, and these issues suddenly make perfect sense. The tasty cheddar “fish” (and other natural resources) are in short supply, and ensuring a community full of happy students means learning to conserve and cooperate.

This hands-on exercise, one of nine in Population Education’s new curriculum kit *Sharing a Small World*, allows young learners to explore their connections with other people, the wider community and the environment. Designed for pre-Kindergarten through second grade, the kit is Population Connection’s first official venture into early childhood education and meets national teaching standards for social studies, science, geography, and mathematics. With lessons on resource use, population dynamics, and the human impact on the natural world, *Sharing a Small World* gives teachers new tools for presenting environmental concepts in an innovative and informative way.

While Population Connection has been developing hands-on educational material since the mid-1970’s, the *Sharing a Small World* project presented a particular challenge for the Population Education team. After all, holding the attention of a room full of

four-year-olds is no easy task! As reported by Pamela Wasserman, director of Population Connection’s Population Education department, “We found the input from our early childhood reviewers to be invaluable. They’re immersed in fingerpaint and dried macaroni every day and know first-hand what engages young minds.”

Encouraging young students to draw on personal experiences is one of the best ways to help children learn about responsible citizenship. Early childhood educator Judith Dighe argues that “environmental education for

young children is about wonder, and it’s about teaching responsibility and caring for a child’s immediate environment and gradually widening circles of the Earth.” The activities in *Sharing a Small World* do just that. Whether through a *Jungle Book*-inspired discussion of the “bare necessities of life”, a hands-on demonstration about river pollution, or the creation of an individual action pledge,

students learn to become global citizens in the 21st century.

We hope your children, grandchildren, and students will enjoy these activities as much as we enjoyed creating them.

To order *Sharing a Small World* for just \$5.00 or for a free download, please visit our website at www.populationconnection.org. Or, call the PopEd Department at 1-800-767-1956.

