

Place-Based Learning in a Pandemic:

Using your Senses to Experience Nature: A Self-Guided Field Experience

Post-session e-handout blog post:

Reference: Activities for this session were adapted from: Get Outdoors, An Educator's Guide to Outdoor Classrooms, written & compiled by Sue Staniforth. (purchase: <https://www.hctfeducation.ca/product/get-outdoors/> or View the Sample Resource: <http://www.metrovancouver.org/events/school-programs/K12publications/GetOutdoors.pdf>)

Overview

This field experience takes a sensory approach to nature-based inquiry, encouraging you to engage with place and the natural world as a learner. As a teacher, you'll then consider how to successfully lead your students outdoors in person or virtually, to powerfully engage their senses and connect to nature, and thoughtfully integrate digital technologies.

What to Pack

- A handheld digital device
- Your journal* & writing implement (*or paper/clipboard if raining), a sit pad (optional)
- A selection of coloured pencil crayons
- Optional: a piece of string approx. 3m long, an empty picture frame

Key Challenges

- A. Engage with a flow of sensory activities that connect to place and nature
- B. Record observations and share your experiences

Instructions

1. Prepare to be outdoors for 30 minutes – see 'What to Pack' above.
2. Download this '**Field Experience Resource Package**' to a mobile device.
3. Locate 'nearby nature' suitable for your field experience. Proceed there and...
 - a. **Complete Activity 1**
 - b. **Complete Activity 2, 3 OR 4**

ACTIVITY 1: SENSORY WAKE-UP!

CHALLENGE

Wake up your senses, hone your observation skills and explore your local environment!

MATERIALS

- 10+ different coloured pencil crayons in a bag/pencil case
- A blank piece of paper
- A piece of string 3m long (*optional*)
- Camera (*optional*)

EXPLORE

How can you 'wake-up' your senses to explore and observe your environment?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Touch: Rub your hands together until you feel heat energy between your palms when you pull them apart slightly. Do this until you have "woken up" your fingers.

Hearing: Give yourself some 'deer ears.' To do this cup your hands around each of your ears so the area for sound is enlarged. Take off your 'deer ears' and notice how your 'deer ears' change your hearing. Next, try your 'deer ears' on backwards to hear sounds behind you. Last, close your eyes and count the number of different sounds you hear in 30 seconds. Hold your fingers up for each sound you hear.

Taste: If it is raining, you can taste a raindrop, but otherwise save the tasting for lunch time!

Smell: Close your eyes and focus on your sense of smell by taking a breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Repeat two more times. What do you smell?

Sight: Collect a selection of pencil crayons in a variety of different colours and place them in a bag. Every colour of the rainbow exists in nature. Choose a 'rainbow stick' from inside of your bag. Match your rainbow stick with something natural in your environment. Show your matched item to a parent or sibling. *Hints:* turn leaves and stems over to see what colours are beneath, look closely at rocks, pebbles, lichen, tree bark and other natural materials. Once you have found a match, select a new rainbow stick from the bag. How many different colours can you find in your local environment?

SHARE

Record your observations and experiences in your journal or using a camera.

REFLECT

Which sense could you give up?

Which sense could you not live without?

What were the most interesting things you observed in your environment? What surprised you the most about exploring your environment?

EXTEND

Take a piece of string about 3 metres long. Lay down the string so it forms a circle. Record all the smells, colours and textures you find in your circle.

Digital Photo Sensory Shoots: Choose a sensory theme (colour, texture, smells, sounds, or contrasts). Take photos in an outdoor area based upon your theme. Make a digital presentation to share with your family and friends.

Any of these warm-up activities can be adapted for on-the-move, for example go on a 'Colour Walk' or 'Texture Walk' in your neighbourhood.

ACTIVITY 2: SOUND MAPPING

CHALLENGE

Tune into your sense of hearing and create a sound map of your surroundings.

MATERIALS

- A pencil or pen
- A blank piece of paper or index card
- A hard writing surface (e.g. clipboard or journal)

EXPLORE

How might you tune in your sense of hearing to notice the sounds in your environment?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Find a comfortable spot to sit outdoors. First, tune-up your hearing: listen and count the number of sounds you hear around you. Next, mark an "X" in the centre of the paper. This shows YOU on the map. Close your eyes and listen for at least one minute. Keep listening, but now draw pictures or symbols on the map that represent the sounds you hear, and

where they are coming from. At the top of the page, write down the date, time and your location.

SHARE

Record sounds around your sit spot using 'voicememo', video or drawing.

REFLECT

What were the most interesting sounds you heard?

What is the quietest place near or in your home? How far would you have to go to find no human-made noises?

ACTIVITY 3: A-Z OF NATURE

CHALLENGE

Your challenge is to find and list (or draw) something in nature for each letter of the alphabet!

MATERIALS

An alphabet checklist (in a journal or handout)

Digital camera (optional)

EXPLORE

How might you discover natural objects for each letter of the alphabet?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Head outside looking for natural objects. List or sketch things observed in nature on your alphabet checklist. As you explore, you might be interested in identifying (use a field guide or iNaturalist).

SHARE

Record what you find (in your journal or using a camera). Share them for a group record or ABC book!

REFLECT

What was the most interesting object you found?

Which letters were challenging to find?

Why is there so much diversity in the natural world?

ACTIVITY 4: INSTANT CAMERA

CHALLENGE

Partner with a family member to create “pictures” of beautiful and interesting things in your local environment. In this activity, one person will be the **Camera** while the other person will be the **Photographer**.

MATERIALS

- An open area
- Index cards
- Coloured pencils

EXPLORE

What beautiful and interesting “pictures” can you create with a partner or family member in your local environment?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

The person who is the **Camera** will have their eyes closed between the “pictures” the **Photographer** takes. The **Photographer** should practice guiding the **Camera** safely before beginning the activity. To guide the **Camera** safely: stand beside the **Camera** and use one arm to gently guide them while giving directions. For example, “Walk to the right, bend down,” etc. When the **Photographer** sees something they like, point the **Camera**’s lens (eyes) at it framing the object they want to shoot and then tap the **Camera**’s back. The **Camera** will open their eyes for 3-5 seconds, and until the **Photographer** taps their back again to close their eyes. It is important that the **Camera** keep their eyes closed between pictures. The **Photographer** can experiment with unusual angles and perspectives: zoom-in, zoom out, up and down, big and little. The **Photographer** will take 3-4 photos, and then trade roles.

SHARE

“Develop” one picture by drawing it on an index card or in your journal. Take a photo of the object/sketch and share using a digital platform of your choice.

REFLECT

What picture stood out to you the most, and why?
How did closing your eyes between pictures help to “develop” them?

EXTEND

This activity can be easily adapted to be an individual activity. Use an old picture frame with no glass or one cut from cardboard to frame your photographs. Experiment with various sizes of frames.