

# Education in the Environment: Interpretive Hikes

These short hikes focus children's attention on nature in different ways.

To read 18 more ideas for interpretive hikes, see pages 47-53 of *Celebrating EcoSchools, Festival Ideas (Elementary)*, TDSB, 2004.

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▶ 1. Literacy Connection: "ANT" TRAIL

Materials: One length of string or yarn per student (about 50 cm each should do)

Instructions: Tell students that they have been hired as park naturalists and must build a new nature trail. However, the park and trail are for ants! Give each student a string and indicate that they should choose a habitat and lay the string out so that it includes several "scenic features" for ants. When they have completed their trail, have them take one of their classmates along it. Follow up with a language arts/journal writing activity in the classroom.

▶ 2. Inquiry Connection: Questions

Materials: Nil

Instructions: During a hike, tell students that they will be playing a short question game as follows: the teacher asks a question about something on the hike. Then, one at a time, students answer the question with another question. At first this will be tough, but with practice, students will be able to formulate a string of questions. In an age-appropriate way, explain how this game models the work of scientists all over the world.

▶ 3. Visual Arts Connection: Colours

Materials: Nil

Instructions: Form a circle with students and ask them to face outwards. Going around the circle, students list as many colours as they can spot from where they are standing. Also try picking a colour and have students find as many objects of the colour as possible.

## Interpretive Hikes (cont'd)

► 4. Sense of Place: Misplaced Objects

Materials: A collection of objects (try 10!) that don't belong in the area where you will be walking (they could be natural objects from a different habitat but try it first with 10 human-made objects, e.g., a pencil, key, bottle cap, old mitten); a piece of paper and pencil for each individual or group.

Instructions: Prior to the students' arrival and without being observed, place the 10 objects along a trail of your design so that they vary from easily spotted to well camouflaged (not buried, however!). Balance the objects on both sides of the trail, and vary the height at which you hide objects (consider safety first though!). When ready, tell your students that there are 10 objects on a trail that don't belong there, and that their task is to find them and write them down on their paper. Indicate that they should not reveal objects they spot to others. Give a time limit for their walk. When completed, discuss the idea of belonging to a place. In an age-appropriate way, connect this activity to the fact that we live in a global economy. Human artefacts are made and found all over the world. What does it really mean to be misplaced?

► 5. Numeracy Connection: Count Me In

Materials: Paper and pencils (per student or group)

Instructions: Individually, or in partners or groups, students find something in nature that regularly occurs in similar numbers (or patterns). For example grass blades occur singly (in 1s); tree branches fork (in 2s); clover leaves (in 3s); white pine needles (in 5s) etc. Remind students that they do not need to collect the items—just record them. Celebrate their findings!