

Tips and Tricks for the Outdoor Classroom

1. Be prepared

- a. Get to know your schoolyard before the walk
- b. Identify harmful plants and animals
- c. Gather all materials needed

2. Know the objectives for going out and communicate this to the students

3. Establish groundrules

- a. Set firm rules for behavior
- b. Learning looks different in the outdoor classroom, expect that voices will be louder and excitement higher
- c. Model outdoor skills: observations, note taking and sketching, enthusiasm
- d. Make a rule of careful stepping -leave only footprints
- e. Establish procedures for collecting and returning the tools

4. Strategies for Getting attention

- a. Ask the teacher what works for their particular class
- b. Use attention “Grabbers”-
 - i. Engage in a calming activity - listen with eyes closed and ears cupped
 - ii. Hold up an object that is startlingly unusual
- c. Body language
 - i. “Circle up” the group when it’s time to talk
 - ii. Sit down at the same level as the group
 - iii. Lower your voice to a whisper
 - iv. Stopping and pointing
 - v. Use an unusual sound for getting their attention -hand clapping, bird call, whistle, bell
- d. Assign students a concrete task
 1. Collect or look for specific items
 2. Sketch observations
 3. Complete a recording sheet (if applicable)
- e. Group control
 - i. Play follow the leader - baby ducks following the mother duck, coyotes traveling in the tracks of the leader
 - ii. Allow opportunities to release pent up energy - pretending you’re a bird and flying to another tree, hop like a rabbit
 - iii. Put your hand on the shoulder of the eager to speak child to let them know that their turn is next

5. Things to Remember

- a. Wonder out loud and ask the students rich questions
- b. Don’t worry about covering everything in the walk, be flexible and seize the teachable moments
- c. Don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know” and record questions
- d. Encourage research and future exploration after the walk