



Sensory Safari

Background Information:

Sensory Safari is a way for students to explore natural habitats in and around their home, school, park, etc. Students will explore using sight, sound, scents, and touch.

Natural habitats that are close to us such as the playground at a school are amazingly unexplored. Many things go unnoticed but they are often right before our eyes. This activity will get students to focus on their senses and enhance their sensory awareness. When we collect information from our surroundings using our senses our perception of this information then causes us to respond in certain ways. For example, if we see a swarm of bees we might take notice and go around the area to leave them undisturbed. Or if we smell the sweet smell of lilacs we could perceive this as summer on its way. As we fine tune our senses we are able to notice subtle things and how we respond to the information we gain from our senses helps us survive and thrive living in the natural world.

Objectives:

1. Practice using senses
2. Find and observe naturally occurring objects and wildlife
3. Develop a sense of curiosity through observation and questioning

Helpful materials:

- Binoculars
- Jars or bug box
- Colored pencils
- Magnifying lenses
- Glue sticks or contact paper
- Pencil and paper
- Clipboards

Time: 60 minutes minimum. This will depend on how much time you want to give your students to observe with their senses.

Age: Kindergarten through 5th grade

Activity:

1. Get outside! Take your students to a location outside of your building. Encourage them to look for different shapes, patterns and colors in nature. Have them look high, low and at eye level.
2. Get creative!
 - a. Sight - Encourage them to look for different shapes in the clouds and find different naturally occurring patterns such as the edge of a leaf or the pattern in the bark of a tree.
 - b. Sound – Have students pick a place to sit quietly alone. Be sure you can still see all youth. Have students sit and listen, if they hear a sound they would like to investigate they can move slowly towards that sound. Make sure they know rushing to the sound could scare off any wildlife in the area. Have them document



- what they hear and what they think or know is making that sound. Encourage them to listen to sounds that are near and far.
- c. Touch – Challenge students to find objects that fit several descriptions such as smooth, soft, rough, sharp, dull, furry, feathery, wet, or dry. Encourage students to leave natural objects in their original place. Instead, have students gather items that have fallen to the ground or are loose items.
 - d. Smell – have students start with taking several deep breaths of fresh outdoor air. What do they notice? Encourage students to find several different scents. These could be different trees, or flowers, or even soil.
3. Share. Have students record what they see, hear, touch, and smell. Encourage them to draw or collect things they have noticed using their sense and create a nature collage.
 4. Reflect. Ask questions such as
 - a. What did you see up close that you wouldn't see far away?
 - b. What did you hear? What was quiet? What was loud?
 - c. What textures did you feel?
 - d. What felt soft? Describe it.
 - e. What natural objects had the strongest scent?
 - f. What natural objects had no scent?
 - g. What discoveries were most surprising, enjoyable, or unpleasant.

Reading Connections:

1. Showers, P., & A. (1993). *The Listening Walk* (Illustrated ed.). HarperCollins.
2. A. (2015). *My Five Senses (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science 1)* (Revised ed.). HarperCollins.

Resources:

Dhruv, S. (2012). *Backyards and Beyond*. Arizona Cooperative Extension, Arizona 4-H Youth Develop in cooperation with National 4-H, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, USA-National Phenology Network and Children and Nature Network.

**This activity is adapted from the Sensory Safari activity in "Backyards and Beyond" 4-H curriculum. You can purchase this curriculum and the youth activity books from shop4h.org