



TEACHER CAROLYN YARBROUGH pauses to give instructions as students (from left) Santana Evans, Danielle Harris, Erin Garner and David Scott sort their coins or listen.

**EARTH DAY**

# Youngsters Collect Pennies To Help Rescue A Rainforest

BY SUSAN USHER

Second graders at Supply Elementary School are counting their pennies these days for a worthwhile cause: They want to help save the Earth's rainforests.

On Earth Day last Thursday, the air inside Carolyn Yarbrough's classroom tingled with electricity as 19 boys and seven girls bent intently to their task against a backdrop of posters that encourage rescuing rainforests and recycling. After scooping up cups of coins and sorting out the "silver," foreign coins and currency, they began counting out the pennies that remained into groups of 10.

"We were shooting for 3,500 pennies (\$35) and I think we got it," said Yarbrough as she eyed the stacks of pennies mounting on tables and desks.

For every group of 50 coins dumped into a bucket, a mark went on the board; 126 marks in all as the hour progressed. Multiply that times 50 and the students learned they had collected 6,300 pennies—more than enough to adopt an acre of the Atlantic Rainforest in the Lagmar Region of Brazil and just 200 pennies short of the adoption fee for two acres. Yarbrough reminds the students of currency and larger denomination coins still to be counted.

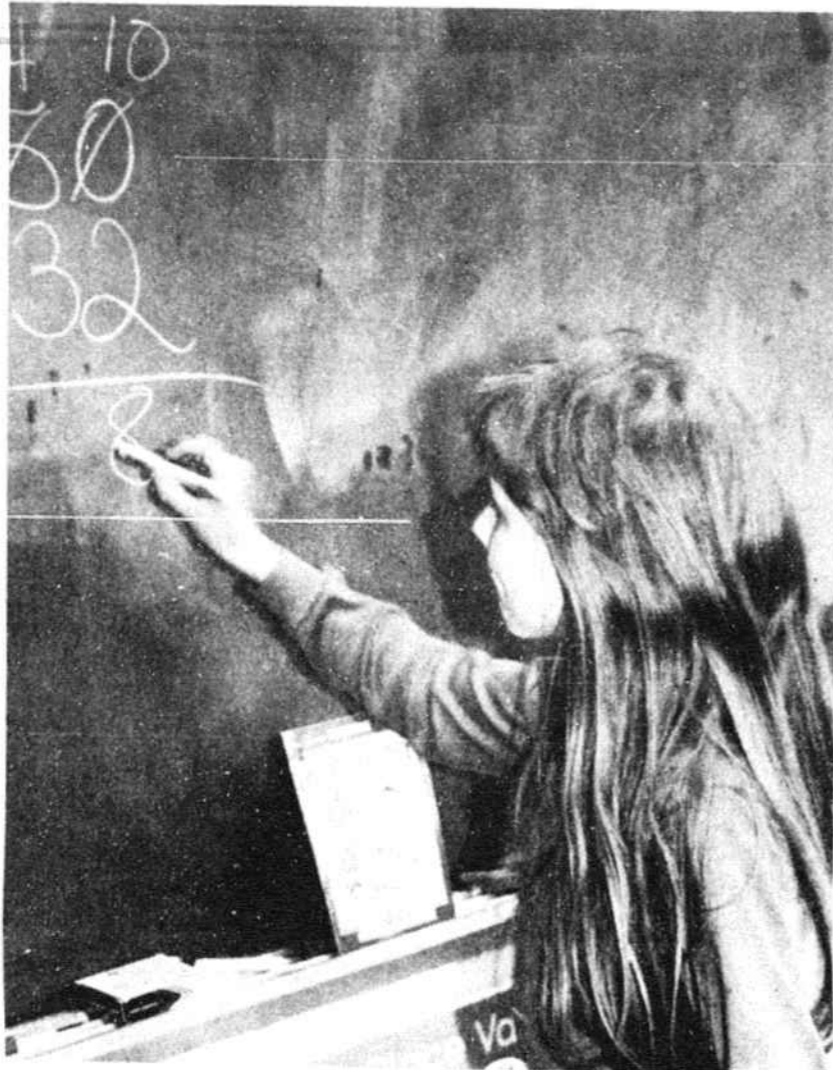
"You've done it!" she announced. B.A. Price did a little dance in celebration, while other students cheered and applauded. At their teacher's suggestion, the students gave themselves a pat on the back for a job well done.

As a result of their efforts, more acreage in the rainforest will be conserved and protected by The Nature Conservancy, which sponsors Adopt-An-Acre jointly with the Earth's Birthday Project.

"Danny and I have been members of The Nature Conservancy for years, and I had accumulated quite a bit of information," said Mrs. Yarbrough as she explained how she came to use the Adopt-An-Acre project in her classroom for the first time three years ago.

"This, the entire second grade is doing," she said. "Next year we would like to do it with the entire school."

Second grade teachers at Supply Elementary are using rainforests as thematic units of study that stretch across the curriculum to include science, the arts, communications, citizenship and math. They've studied plants and animals found in the rainforest, how rainforest conservation fits in with other efforts at conservation and waste reduction, and applied basic skills. Ann Thomas Heath, the school's teacher for the academically gifted, provided enrichment activities for each class. In



SECOND-GRADER Jennifer Kirby uses subtraction to find out how many pennies a classmate needs to have 50.

addition to Yarbrough, other participating classroom teachers include Annette Keese, Ann Barton, Julianne Moon, Lynn Burroughs and Lisa Tate.

Thursday afternoon, Yarbrough's class began winding up its study of the rainforest with a math class the youngsters hardly realized was occurring. They were too busy looking for answers as they counted in groups of 10 to 50, counted by 5's to 125, added, subtracted, multiplied, estimated and tallied.

Down to odd numbers of pennies, students figured out how to share their coins to make up groups of 50, checking their addition and subtraction on the board.

Ask any student in Yarbrough's class, "So what's important about a rainforest?" and the answers come quickly and thickly. Rainforests, they're quick to explain, are dense tropical forests "found near the equator." They're called rainforests because it rains almost every day of the year, which makes the forests very humid. Temperatures remain in the 80s year round and the sun shines 12 hours a day. While they cover only 7 percent of the Earth, rainforests are home to half of all

the plants and animals in the world. Also more than 140 million people live in the world's rainforests.

That diversity is important, says Mario Green, who's been studying about trees being cut in the rainforest. When the tall trees that form the rainforest canopy are felled, it destroys the homes and foods of many plants and animals.

Also, he said, "there are plants in the rainforest scientists don't know about yet. Some of them could provide new cures."

Erin Garner was impressed with the array of insects in the rainforest, especially ants. "We learned that 40 different kinds of ants can live in a single tree in the rainforest," she said. "And there are even more kinds that live in the rainforest."

Students also had the option of taking home and signing individual copies of the Earth's Birthday Pledge: "Because the Earth is my home and needs my help to survive, I will try my best to respect it at all times by recycling, conserving energy, saving water, and buying and using products that are least harmful to the environment. I also promise to remind my friends and family to care for Earth in the same way."



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