

Favourite Outdoor Activities

Many of the activities below can be adapted for any topic you desire. Use your imagination and have fun!!! Use journals to document experiences when possible.

Math

Grade: K-6

Topic: Measurement Hunt

Description: Discuss different ways to measure (length, height, weight, etc.). Brainstorm possible measurement “tools”: hand, foot, thumb, arm, classroom items, etc. Give students a “tool” (e.g., thumb). Students use their tool to measure various objects (e.g., width of a rock; height of a bush, etc.). Show a classmate. Repeat with other tools.

*For older students, use measuring tapes.

*You can also do a comparison: find something bigger/smaller/same size as your hand. Or find something bigger than 1m, smaller than 1m and exactly 1m.

*You can also make it an estimation activity. Students make a chart: estimate-measure-compare.

Grade: K-2

Topic: Scavenger Hunts: Colours, Textures, 2D or 3D shapes, Patterns

Materials: colour swatches, texture swatches, 2D or 3D shapes

Description: Give students an item (colour or texture swatch, shape, etc.) Students find three examples of their item in nature (e.g. sphere - berry). Swap items. Share findings.

Grade: 2-6

Topic: Tally and Graph

Materials: Pencils, journals, graph paper, pencil crayons

Description: Discuss your theme. Predict the most common item. Discuss counting, tallying and graphing. Students draw, find and tally your chosen object/living thing: invertebrates, colours, plant species, flowers, sounds, shapes, etc. Graph the results.

* You can also use this for ratios – e.g. comparing tally/total plants

Art

Grade: K-6
Topic: Nature Art Supplies
Materials: journals

Description: Discuss ancient art, natural colours and nature as inspiration. Brainstorm natural art tools in the natural area. Students take out only their journals and create a piece of art using natural art supplies (mud painting, leaf/needle rubbing, etc.). Wrap-up: sharing circle to present finished art pieces and discuss challenges and creative solutions.

Grade: 1-6
Topic: Blind Art
Materials: journals, pencils, blindfolds

Description: Discuss our senses and how we perceive the world. Compare human senses to animals that rely on smell, touch or sound more than sight. Students find a partner. One partner gets blindfolded. The other partner brings a natural object (rock, leaf, cone, etc.) to blindfolded partner to touch. After getting to know the object, draw it in a journal without looking at the object. Switch roles and repeat. Wrap-up: share objects and drawings and discuss challenges and creative solutions.

*Variations: draw an object without looking at the page; draw in contours (single lines)

Grade: 1-6
Topic: Small Picture, Big Picture
Materials: journals, pencils, pencil crayons

Description: Discuss natural objects (flowers, leaves, rocks, etc.) in context of their environment (the bigger picture). Explain positive and negative space. Divide page in half. In the top half sketch the object (positive space). Leave the surrounding space white (negative space). In the bottom half draw an outline of the object (negative space inside). Draw the environment around the object (positive space). Wrap-up: share drawings and discuss small elements of nature in context of the environment.

*Variation: use different perspectives such as close up/far away, magnified/naked eye

Grade: 1-6
Topic: Framing nature
Materials: frames (can be made from cardboard), art materials

Description: Discuss how art is personal and connects differently to different people. Give each student a frame/have them make a frame. Have them hold their frame up to different elements in nature and then pick their favourite. Do a gallery show by walking around to the different frames and have the artists describe why they chose what they did. Wrap up: Have students draw 1-3 different 'pictures'.

Grade: 1-6
Topic: My tree
Materials: journal, art supplies

Description: Introduce desired art technique and details that might be included in a picture. Let the students explore and find a plant they like. Have them draw, paint or photograph their tree. Repeat in different seasons. Wrap-up: Challenges and benefits of using the medium, details they observed. *Can use as inspiration for science/socials lessons

Science

Grade: 1-6

Topic: Nature Observations

Materials: Pencils, journals

Description: Discuss your topic: life cycles, invertebrates, plants, etc. Students find something from your topic in the natural area to observe. Draw it, label it, describe it, write three things about it and write three questions you have about it.

Grade: K-6

Topic: I see... I Wonder

Description: Discuss senses and observations. Make a circle around a natural object (boulder, tree) or pass a smaller object around (leaf, berry, etc.). Each student says one observation (I see that it's green; It feels rough, etc.). Go around the circle one or more times (for the older grades, make sure nobody repeats the same observation. Go around the circle until nobody can think of a new observation). Each student asks one question about the object ("I wonder what kind of tree it is", "I wonder if it's alive", etc.)

Grade: K-3

Topic: Animal Senses

Description: Discuss animals that have a particularly strong sense – e.g. deer and hearing, owls and sight, raccoons and touch. Focus on one sense at a time and have them imitate the animal: deer – cup hand behind ear, close eyes and try to hear farthest and nearest sounds, quietest, count individual cars/birds etc; owl – fix gaze at one spot and try to take in the whole scene without moving eyeballs; raccoon – feel things with hands/feet/body without having to look at them. Wrap-up: Discuss how we might improve the use of our senses to improve our awareness.

Grade: 2-6

Topic: Nature Trust Walk

Materials: Blindfolds

Description: Discuss senses, observation and trust. In pairs, blindfold one partner. Leads blindfolded student to a plant, rock, log, etc. Explore with their hands, noses and ears. Bring the blindfolded partner back to the starting point. Take off the blindfold and try to find the object they were exploring. Their partner can give hints after a few minutes. Switch roles and repeat. Wrap-up: how it felt to explore in this way and descriptions and features of different objects.

Grade: K-1

Topic: Un-nature Trail or Nature Trial

Materials: numbers, clips

Description: Place numbers on objects outside. Discuss natural vs. manmade (or living/non-living). Take a group walk to find the numbers. Students decide if the object is natural (or living) or not. Wrap-up: which are more common?

Science Continued

Grade: K-1
Topic: Signs of the Season

Description: Discuss seasons and senses. Brainstorm signs of this season (from animals, plants, sun, etc.). Students find signs of the season and decide which sense they used to discover it. Wrap-up: signs found, sense most used, predict seasonal differences.

Grade: K-3
Topic: Animal Homes

Description: Discuss animal needs. Focus on shelter: requirements, materials and how animals build them. In pairs students collect natural, nonliving materials and build a home for an animal. Afterwards, students hunt for homes of animals living in the natural area. Wrap-up: share students' homes (animals, materials, strategies) and what animal homes students found in the natural area.

Grade: 1-6
Topic: Who Am I?
Materials: paper, tape, marker

Description: Choose a theme: plant species, invertebrates, colours, lifecycle stages, etc. Tape cards on students' backs. Students ask each other yes or no questions to guess what they are (ex. ladybug pupa). Search the natural area for the things you were in the game.

Grade: K-6
Topic: Maps
Materials: Pencils, paper

Description: Discuss maps and compasses. Either as a teacher, class, partners or individuals, draw a map of the natural area. Add to the map whatever theme you choose: colours, distances, animal habitats, invertebrates, temperatures, plant species, sounds, sun/shade, etc.

Social Studies and Language Arts

Grade: 1-2
Topic: ABC'S in Nature
Materials: Pencils, Journals

Description: Review alphabet. Students write down the alphabet in their journals with room beside each letter to draw and write. Students search for letter shapes in nature: e.g., split branch looks like U or V or a berry looks like O. Students write down what they find and draw the shape. If they finish early repeat the activity using things that start with each letter (ant, bud, cocoons, etc.). Wrap-up: share one cool finding for each letter.

Grade: 1-6
Topic: Make a Park
Materials: Pencils, journals, string

Description: Discuss parks in your community. Explore reasons for park creation: protect unique natural features, protect natural heritage, protect biodiversity, recreation, etc. In pairs students use string to create boundaries of a park in the natural area. Decide what features should be in the park and why the park is being created. Write a short, descriptive paragraph about the park. Leave the description at the park and travel the natural area to see the parks created by others. Wrap-up: reasons for park creation, visitor limitations, development of park areas for human homes and business, etc.

Grade: 2, 4
Topic: Giving Thanks to Nature
Materials: Journals, pencils

Description: Discuss how Natives viewed nature and the gifts that nature gave them. Each part of nature (plants, animals, rocks, etc.) has unique gifts and abilities to share. Plants and animals were prayed to and thanked for the gifts they gave humans. Plants, animals and rocks were viewed as living beings, different from us but equal. Observe nature and find an element of nature that gave you a gift (a place to play, air to breathe, toys, etc.) Write a thank you for the gift. Wrap-up: Discuss how we can give back.

Grade: 3-6
Topic: Details, details.....
Materials: Journals, pencils

Description: Discuss describing words and how to describe a natural object in detail. Each student chooses a natural item (plant, rock, leaf, berry, etc.) and writes a descriptive paragraph without naming the item. Exchange paragraphs and try to discover what another student wrote about. Wrap-up: share paragraphs, discuss varying perceptions, etc.

Grade: 3-6
Topic: Shape Poems
Materials: Journals, pencils

Description: Discuss shapes (natural, manmade), adjectives, senses and shape poems. Students choose something from nature to draw a shape poem about: draw the outline of the object and write a poem inside the outline about the object. Wrap-up: share poems.

Social Studies and Language Arts Continued

Grade: 3-6

Topic: Colour poem

Materials: Journals, pencils

Description: Observe the colours around. Then make a poem using the format:
Adjective + colour + verb e.g. Midnight black glistening

Grade 2-6

Topic How it came to be stories

Materials: Journals, pencils, optional: fact sheets (ethnobotany)

Description: Introduce 'How it came to be' stories e.g. 'how the birch got its papery bark' or 'how it was discovered that poplar bark works like aspirin'. Students observe features of certain plants and/or learn about their functions. Students create a story (oral and/or written) to share with their classmates.

*This can be adapted to different cultures being studied such as Incan or lackfoot tradition

*This could also be used to tell the story of how your school's natural area came to be based either upon interviews or fiction

Grade 4-6

Topic: Debate/community meeting:

Description: Discuss decision making and the process you wish to use (debate/meeting etc). Pick a real decision that could be made for the garden (e.g. should herbicides be used to control weeds) and assign roles to the students. Give the students time to explore the natural area with the question in mind and then to determine their

* En'owkin community meeting: representatives speak for *mother* (nurturer - cares about children and future), *father* (provider - cares about feeding the family), *earth* (cares about sustainability), *grandparent* (historian - cares about preserving history and knows traditional uses) and then community votes

Other great resources for activities:

1) Grounds for Change Website:

http://www.calgaryzoo.com/schoolyard_naturalization/connections.html

2) 5 Minute Field Trips: <http://www.geoec.org/lessons/5min-fieldtrips.pdf>

3) Get to Know resources: <http://www.get-to-know.org/education/>

4) Biggest Classroom of them all (CBE):

http://www.cbe.ab.ca/community/ecostewardship/pdfs/Biggest_Classroom.pdf