

Sensory Walk

Outdoor Activity

Curriculum: Science, Literacy, Wellness



Humans share the world with millions of types of living things that have a variety of shapes, colours, smells, sounds and taste. In this activity, students participate in a sensory walk discovering the diversity of life through their senses.

This activity is from Alberta Park's teacher resource, [Our World, A Special Place](#). If desired, a student logbook is available in this resource to document their sensory walk.

Materials:

- Story – Find a book in the library celebrating a special place (or a personal story)
- Set of 5-10 Rainbow Paint Chips in an envelope (you can get these at a local paint store)
- Set of 5 Shape cards (cut a variety of shapes from cardboard including: square, rectangle, triangle, circle, oval)
- Set of 5 Texture cards. Cut 12 cm x 12 cm cards out of Bristle board and label them:
 - Bumpy (pebbles under wide masking tape)
 - Smooth (laminated paper or acetate)
 - Prickly (piece of old scrub brush)
 - Furry (piece of fun fur)
 - Rough (piece of sandpaper)

- A set of 5 blindfolds
- 5 bottles of “Magic Liquid” (spray bottles filled with water and food colouring to give it colour)
- Raspberries (or another fruit to share)

Instructions:

- Head outside to your schoolyard, local park or nearby natural area.
- Read a story or share a personal story of a special place. Ask students to describe a special place they have and why it is special. Set the stage for the sensory walk and build up student excitement on the sensory explorations for discovering a new special place.
- Divide your students into small working groups of 4-5 students. If you have volunteer adults, assign one to each group.
- Assign boundaries for student exploration.
- Explain to students Nature is filled with a variety of living things including animals, plants and insects. This variety of living things is called biodiversity. In our walk, we will explore the variety of living things with our senses.
- For each of the following explorations, give each group the set of materials required. Pending on time available, you can spend 10-20 minutes exploring each “sense”. Encourage students to find as many things in nature for each sense they will be exploring.
 - **Touch** – Give each group a set of 5 texture cards. In this discovery activity, students will compare the textures of their texture card with textures they find in nature.
 - **Sight** – Ask students what they like to see outside. Discuss how our observations include colour and shapes that appeal to us. In this activity, students will look for items in the nature which are the same colour as one of the rainbow chips they are given. Repeat this activity with shapes. Discuss student observations.
 - **Smell** – Ask students to describe their favourite smells. In this activity, using their bottle of “Magic Liquid” students will explore spraying a variety of natural objects with their liquid and then smelling it. Discuss the variety of smells they discovered. Did any scents surprise them?
 - **Taste** – Discuss some of the student’s favourite tastes. Discuss how all our food comes from nature. Caution students that some of nature’s tastes are poisonous and could make them sick. Hand out raspberries (or other fruit to share) and explain how this

represents one of the tastes of nature. Discuss other tastes students have experienced from the wild. Caution students that they should never eat from the wild without an adult's permission.

- **Sound** – This activity is implemented as an individual sit spot. Have each student find their own personal spot in nature where they can sit quietly and listen to sounds of nature. Encourage them to be as quiet as they can in order to hear nature. Afterwards, discuss the variety of sounds they heard.
- **Concluding Discovery** – Blindfold Walk. In this discovery activity, students will use all their senses to discover a tree. Working in pairs, give each group a blindfold. Have the student with sight lead their blindfolded partner to a tree. Using all their senses, the blindfolded student is to find out as much as they can about the tree. They are then led away from the tree and their blindfolds are removed. Can they now find their tree with all their senses? Switch roles.
- **Journaling** – Give students time to capture in words and pictures why the space they explored is special.

Discussion:

Sensory walks are a great method to immerse students into the variety of living organisms with whom they share their world. Through their explorations, students will discover nature is rich with shapes, colours, smells and sounds that represent the variety of living things or the biodiversity of Alberta.

Learning Extension – Night Walk

Encourage student families to take a short night walk or to lie on a blanket in a dark place where they can sit or lie down spending some time with the night sky. Encourage them to let their eyes adjust to the dark environment. Have students reflect on the following in their journal:

- How do the smells, sounds and colours of the night differ from those of the daytime?
- Which of their senses feel most alive?