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Maya loved puddles. After rain, she pulled on her yellow rain boots and splashed down the path. Her green backpack bounced as she ran. Today her class was visiting a wetland. Maya carried a pocket notebook to write down every question. She had so many questions! Why was the ground so squishy? Who lived in all that water? She couldn't wait to find out.

At the wetland, the teacher pointed to a pond. "Look closely," she said. Maya saw sticks and mud packed across the stream. Water trickled over the top. "What's that?" Maya asked. "A beaver dam," said the teacher. Maya wrote 'beaver dam' in her notebook. Then she heard a splash. Something small and brown was swimming toward her. It had glossy fur and a flat black tail.

The little beaver climbed onto the bank. It held a twig in its mouth. "Hello," Maya whispered. The beaver dropped the twig and looked at her with bright dark eyes. "Are you building something?" Maya asked. The beaver seemed to nod. It picked up the twig and waddled toward the dam. Maya followed. She wanted to see what the beaver was doing.

The beaver placed the twig on the dam and patted it with tiny clawed paws. Maya watched. "You're fixing it!" she said. The beaver chattered softly. It showed her how the dam slowed the water. On one side, the stream rushed. On the other, the water spread out calm and wide. "The water stays here," Maya said. She wrote 'water slows down' in her notebook.

The beaver led Maya along the wetland. "Look," Maya said. "The ground is wet and green here." She saw tall reeds, mossy logs, and bright flowers. Frogs splashed. Dragonflies zoomed. "It's like a sponge," Maya said. "The wetland holds water." The beaver nibbled a twig. Maya wrote 'wetland = sponge' in her notebook. She had never seen so many plants and animals in one place.

Maya crouched down. "Does your dam help all these plants and animals?" she asked. The beaver looked at her with its bright dark eyes. It seemed to say yes. Maya watched a duck paddle in the calm water. "Your dam makes a home for everyone," she said. The beaver chattered and patted the dam with its flat black tail. Maya smiled. She wanted to learn more.

Back at school, Maya couldn't stop thinking about the wetland. "Can we build a model?" she asked the teacher. The teacher smiled. "What a great idea!" she said. The class gathered around. "We'll show how a beaver dam holds water," Maya said. Her classmate in the red cap said, "I'll help!" Everyone was excited to work together.

The next day, the class brought supplies. They used a big tray, rocks, clay, moss, and sticks. Maya's classmate poured water at one end. "Now we need a dam," Maya said. She packed clay and moss across the stream. The water slowed and spread out. "It works!" her classmate cheered. The teacher watched and nodded. "Great teamwork," she said.

Maya placed small plants around the model wetland. Her classmate added tiny animal figures. "The water stays here," Maya said. "Like a sponge." The teacher asked, "Why is that important?" Maya thought. "It helps plants grow and animals have homes," she said. Her classmate added, "And it keeps the land green!" The teacher smiled. "Exactly," she said.

The class tested their model. They poured water and watched it slow behind the dam. It spread out and stayed. "Look how the moss soaks it up," Maya said. Her classmate nodded. "It's just like the real wetland!" Maya wrote in her notebook: 'Beaver dams help wetlands store water.' She felt proud. Everyone had worked together to make the model.

On the day of the science fair, Maya stood by the model. She told visitors how beavers build dams. "The dam slows the water," she said. "Then the wetland stores it like a sponge. Many plants and animals live there because of the beaver." Her classmate poured water to show. People smiled and clapped. Maya felt happy. She had learned so much from a little beaver.

The teacher gave Maya a certificate. "You showed us how wildlife can make ecosystems healthier," she said. Maya grinned her gap-toothed smile. She looked at the model and thought of the little beaver. "Beavers are nature's helpers," she said. Her classmate nodded. "And we're a good team!" Everyone cheered. Maya felt warm inside.

That spring, Maya visited the wetland again. She sat quietly and watched. The little beaver swam by and patted its dam. The water was calm and clear. Frogs sang. Flowers bloomed. Maya wrote in her notebook: 'Beavers help everyone.' She knew that nature was full of clever helpers. She wanted to protect them.

Maya shared her notebook with her class. She showed pictures of the beaver and the wetland. "Beavers are ecosystem engineers," she said. "They build dams that help plants and animals." Her classmate asked, "Can we visit the wetland too?" The teacher smiled. "Yes, we can," she said. Maya beamed. She loved teaching others about nature.

The class planned another field trip. Maya led the way with her yellow rain boots. Her classmate wore the red cap. They carried notebooks and cameras. "We'll observe the beaver's dam," Maya said. "And see how it helps the wetland." Everyone was excited. They knew that teamwork made learning fun. Maya felt proud to share her discovery.

At the wetland, the class watched the little beaver work. Maya's classmate whispered, "It's amazing!" The teacher said, "Wildlife like beavers can improve ecosystems." Maya nodded. She looked at the beaver and smiled. "Thank you, little beaver," she said softly. The beaver chattered and patted its dam. Maya knew she would always remember this adventure. Nature is full of clever helpers, and we can help them too.