

All hail the great & mighty phytoplankton! Base of the food chain, provider of oxygen!

Here are some fun ways to introduce younger kids to the importance of phytoplankton.

Read “[This is the sea that feeds us](#)”, by Robert Baldwin. Delightful writing, beautiful illustrations, solid science, good conservation message. My all–time favorite book about the ocean.

Collect some nice images of plankton, & try this Hug a Plankton script: “Everybody take a deep breath ... ahhh. Where does the oxygen in that breath come from?” Students will mention various plants, but especially trees. “Trees are great; everybody be a tree (arms up). It’s easy to be grateful to a tree – it’s big and provides shade as well as oxygen. Hug your tree (hug yourself). But only half our oxygen comes from plants on land – everybody take half a deep breath. (everyone’s eyes bug out) At least half the oxygen we breathe came from the ocean. So let’s go down to the ocean with an eyedropper. We’ll take a tiny drop of water, and place it on a microscope slide (act out the motions). Now focus ... mm hmm ... do you see the little green specks in all the weird shapes?” Now hold up or pass out your photos, explain that phytoplankton are tiny floating plants, and that we could not be here without phytoplankton making oxygen.

C. Cudaback, OceanAndYou.com, August, 2012