

Imaginative Ecological Education (IEE)

Some Teaching Activities – General

Your Place Tells a Story

Encourage students to choose a tiny part of the local area (a space about the size of their hand) and discuss its significance. They might think that this place is inconsequential but, in reality, it is not.

- In a journal entry, students can describe what they think is remarkable about this place. Ask them to imagine the feet (paws or hooves) that have walked there before...someone laughed here. Why? An animal paused here, why?
- Ask students to describe the spot in intricate detail. What can they deduce about it? What questions do they have about it? (Students might direct their questions directly to the place in the form a letter. (E.G. dear place ...). How might the place respond?)

My Maps

Students can draw a series of maps of a place that matters to them.

The map series can include the following: what the place looks like from the sky as opposed to from the ground, what lives in the place (what does the place look like from the perspective of one of these inhabitants?), what passes through the place, what is under the place (underground), and what the place might have looked like 100 years earlier. (Challenge students to come up with other aspects of the place to map.)

In a class presentation, they can share why the place matters, who else (or what else) uses this place, and who else lives there.

- Students could also conduct interviews with someone about their place. Ask, what do they know about it? What do they wonder?

Galaxies of Wonder

Students can be asked to bring to school a natural object that fits in the palm of their hand.

- Students will ask five other students in the school what they wonder about the object and will ask five adults what they wonder about it.
- Students will indicate what is wonderful about the object—how does it boggle the mind?

Zoo-opolis

Students can examine the wildness of the school grounds in a delineated outside space.

Students will become urban naturalists and will require journals to document and keep track of living things.

- Begin with a class brainstorm. Ask: what is alive in this place?
- Classify: What breathes? What grows? What moves? What is at this “zoo” every single day?
- Ask students to “adopt a bug”. That is, ask them to learn about one insect or bug in detail. If possible, they should track the habits of this bug first hand. What qualities do you share? (e.g. industriousness)

Spotlight on a Species

Change of context! Enlist students as “urban naturalists” who have been hired to teach people in their human community about the animals and insects also inhabiting the place. They will need show what they know about a local species. So, students will adopt a species and prepare to indicate what is unique about the animal/insect.

- They might design a trading card about it.
- They might create a pamphlet nominating this species for a local award or recognition—how is this being an unsung hero?
- As an imaginative extension activity students could be asked to invent a species and describe its predators, prey, food, habitat, habits etc

Eclectic Ecosystems

The aim of this activity is for students to experience concepts related to ecosystems first-hand so that they can deepen their understanding of these concepts. Student can work with the following concepts to begin: networks, boundaries, cycles, flow-through, development, and dynamic balance. Assign one concept to each student or pair of students.

- Ask students to find examples of their concept in the local community or school yard.
- Ask students to identify or describe their personal relationship to or involvement in this concept/aspect of an ecosystem.
- Ask students to find a natural object that represents this feature of an ecosystem (explain the metaphor if need be).
- Ask students to create a mobile that represents the concept. Interconnect all of the students’ mobiles; hang them from the ceiling of the classroom.

Not Just From The Mall

Have the students pick an article of clothing they are currently wearing and research its history. Students can research where all of the “ingredients” come from, the costs involved to make it (human, social, economic) and to transport it etc. Students can present their findings to the class. Challenge students to think of a resolution for the huge global ecological impact of the fashion industry. Ask them to design a proposal for reducing this impact while maintaining their ability to dress with style.

Walk & Wonder

Simply walk with the students. Ahead of time, alert students' attention to something they can wonder about as they wander. That is to say, make the walk spark wonder.

- Students might be asked to focus on the body as they walk—guide them in noticing the feeling and flow of their arms (what they do with their arms, usually unconsciously perhaps), the feel of their feet on the ground, the sensation of the nose as it encounters different smells.
- They may be invited with you on a “systems” walk where they would be invited to notice different systems at play (e.g. transportation systems, water systems, communication).
- They might be invited on an “impact walk” where they would be enlisted to spot all evidence of human impact on nature.
- They may take part in a “concept walk” finding examples along the way of interdependence or some other ecological concept.
- You might have students try to spot different shades of a single colour on a “colour walk” or identify different natural sounds on a “sound walk”.
- Alternatively, students may choose what they will look (smell, hear, listen) for as they go.

Hideaway

Allow the students to explore the playground/school ground. Have them find a special or “secret” place that they would hide away in if they could.

Ask the students to recreate the shelter using various craft supplies. What natural materials would they use to create their shelter?