

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Outdoor Teaching Strategies

Classroom Management Strategies for the Outdoors

Participation in outdoor activities may require alternative class management strategies from those applied in indoor settings. Students who have had little previous experience in outdoor settings may require reinforcement of appropriate rules of behaviour.

Suggestions to Teachers

- Develop conceptual and behavioral skills before heading outdoors. School grounds may often be better used as a site for direct experience rather than a site for direct instruction.
- Develop productive "study buddy" group relations by recognizing, rewarding and building on positive interpersonal dynamics. Know who works well with whom and reward students by letting them choose their partners. Be attentive and inclusive of students with special needs.
- Arrange work groups. Groups of 2 to 4 people work well. If possible, partner behaviorally challenged students with an adult.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Get help. Invite community workers, parents and specialists to join in your activities and work with the students.



Plan your Lesson Flow to Maximize Student Learning and Focus

Joseph Cornell in *Sharing Nature with Children* recommends structuring outdoor activities to maximize learning by “awakening enthusiasm and curiosity” and engaging students in direct experiences. Consider the following in your planning:

Active Activities

- A short active activity can channel excess energy and prepare students to focus on a more detailed task.

Observation and Direct Experiences

- Allow children to engage with nature on a meaningful level. Foster a deeper understanding of the natural world by providing students with opportunities to use their senses, develop their observational skills, engage in hands-on exploration and experimentation and make personal connections to nature.

Reflection

- Provide an opportunity for children to share their thinking and inspiration, learn from one another and consolidate their own learning.

When You are Outside

Use an Attention-Getter

- Attention-getters, such as a whistle, are an effective tool for classroom management. Consider also using signals so that you don't have to shout simple instructions (i.e. thumbs up means to keep working and a wave means to come back to the meeting place). When the signal is given, students need to immediately stop, look and listen.

Use Teaching Circles

- Practically speaking, circles allow you to see all your students at a time. They allow all students to participate and leave no one lingering on the outside of the group.

Use Learning Centres

- Create a number of activities in different bins and place them at different locations. Have students rotate through the activities or choose the activities which interest them.

Clearly indicate boundaries

- Use natural structures in the schoolyard, pylons, flagging tape or yarn as boundaries. Confine outdoor activities to the smallest area possible to facilitate gathering and giving directions if activities need to be modified.

Circulate Constantly

- Circulating among the groups of students allows you to assess their understanding of the task and help clarify if necessary. Students will also use this time to share their discoveries, and it is a wonderful time to build relationships and the sense of wonder for outside learning.

Model Respect for Living Things

- Emphasize that all living things, plants, animals and fungi are returned back to their original location. In terms of gathering, The National Wildlife Federation promotes the "1 in 20 Rule. Collect a plant only if more than 20 of the same species are growing in the immediate area. This applies to parts of plants as well—remove only one leaf from a shrub with 20 leaves.

Plan

- To maximize the learning time outdoors, plan for learning activities between locations and during transitions.

Be flexible

- Use teachable moments when they appear. Have alternate plans if the weather changes quickly.

Note: Student skills and behavior will generally improve with increased contact and familiarity with the routines and expectations that accompany outdoor learning activities. School programs that provide school ground activities from K to 7 will develop a continuity of appropriate school ground learning behavior.

Constructive Time Fillers

- Once students have been given their own outdoor kits (see below), they will have a sketch book and a basic journal that they can work on if they complete a task early.

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