



Our Special Place

Exploratory Nature Walks with a Kindergarten Class



Background

A kindergarten teacher at South Park Family School, Kathy Inglis, wanted to take her class out for a weekly nature walk. With the support and encouragement of a parent in her class, Farheen HaQ (WildBC Facilitator), she instituted a weekly afternoon excursion to nearby Beacon Hill Park. The two worked together to record and reflect on each nature walk's successes and challenges. Kathy is a teacher with a passion for teaching and learning with her students. She is not an outdoor or environmental education expert, but she has the knowledge and experience to know that learning happens everywhere and that children need to be outside. One does not need to be a specialist in natural history or ecology to take students outdoors. Kathy is an expert teacher and knew that she could teach the curriculum

while engaging students in the dynamic, open learning environment of the outdoors.

While incorporating outdoor experiences into science units is common practice and taking students outdoors for PE and art lessons is the norm at South Park, we wanted to explore the possibilities of a weekly, scheduled outdoor learning experience with a cross-curricular focus for a kindergarten class. Each trip involved a structured lesson/activity time as well as free play/exploration time.

We hope this reflective journal of our experiences taking a kindergarten class outdoors weekly will provide ideas, inspiration and support for other teachers wishing to take their students outside to learn.

What We Learned

We learned a lot about many things while outside! Although many of the logistical and safety considerations are the same as those for a regular field trip, along the way we learned some ways to streamline the regular outings. Some of the points included below may be intuitive for many teachers, some may be helpful reminders, and some may be new ideas for beginning teachers. We hope that everyone can take some inspiration from our discoveries - and avoid reinventing the wheel. In taking a class outdoors, we needed to revisit class management strategies, expectations, and teaching practices. We were excited by the students' engagement and the connection with place that developed. We saw children who found classroom activities challenging thriving outdoors and diverse curriculum goals falling into place.

Step 1 - So you want take your kindergarten class outside?

Things you may want to do first:

1. Pack a bag! Put key items into a dedicated backpack so you don't have to re-pack each week.

For every trip:

- first aid kit
- class list
- cell phone
- whistle
- tissues
- plastic bag for garbage/recycling to pack out
- plastic and paper bags for collecting
- camera
- guide books to local flora/fauna

Depending on the activity planned:

- blanket(s) or sit-upons for delineating meeting places or group areas
- clipboards (1/2 size are perfect), pencils, paper (preferably card stock as it is more durable)
- magnifying glasses
- a story book or story telling props
- pre-collected samples to examine

2. Plan your route

- Visiting the site in advance of walking with the children helps with planning. Once all involved are familiar with your routines, you may feel comfortable exploring new areas with your students.
- crosswalks everywhere
- place to sit/gather
- clear landmarks to delineate boundaries
- close to bathrooms
- check for manmade hazards (eg. needles, garbage, broken glass) – ask parent volunteers to do a sweep while you are talking to the class, let the park staff know you are coming and ask if they can do a sweep that morning

3. Connect with Volunteers

- Ask parents to sign-up ahead of time so that you know how many helpers you will have and can tailor experiences accordingly
- Make sure you have enough adults to supervise (depending on the needs of your group) and don't hesitate to cancel or alter plans if you don't have enough people at the last minute – a stressful outing is no fun for anyone
- A core group of volunteers will quickly learn class expectations and become ambassadors for the outdoor experience
- email parents to let them know about your activity/plan for the outing if possible, especially if you will need some help leading an activity
- Give parents a quick outline of their responsibilities before leaving the school – students to watch specifically, road crossing procedures, modelling behavior expectations, helping to carry supplies (sometimes parents are reluctant to step in, let them know you value their assistance and will direct them if necessary)

4. Think Logistics

- Have a class meeting about safety expectations (volunteers included)
- Teach the students about being stewards (no picking, killing, or littering, etc.)- the phrase "Nature stays in nature" is useful for reminding students to leave sticks, rocks etc. behind as well as to dissuade picking
- Divide class into smaller, manageable groups (create groups/buddies for walks ahead of time) if you are planning stations or buddy activities

- Choose easily identifiable boundaries (landmarks) and make sure students and parent volunteers know these boundaries
- Plan a signal for “move closer” to use when the group is venturing too far afield, and another signal for “gather up” when you need to move on or give more instructions
- Plan a set of alternate activities to leave for TOCs who may not know the area or the needs of the class
- Ensure nature walks are focused on nature – no playground equipment or toys from the classroom
- Let students take risks outdoors – play with sticks, climb, explore, jump - with some basic safety expectations. This risk taking develops independence, confidence, co-operation skills, realistic self-awareness, as well as physical skills such as balance and co-ordination.

Step 2 - Planning Your Outdoor Time

1. Start close to home

- Begin nature walks on the school grounds in order to practise safety routines and expectations in a familiar environment
- Build the concept that the school yard is nature too
- Plant the idea of stewardship close to home
- When the class (and volunteers) are ready, move to a location a short distance away
- As student fitness increases, slowly increase the distance to your destination

2. Go to the same places often

- Children build a relationship with an environment they visit again and again
- Students have opportunities to observe changes over time
- Children develop play routines and create stories of place over time
- Class management is easier as students are familiar with boundaries and behavior expectations

3. Locate bathrooms

- Encourage students to use the bathroom before leaving school to avoid interruptions when outdoors
- Have enough volunteers to be able to send a child with an adult to the nearest bathroom
- If you are not near bathrooms, have a plan (eg. a private spot, tissue and wipes as well as some small bags for clean-up)

4. Free Play Outdoors

- Make sure every experience includes some free play/ exploration time
- Unstructured time is essential for students to build narratives around place and connect with their natural surroundings

5. Tools are Cool

- Young students love tools to explore with, bring along those magnifying glasses, binoculars, tweezers, plastic dishes etc. The Nature Kindergarten at Sangster Elementary even had vegetable peelers for whittling. They also had a carrying pouch that can be tied around a tree to holding tools.
- Make your own tweezers to pick up specimens
- Have some spare plastic and paper bags for carrying collections (if you are planning to use them later at school).

6. Integrate, Integrate, Integrate

- Don't feel the need to program or teach strictly nature based lessons. Outdoor learning spaces are perfect for cross-curricular lessons. Take what you would do inside outside!

7. All Weather Play

- Children are happy in the rain – it's the parents who sometimes worry. Don't let the rain keep you in! Just be prepared with the right gear and the right attitude.
- Let parents know ahead of time that nature walks will go ahead rain or shine and remind them to dress their children appropriately and keep a set of spare clothes at school.
- Visit second hand stores or gather from the lost and found to create a set of spare outdoor clothes (rain coats, fleece, mittens, boots).
- Plan a place in the classroom for hanging things to dry out. I often plan to arrive back at school at home time so that students can go straight home to change and dry out.

8. Anticipate Transitions

- Just as classroom transitions can be difficult for some students, the transition from indoors to outdoors, and vice-versa, can be challenging
- Routines are important outdoors just as they are indoors
- We had a “stop and listen” signal, a “countdown” signal,

a “gather together” signal, a “line-up” signal. We learned from the teachers in the Nature Kindergarten program at Sangster Elementary that it is also useful to have a “come closer” signal just to bring the group back together if they seem to be straying too far.

- Make the walk home fun too with marching or action songs, follow the leader games, eye spy etc.

Nature Walk 1

Theme: 100's Day

Activity: split class into two groups, each group of 10 to collect 10 items each to total up to a 100 in their bin. Create a collection of things.

Materials needed: 2 bins for two teams

Parent volunteers: 6

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Math:** counting by ones and tens, comparing size and weight of rocks, counting to 100
- **Writing:** Julien found a small rock could write on the larger rocks and wrote his name several times practicing lower case letters
- **Oral Language:** lots of co-operation, imaginary play and problem solving, listening and responding during lesson conclusion
- **Drama:** imaginary play
- **Science:** comparing and classifying different types of leaves and twigs, crocus only grow one flower per year, we need to put creatures back where we find them, bigger rocks make bigger splashes, compare and contrast objects, shapes



What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students choosing to play on the natural playground rather than the equipment
- So many parent volunteers made it possible to have a large area for exploration.
- Lots of co-operative and imaginative play.

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Getting everyone dressed and ready to go outside.
- Getting students' attention for outdoor instructions/lesson.

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Nothing, students had what they needed to complete the task and we had an abundance of parent volunteers.

Other Comments: TIPS FOR NEXT TIME

- Do more whole group instruction about expectations in the field eg. not picking flowers, returning creatures to their habits, listening rules apply outdoors too
- Some time to orient parents to expectations and philosophy would be helpful too
- transition of classroom to outside
- outside attention getting strategies
- How to incorporate self-assessment or peer assessment?

Nature Walk 2

Theme: Walk through Beacon Hill to playground

Activity: Nature walk

Materials needed: none

Parent volunteers: 4

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- Observation
- Physical activity
- Cooperative play



The following reflections are from Farheen, parent and WildBC Facilitator, as teacher was away this day and walk was led by a Teacher on Call.

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Spotting eagles from the playground at Beacon Hill Park
- Transitioning from inside school to outside fairly smoothly
- The value of not over programming so spontaneous learning can happen (like watching the eagles)



Theme: Trust, Cooperation, Observation

Activity: Cameras activity (Joseph Cornell, Sharing the joy of nature. Nature activities for all ages.) Have the children pair off. One player is the photographer and the other is the camera. The photographer guides the camera, who keeps his/her eyes closed. The photographer searches for beautiful and interesting photos. The photographer points the camera's shutters (eyes) at the object or scene he/she wants to "shoot" and then presses the shutter button to take the photo. You "press the shutter button" by tapping the camera's shoulder once to open his/her eyes. Two taps

Nature Walk 3

tells the camera to close his/her eyes. The photographer should close the shutters after 3 to 5 seconds. Try creative shots: different angles, close ups, panorama shots, etc. While taking photos, it's best to talk as little as possible. Give photographers about 10 minutes to take at least three photos. Then the pairs switch places. When everyone is finished, have each child use an index card and pencil to draw a favorite photo they took as the camera. Share the photos in a group.

Materials needed: clipboards (1/2 size), pencils, paper (for drawing favourite photograph)

Parent volunteers: 2

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Process skills of science:** observation, description, recording
- Fine motor skills (drawing), large motor skills (walking, climbing, running, dodging a muddy finger)
- **Social responsibility:** co-operating, respecting the environment, following directions
- **Science language:** living/non-living
- **Oral language skills:** describing, taking turns in conversation, asking questions

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students co-operating to work as imaginary camera and photographer, students were very engaged
- Very active students self-regulating to lead their "blind" partners
- Students using descriptive language including texture, colour, living/non-living to give clues for their "pictures"
- Students being careful of flowers (one told me to watch where I was stepping)
- No-one complained about being cold
- Students stayed on the pathway on the way there and home (I heard last outing that was a problem)
- Free play in the field with no "toys"

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Management (to be expected in a new setting)

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Two more parents - I had a plan to have groups of four each with a parent to do the activity. That might have helped with behaviour as the groups would have been smaller and certain students could be separated from each other.
- Time to brief parents on the expectations of the activity
- Some cones etc. to mark boundaries (I will bring some next time)

Other Comments:

- Visiting the same spot we had been before but doing a different activity let the students explore a familiar place again and realize that there was more to see
- I wonder if they noticed changes from last time? (muddy ground, flower buds/blossoms) I will ask them tomorrow.
- The free play time was essential to let them run off steam. I wonder if it would be better to have the run first? They might get too overstimulated and have trouble settling down. We will have to try and see.

Nature Walk 4

Theme: Seed exploration and sensory awareness activity

Activity: a walk to our "special spot" noting flowers and seeds along the way

Touchstones: (Get Outdoors, www.hctfeducation.ca)
Students get into small groups (one adult per group) and they close their eyes. A rock is placed in each child's palm. They use all their senses except sight to get to know their rock. They then place the stones into a bag and open eyes. The adult puts all the stones out in the center of the blanket and children try to guess which one they had.



Materials needed: bag of stones, blankets to delineate group areas

Parent volunteers: 3

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** using 5 senses, observation, description, comparison (What is different/new on our trail today?), caring for the environment (not stepping on flowers)
- **Visual literacy:** point of view (viewing flowers from above, below, beside), relating descriptions of rocks to seeing the rocks for the first time
- **Oral literacy:** taking turns speaking, describing rocks, listening and responding to speakers (parent as well as teacher)
- **Social/emotional:** taking turns, sitting quietly, listening and responding to speakers (parent as well as teacher), co-operative and imaginative play during free play time, sharing the new found seed casings, including younger siblings in the activities

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- All those children kneeling down to look at the underside of Fawn Lilies
- Students pointing out different flowers - "We haven't seen those purple ones yet!"
- Students engaged for a long time at the "Touchstones" activity and using excellent descriptive words
- Students' independent discovery of the seeds below the tree and their exploration of the seed casings (taking the seed casings apart and discovering all the different parts of the seed) - "Hey, there's a hard part in the center!"
- Students sharing the seeds with each other/showing each other
- Students feeling confident with behaviour expectations - I was able to lead the group and everyone stayed on the trail, was careful of flowers, stayed within the boundaries of the free play zone, lined up quickly when called

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Getting ready and out of the classroom quickly (it will come)
- No bathroom nearby

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Nothing - I thought we had the perfect number of parents and the supplies were effective

Other Comments:

- What a great day! The students are beginning to feel familiar with their "special place" and to feel confident observing and describing their surroundings. They were so excited by their independent discovery of the seeds below the big tree and anxious to share their discovery with adults and other students.
- We couldn't have done the activities with fewer adults, though. The fact that these were repeat volunteers who knew the expectations and routines helped a lot too!

Farheen's Observations:

- Having a parent dedicated to children who might run/ need attention helped a lot
- Children observed different flowers and smelled them along the way to the field
- One student created a story around the fawn lilies – what they looked like (a fan, one that wasn't open yet looked like an auger to him)
- Boys and girls alike were engaging in the flowers and getting in the grass and exploring colours and scents (One student found a flower that smelled like ginger)
- Children found interesting seeds and flowers from trees, taking them apart, blowing them
- One student found budding leaves on the ground (fallen from tree) and said "the wind probably brought them here"
- Children engaged in touchstones activity – great descriptions and closing eyes and using senses. Describing textures, smell, rubbing on cheeks, talking about size, gave each of their stones a name.

Nature Walk 5

Theme: Seed observations

Activity: Students walk to Beacon Hill Park with magnifying glasses and observe flowers on the way to our meeting field. At field, two groups observe, classify, describe and discuss seeds.

Materials needed: magnifying glasses, seeds in film canisters, blankets

Parent volunteers: 3



Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** observation (flowers, insects, seeds in containers, using scientific tools (magnifying glasses, clear containers)
- **Oral language:** describing observations, sharing sorting rules, taking turns talking and listening
- **Math and Science:** Sorting and classifying
- **Social/emotional:** being respectful of flowers, taking turns, staying with the group, rules of tag during free play time
- **Self-regulation:** touching gently during tag, not getting upset if tagged, trying repeatedly to climb trees, dealing with disappointment when the tree is too tall

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- How excited the children were to use the magnifying glasses. I had planned to hand them out when we examined the seeds, but a child asked for one as soon as we crossed over to Beacon Hill Park and soon a swarm of children was asking for magnifiers. They were so engaged looking at the flowers and found insects too!

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Putting the students in groups for the seed sorting activity - it took too long. Having a group A and B set ahead of time would help - I will do that for next time.
- A review of sorting before we set out might have helped some students with the classifying activity.

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Magnifying glasses all the same size and type to avoid envy. I have them on order.

Farheen's Observations:

- The children loved the magnifying glasses! They were finding all sorts of things: such as a bug inside a tulip. A group of boys were excited to get close up to things and wanted to climb rocks and get into flower beds with enthusiasm. Free play revolved around climbing a tree and most children playing around a large tree together.

Nature Walk 6

Theme: Drama outdoors with 5 senses

Activity: Shona Athey, a drama in education Master's student, gets into the role of a naturalist and asks the junior naturalists to help her collect information about Beacon Hill Park.

Materials needed: clipboards, paper, pencils

Parent volunteers: 3

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** two of the five senses, caring for the environment
- **Social/emotional:** listening to another adult, waiting for turns to get paint chips, imaginary free play, accepting frustration at not being able to climb as high as Joe
- **Oral language:** sharing discoveries, taking turns talking, repeating after Shona for the pledge
- **Art:** representing and drawing sounds, recognizing different shade of colour
- **Fine motor skills:** negotiating clip boards and small paper, drawing sounds
- **DPA:** trying to climb trees, tag games

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students really engaged in listening and trying to find ways to depict what they heard.
- Students looking for creative ways to find the colours on their chips.
- Students accepting instruction from a stranger (Shona) and working with her.



What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Students who did not treat our guest with respect - talking, interrupting and not participating. Smaller group instruction seems to work better, or maybe they just need more practise with attending outdoors.
- Students who did not/could not participate in the activities - an EA and a parent were definitely necessary to supervise non-participating students.

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

Other comments:

- I am working towards covering "traditional" curriculum in this alternative environment. I would like to try a more traditional drama workshop/activity outdoors and see how the students' engagement is.

Nature Walk 7

Theme: Earth Day alphabet hunt

Activity: Students in partners, find things in nature that begin with a letter of the alphabet, tell an adult, adult puts a sticker on that letter on the student's alphabet card

Materials needed: alphabet card for each student, stickers

Parent volunteers: 4

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Language Arts:** letter/sound correspondence, letter recognition
- **Science:** names of plants, natural vs. man-made, using senses, observation
- **Social/emotional:** staying with partners, co-operating, working with different partners, following expectations, imaginary play
- **DPA:** walking, climbing

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students really engaged in listening and trying to find ways to depict what they heard.
- Students so enthusiastic about the alphabet treasure hunt - I was swarmed! I liked how the partners worked together too (most of the time) with stronger students leading students who needed encouragement.
- Students feeling confident about our route. They were very comfortable about where we were going and felt confident in the environment.
- Imaginary play.
- Students going to trees they remembered from past walks as soon as they had free play time.
- Noah climbed the tree he tried to climb last week!!



What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Getting partners to stay together. This was our first outdoor partner day, so I think they would get used to it after a few experiences.
- Some students staying with the group. They were very excited about the hunt and feeling confident about our environment and some of them felt comfortable to forge ahead. If we were not close to a road, this would not have been such a concern. Most followed expectations, though.
- Students throwing grass at each other. More incidents on the playground lately too. We are having a class meeting about behaviour expectations/empathy tomorrow.
- Timing - Again, I was ready to head home and there was a dispute to work out. I tried to run part of the way but other parents did not get students to catch up. I will need to brief parents about keeping up/getting students to walk/run quickly when necessary.

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Perfect number of parents and those were used to the routine so needed little direction.

Nature Walk 8

Theme: Nature Charades

Activity: Students act out various plants and animals we have seen on our walks this year while others guess what they are. Teacher whispers ideas for those who are stuck.

Materials needed: none required

Parent volunteers: 3

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Language arts/drama:** acting, being a good audience, listening, visual literacy, taking turns
- **Self-regulation:** waiting for turns, remaining quiet and respectful in the audience, accepting wrong guesses gracefully, trying different clues to help others guess
- **Science:** being aware of the attributes of the different charades choices in order to give physical clues and to guess appropriately, learning to respect the environment ie. not to damage trees/fungi etc. when playing with sticks
- **Social/emotional:** making choices, co-operating, following rules during free play time

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students sitting quietly while everyone had a turn to act out a charade (21 charades for a group of 5 and 6 year olds!). Not everyone was engaged in the action the whole time, but no-one was disruptive or disrespectful. They sat quietly and moved in and out of engagement in the action as best suited their individual attention spans.
- Students playing with sticks during free play time to build forts and towns. Sticks were used for building, digging, breaking other sticks, but NOT for hitting each other. I didn't even need to remind them to be careful of each other. I did need to tell them to be gentle on the trees and fungi, but that it part of becoming aware of the nature around them.



What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Being reliant on an EA to take our student with ADHD and another student for a walk during the activity so that they did not become disruptive. If she had not been there, the experience would have been different for all students involved.

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- A bathroom. One parent had to take a student all the way back to the school (this happened last week too).

Nature Walk 9

Theme: Diversity Treasure Hunt

Activity: Divide students into groups with an adult leader for each group. Adult leader has list of treasure hunt challenges for students to find. Students co-operate, or search individually for each treasure. Treasures reflect the diversity of the habitat (eg. A plant with smooth leaves. A plant with fuzzy leaves. Two different types of insects.)

Parent volunteers: 1

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** diversity, observation, touch, smell, habitat ie. Why didn't we find any fungi on the playground? Where did the insects live?
- **Language Arts:** using descriptive language, listening to challenges and clues from others, taking turns talking
- **Social emotional:** working with and listening to a different adult, working in a small group of students, coping with not being able to fulfill the last challenge, playing co-operatively on the playground

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students engaged in searching the playground in a different way, discussing new discoveries and different aspects of familiar plants, using descriptive language and co-operating in small groups to find the "treasures".

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Not enough adult supervisors to go to Beacon Hill. Some of the hints and questions on the hunt were designed with our Beacon Hill location in mind. It was still an effective learning activity, however.



What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Chaperones (as mentioned above): this program depends on having the appropriate ratio of adults to children

Other Comments:

- Working in small groups with a trusted adult (regular adults have been attending the walks) is very effective for this group. In fact, research shows that it is effective for all students.
- Having focused "challenges" to direct observations led to new discoveries in a familiar landscape and to sharing amongst more experienced students.
- "Oh, yah, I have felt that sticky plant before."
- "That is spiky, but it is not like stinging nettle. Stinging nettle has smaller spikes, but they sting way more because they have acid in them."
- "Ants live in the sandy part."
- Student 1, poking a stick into a whole in the sand, "There is a hole here. Someone lives in it." Student 2, "Yah, bees and wasps live in the ground."

Nature Walk 10

Theme: Visiting Beacon Hill Park's Heronry

Activity: Walk to heronry, read signs with heron facts, count herons in trees, look for nests, collect feathers, egg shells etc. from the ground

Materials: Student made tweezers (Popsicle sticks and sponges), small Ziploc bags

Parent volunteers: 3

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** habitat, life cycles, respect for wildlife, using scientific tools, observation
- **Self-regulation:** coping with the rain, keeping relatively quiet near wildlife, staying with the group
- **Visual literacy:** interpreting signs, images on posters
- How to weigh down your prizes so they don't blow away when you leave them on the picnic table (Fin could not find a rock, so he used a handful of gravel.)

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students using the tweezers they made with the Science Venture program this morning to pick up egg shells and feathers.
- Students happy to walk in the rain (not a single one complained) and happy to stay out and play once we did get back to school.
- Finding information signs in the park to tell us about the heronry. Students excited about learning about the yearly round of the herons (at least a few months of it).
- Students self-regulating when near the heronry - they were very excited, but did not lose control.
- Students staying with the group, following the leader, exploring within boundaries (with very few reminders)



What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Worrying about students disturbing the heronry.
- Parental concern about the rain/cold.
- Students without proper clothing (rain coats, boots, hats).
- Settling students on the tarmac side of the school yard - they had much more difficulty focusing once on the paved surface. Maybe this was due to the fact that it was right at the end of the day, but I think it was more that they did not have enough ideas for appropriate play. They got silly and forgot to follow directions. Play in the nature playground was reasonably calm and appropriate.

Other comments:

- Our first rainy walk was a great success!

Nature Walk 11

Theme: Field trip to Island View Beach

Activity:

- Pre-activity – students created “I wonder” questions about what they might see at the beach
- Beach exploration with Shaw Ocean Discovery Centre Staff
- Post-activity – students answered their “I wonder” questions in class the next day

Materials: Program Leaders, I.D. guides, buckets, dip nets

Parent volunteers: 6

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** observation, classification, habitats, differences between animals and plants, adaptations to environment, returning specimens to appropriate habitats, physics of moving big logs and rocks (levers, push vs. pull etc.)
- **Language Arts:** listening to new adults, describing finds to program leaders, asking questions, conversations with peers, co-operating with big buddies
- **Physical:** Gross motor - balance activities climbing on rocks and logs, jumping between rocks, crouching and retrieving specimens, moving big logs and rocks (safely); Fine motor – manipulating dip nets, touching specimens with care
- **Outdoor skills:** storing belongings under tarps, sheltering under logs to eat lunch
- **Self-regulation:** enduring the rainy day without complaint, stopping play long enough to eat, waiting for turns to touch specimens, climbing only where adults agreed it was safe



What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Exploring a different beach habitat! The students were very excited and yet remained engaged.
- Students adapting to the rain
- Free play time on the beach – moving and building with logs.

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Rain.
- Not having booked the shelters – another school group was using them.
- Student behaviour in a different setting and with different leaders – many reminders to listen politely

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Nothing – the Shaw Ocean Discovery team was very well equipped.

Farheen's Observations

- Children were all really excited to explore and get close and curious – lots of turning rocks over and discovering different kinds of crabs. They learned about decorator crabs, purple shore crabs, green shore crabs, limpets, barnacles, whelks.
- Kids really needed self-exploration time
- Hard to pull kids out of their exploration and listen to the talking, drawing a circle in the sand really helped – we were also two classes, so had 40 students to manage.

Nature Walk 12

Theme: Buddy Walk to Fonyo Beach (school's local beach)

Activity: Beach exploration with teachers, parents and big buddy class

Materials: camera, guide book to pebbles, guide book to intertidal creatures

Parent volunteers: 4 (per class)

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

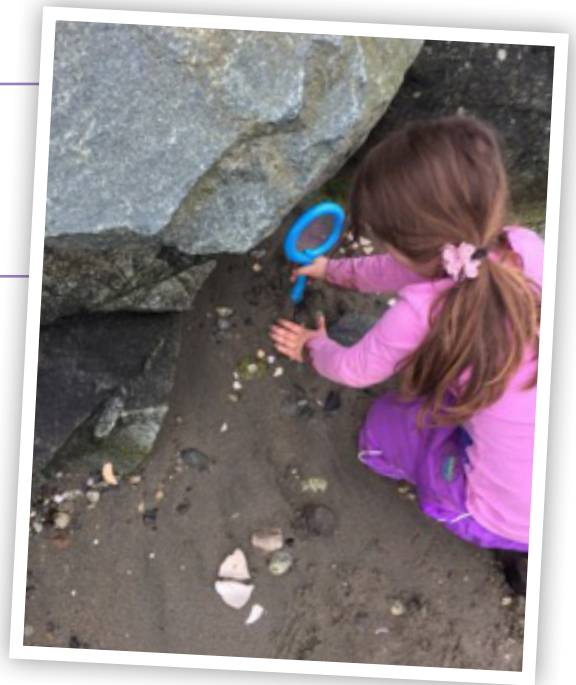
- **Science:** classification, habitats, observation, description, wave action
- **Math:** size and weight of rocks to be moved, counting various organisms found, comparing size of creatures
- **Language Arts:** conversations with buddies and adults, sharing observations and theories
- **Physical:** gross and fine motor activities, endurance (walking to beach and back)
- **Self-regulation:** sharing prime locations, waiting for turns, enduring wet feet

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students remembering names and facts they learned at Island View Beach and transferring the knowledge to our local beach – pride and empowerment
- Students engaged and exploring the intertidal with their buddies

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Choosing boundaries that allowed exploration but limited wet clothing, slippery rocks etc. – having more frequent beach visits would allow students to learn their own limits and how to navigate the intertidal safely



What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

- Dip nets, magnifying glasses, collection containers, more guide books

Other Comments:

- Big buddies created journals of both beach trips

Nature Walk 13

Theme: Art in the Woods (with Big Buddy Class)

Activity: Led by Farheen HaQ, art educator and WildBC Facilitator. Show students artists that use natural materials in their art – eg: Andy Goldsworthy. Talk about colour, line, shape, pattern (building art vocabulary). Assign partners to search for various materials and create installations in the park. Photograph the installations. Students lead a tour of their work before heading back to the school.

Materials: camera, images of art for introductory lesson, found objects (Choose an area with diverse plant life; Fall is a good time to make nature art as there is much fallen material so no picking will happen)

Parent volunteers: 3

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Art:** working with pattern, comparing and contrasting materials, elements of art (line, shape, pattern, colour, composition)
- **Social Skills:** teamwork/cooperation – groups of 2 or 3, students negotiated and collaborated on art projects
- **Science:** observation, classification
- **Language Arts:** remembering and following instructions, describing their art for others during the tour
- **Math:** comparing overall size and length



What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Student collaborations
- Students so proud of their artwork
- Students appreciative of others' work – words of praise echoed throughout the tour
- The works themselves - students understood and used the elements to create beautiful installations

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Keeping easily distracted students on task

What could you have used more of? (eg: resources, parents, etc.)

Farheen's Observations:

- children worked together with focus to notice their surroundings and the materials they had to build something beautiful

Nature Walk 14

Theme: Sensational Snoop” Program (Using the 5 senses in the forest)

Activity: CRD Parks Interpreters led students in a variety of activities using the 5 senses as a way to observe and explore the forest. Sight = making a picture frame to frame things seen; Smell = making forest perfume (students collect fallen items from forest floor and stir and crush with a stick to create their perfume); Sound = Bird call game: a sound game with seeds in film canisters (students find their group with the same sound), doing a silent walk part of the time; Touch = slug power (using slug slim to pick up small objects), touching bark, leaves etc.

Materials: paper for picture frames (thick paper), film canister and a variety of seeds/beans/small objects to make different sounds, Dixie cups for making forest perfume

Parent volunteers: 5



Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Science:** Using 5 senses to make observations
- **Language Arts:** listening to an unfamiliar adult, describing observations, taking turns speaking
- **Physical:** walking, balancing, climbing

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students engaged
- Skilled CRD interpreters

What was the challenge in regards to today's outing?

- Funding for the bus and program (Thanks to CEAF!)



Theme: A Nature Party

Activity: snack and circle at our special place reflecting on highlights of our walks

Materials needed: snacks, water, cups, garbage/recycling bags, picnic blankets

Parent volunteers: 3

Nature Walk 15

Teacher Reflections

Learning Observed:

- **Language Arts:** retelling (remembering favourite parts of nature experiences), listening to peers, taking turns speaking

What was the highlight of today's outing?

- Students' connection to place and memories of how they enjoyed their "special spot"

Farheen's Observations

- The children's highlights were the games they played at the special spot, not so much the mediated activities. This underlines how important the free play is for the children.

Resources

Local groups or resources to use for outdoor learning:

- **HCTF Education**-WildBC
- Victoria Natural History Society
- SeaChange
- Sierra Club
- CRD Parks Interpreters
- UVic Students (Graduate students: Sciences, Drama, Art, Counselling, Dance, etc.)
- City of Victoria Parks Dept., Pest Dept., Gardening Dept. – or volunteers of Beacon Hill Park
- Habitat Acquisition Trust (on naturalizing spaces)
- Storytellers (Victoria Storytellers Guild)
- First Nations teachers (storytellers, music outside, dance)
- Dance classes outside (Moondance, AnneMarie Cabri)
- Parachute games
- Victoria Compost Education Society
- Swan Lake educators
- UVIC Science camp coordinators, Education/Masters students doing field or education research.
- Royal BC Museum (lots of knowledgeable staff)

Activity Guides

- Get Outdoors, www.hctfeducation.ca
- Growing up Wild www.hctfeducation.ca
- Teaching About Nature in the SchoolYard, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, 2002
<http://www.geoec.org/lessons/5min-fieldtrips.pdf>

Professional Reading

**Annotations found at Children and Nature Network (2014), Retrieved from <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>*

Born Selly, P. (2012). *Early Childhood Activities for a Greener Earth*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Broda, H. W. (2011). *Moving the Classroom Outdoors: Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning in Action*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Cornell, J. (1989). *Sharing the joy of nature. Nature activities for all ages*. First Ed. Nevada City, CA: DAWN publications.

Danks, F. & Schofield, J. (2012). *The Stick Book: Loads of Things You Can Make or Do with a Stick*. London: Frances Lincoln.

Dunlap, J. & Kellert, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Companions in Wonder: Children and adults exploring nature together*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kenny, E.K. (2013). *Forest Kindergartens the Cedarsong Way*. Vishon, Wash.: Cedarsong Nature School.

Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books.

Louv, R. (2011). *The nature principle: human restoration and the end of nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books.

Moore, R. C. & Wong, H. H. (1997). *Natural Learning: Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching*. Berkeley CA: Mig Communications.

Nabhan, G.P. & Trimble, S. (1995). *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Sobel, D. (2011). *Wild play: parenting adventures in the great outdoors*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Van Noy, R. (2008). *Natural Sense of Wonder: Connecting Kids with Nature Through the Seasons*. Athens, GA.: University of Georgia Press.

Classroom Resources a taste

**Included in a public resource list on SD61 school library sites.*

Aloian, M. *The Life Cycle of a Flower. Traces the life cycle of a flower from seed to maturity, and includes information about pollination, making and spreading seeds, other ways of growing, and threats to their survival.*

Aston, Dianna Hutts. *A Seed is Sleepy. An introduction to seeds; explaining their varying shapes and sizes, where they are found, and their life cycles. Fabulous illustrations!*

Aston, Dianna Hutts. *A Butterfly is Patient. An introduction to butterflies; explaining their varying shapes and colours, where they are found, and their life cycles. Fabulous illustrations!*

Aston, Dianna Hutts. *A Rock is Lively. An introduction to rocks; explaining their varying shapes and sizes and where they are found.. Fabulous illustrations!*

Aston, Dianna Hutts. *An Egg is Quiet. An introduction to eggs; explaining their varying shapes and sizes, where they are found, and their life cycles. Fabulous illustrations!*

Bird, J. S. *Going on a tree hunt: a tree identification book for young children. A boy and his mother identify various types of trees by their leaves and seeds. Some from a different climate zone, but a good story about tree identification.*

Carle, Eric. *The Tiny Seed. A simple description of a flowering plant's life cycle through the seasons.*

Christian, P. *If You Find a Rock. Think of all the rocks there are: skipping rocks, splashing rocks, climbing rocks, and wishing rocks. Children can't help collecting them. With joyful, poetic text and luminous photographs, If You Find a Rock celebrates rocks everywhere—as well as the mysterious and wonderful places they are found.*

Creative Star Learning Company Retrieved from <http://creativestarning.co.uk/> UK website with practical ideas for math and literacy activities outdoors

Fredericks, Anthony D. *On One Flower: Butterflies, Ticks and a few more lcks. A child finds a goldenrod flower and discovers a whole community of insects on it; and includes facts about these animals and their relationships, plus resources for further study.*

Hall, M. *Hérons. Primary reading level with basic facts about herons*

Harbo, Rick M. *Whelks to Whales: Coastal Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest. This all-in-one field guide covers the full spectrum of Pacific Northwest marine life, from tiny whelks on the beach to great whales in the ocean depths. Excellent photographs and accessible descriptions – great for beach walks.*

Heller, R. *The Reason for a Flower. Brief text and lavish illustrations explain plant reproduction and the purpose of a flower and present some plants which don't seem to be flowers but are.*

Jeffers, O. *Stuck. When Floyd's kite gets stuck in a tree, he tries to knock it down with increasingly larger and more outrageous things. Another funny story for under your 'story tree'.*

Keller, Eileen Ven der Flier. *A Field Guide to the Identification of Pebbles. Great pamphlet style guide to common pebbles found on local beaches*

Kraner, Etta. *Who Likes the Rain? Part of a series including: Sun, Wind, Snow. Asks "I wonder..." questions and then answers them in language accessible to primary students. Great for introducing inquiry. (Also available on Tumblebooks.)*

Larsen, A. *The Tree House. An evocative story about two brothers who are growing up (one faster than the other), an unusual summer night and a special tree house that proves childhood is not just a time but also a place.*

LeBox, A. Salmon Creek. *The story of a coho, Sumi, from her birth in a remote creek and her trip down river to the ocean, to her time as a mature fish in the seas, and finally her return to the place of her birth, where she spawns and dies.*

Lottridge, Celia Barker. The Name of the Tree: A Bantu Tale. *When the other animals fail at the task, the slow but wise turtle finds a way to obtain the bountiful fruits of a magic tree. A great storytelling resource for under your 'story tree'.*

Maestro, B. Why Do Leaves Change Colour? *Explains how leaves change their colors in autumn and then fall from the tree as it prepares for winter.*

Pfeffer, W. A Log's Life. *Introduction to the life cycle of a tree.*

Portis, A. Not a Box. *To an imaginative little bunny, a box is not always just a box. Great for introducing using your imagination to make toys.*

Portis, A. Not a Stick. *An imaginative young pig shows some of the many things that a stick can be. Great activity starter for a walk. Create your own "Not a Stick" book back in the classroom.*

Raczka, Bob. Guyku. *A collection of haiku poetry for boys (or girls) that features poems about tree-climbing, kite-flying, and other related topics.*

Ray, Mary Lyn. Mud. *As winter melts into spring, the frozen earth turns into magnificent mud. A great read before that muddy walk!*

Rosen, Michael. Going on a Bear Hunt. *A classic but still good for chanting as you walk along. Great for introducing different movements and levels, too.*

Seifert, Patti. Exploring Tree Habitats. *Illustrations and text describe five different trees located in countries throughout the world that serve as homes to a wide variety of animals.*

Singer, Marilyn. A Stick is an Excellent Thing: Poems Celebrating Outdoor Play. *A collection of illustrated poems for children that celebrates the outdoors, featuring lyrical poetry about playing hide-and-seek, making mud soup, transforming a stick into a magic wand, and more.*

Spalding, A. Solomon's Tree. *Solomon's favorite maple tree is destroyed in a storm, but he feels better when he makes a special mask out of its bark.*

Zweibel, A. Our Tree Named Steve. *In a letter to his children, a father recounts memories of the role Steve, the tree in their front yard, has played in their lives.*