

Progress Monitoring Probe 7

These Students Made a Difference

The teacher watched his fourth-grade students struggle with the dried, cast-off Christmas trees. They were placing the trees, one by one, in a long row. Passers-by must have wondered why the students were “planting” dead trees on their town’s beach. If anyone asked, the students would explain that they wanted to protect and rebuild the sand dunes.	9
Dunes are hills of sand that help to hold the beach in place and protect coastal areas from rising ocean water. They also provide a home for plants and animals. Over the years, storms had destroyed many of the dunes along the beach at Margate, New Jersey. Some people had the idea that placing used Christmas trees sideways on the sand would help rebuild the dunes. Volunteers put this plan into action, but it did not work. During storms and at high tide, the trees were loosened from the sand and washed out to sea.	20
A group of fourth-grade students at Union Avenue School thought they had a better idea. They would place the trees upright on the beach. They reasoned that the tree limbs would catch blowing sand, causing new dunes to form around the trees.	33
To put their plan into action, students dug a three-foot deep trench in the sand. Then they stood the trees in the trench and filled sand in around the trunks. This held the trees firmly in place. To test their plan and make sure it was working, students tied red ribbons to the treetops. Each week they measured the distance between the ribbons and the sand. In a short while, they saw that the level of the sand was rising. The dunes were being rebuilt!	44
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These Students Made a Difference (Continued)

When the trees are completely covered with sand, the students plan to scatter grass seed. Dune grasses will send down roots that will help hold the new dunes in place.	293
Students in nearby communities learned about the new dunes. They asked for help in planning their own dune-building projects. Now dunes all along the coast are being protected, thanks to the work of one fourth-grade class.	304
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Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

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