

Something to Think About...

Title: Something to Think About...

Subject: Science (Environmental Appreciation, Ecological Literacy)

Grade Level: Grades 4-6

Overview:

The purpose of the following activity is to:

1. Allow students the opportunity to sharpen their observation skills and to develop a sense of wonder about the world around them.
2. Allow students the opportunity to reflect on what they appreciate about their environment.
3. Prompt curiosity about the natural world, enhancing observational and analytical skills. It corresponds with the "Curriculum Focus" as outlined in the Atlantic Canada Science Curriculum Foundation:

"encourage students at all grade levels to develop a critical sense of wonder and curiosity about scientific and technological endeavours"(p.1)

Outcome:

Through exploring the site, students will:

1. Learn to examine objects purposefully, recognizing the details that are commonly overlooked.
2. Realize some of the ways they are connected with their environment
3. Recognize that everyone relates to their environment differently.

Description: (Teacher to student)

Today we will explore the Outdoor Learning Centre. We'll walk through the site together and talk about what we know about Washbrook and its surrounding ecosystem. We will then split up and work alone, thinking about what is important in this ecosystem, and then about what you think is special in this environment around Washbrook. You will each explore the site on your own,

looking for things you would not normally notice. Look under rocks (put them back once you've peeked), behind shrubs, up high into the trees, in the brook, and anywhere else you're interested in. Look for signs of life, or for interesting shapes, colours, or patterns. Along with looking, you'll be listening and smelling very carefully too. You'll have a chart to fill in of all of the things you see, hear and smell. Then everyone will sit on their own in a spot they like (look for a place away from your friends please!). You'll sit very quietly, listening to the environment. You will draw a "sound map" describing what you hear and where on the site the sounds came from. When you're finished, you can look around and think about what it is that you like about the site. You will then draw a picture of something that will help remind you of the site.

Back in the classroom, you will be writing a short story about how 2 sounds, 2 smells and 2 things you saw are connected. For example, you could write about a bird that you **hear** will probably eat the fly that you **saw** on the flower that you **smelled**. Keep relationships in mind (how one thing relates to another) when you're filling in your chart.

Materials:

Pencil

Hard surface to write or draw on

Sound map handout

Procedure:

Inside:

1. While in the classroom explain the objective of the activity to the students. Explain that while outside, the students will have to listen carefully to know what to do. Also explain that when it is time for students to work on their own, that they wander off a little and sit by themselves, not next to a friend.
2. Distribute drawing paper and sound-map handouts
3. Go out to the Outdoor Learning Centre together. Walk around and briefly explain the site. Content will depend on grade level. For example, point out the bank, the field, the shaded area under the tree, digger logs, flowers, bushes, grass (name any plants you know), the air, trash, and anything else that is obvious. If these topics have already been introduced, explain in more detail, noting the different parts of the brook (pool, riffle, run), the different soils, the different types of plants, etc. Also, mention the relationships that they have with one

another - remind them that the plants' roots are drinking water from the brook and groundwater, and that plants use carbon dioxide that we breathe out and give us oxygen to breathe. This should give them an idea of interconnectedness and systems.

4. After a brief explanation of the site, students are allowed to wander around the site **on their own**. There is to be no talking. They should look for things that they have not noticed before (might include looking very closely at things on the ground or taking a step back and looking at the entire landscape). Students should be looking, smelling and listening very carefully. In the chart provided, they should list the things they see, smell and hear.
5. After about 5 minutes of exploration, students are instructed to find a spot that they enjoy and to sit quietly for a minute there, looking all around them. They are to draw 3 or 4 major landmarks around their site (the brook, Southend Community Centre, a big rock, a tree, Brookland school) and then draw themselves in their spot. Then, listening very carefully, they have to write what they heard in the spot where it sounded like it was coming from
6. Once they finish their sound map, they can think about what they like about the spot. Is it nice and shady? Is it beautiful? Does it make you feel like you're in a hiding place? Does it make you feel peaceful? Does it remind you of another favorite place? Do you like the plants you're sitting next to? Do you like the sound of the brook? What is it you like? They are to draw a picture of something that will remind them of the spot.
7. After about 10 minutes (or until they start to get restless!), come back to the amphitheatre. Each student will explain what they liked about their spot and show their drawing.
8. In the classroom, students should pick two things they saw, two things they smelled, and two things they heard and write a paragraph about how those things are all connected. (For example, you could write about a bird that you **hear** will probably eat the fly that you **saw** on the flower that you **smelled**.)

Using Your Senses

What did I see?	What did I smell?	What did I hear?