

# Second Grade / Spring or Fall Walk / At A Glance

Soils 45 minutes

## Goals

- Examine and compare soil in different environments, observing color, texture, and smell
- Observe that soil is made up of living and non-living material
- Learn about the role of living things in making soil

## Observe different soils in the schoolyard

• 5 minutes

- *Looking around, what do you notice about the soil, is it the same color everywhere we look? Where do you see soil? Is there anywhere we would not find soil?*
- *Today we will take a closer look at the earth to make some discoveries about soil. We will visit a variety of sites around the schoolyard. How might the soil be similar or different in these locations?*
- *Visit the blacktop, What do you see in the cracks? Is there soil under the blacktop? Is there soil scattered on top of the blacktop? Is this soil? What do the grains look like? Are they all the same?*

## Visit 3 different sites. For each site, give each child a pinch of soil, children should:

- Smell the soil
- Touch & describe (dry, moist, gritty, etc.)
- Rub soil and smudge on worksheet for color
- Look at the sample with the hand lens, note the size and shapes of the particles
- Note living (roots, leaves, fungi, etc) and non-living things (minerals)
- Dig down a few inches using the trowel and notice whether or not the soil changes
- Discuss similarities/differences with other sites
- Fill in holes and replace any clumps
- Look for signs of erosion

## Exploration sites listed in no specific order

• ~7 minutes at each site

### Site #1 Soil in the Grassy Area (topsoil or humus)

- Carefully remove a plug of grass. Compare to blacktop. Soil likely to be darker in color, more roots and pieces of leaves, fewer mineral bits. Soil feels softer, less gritty. Living thing in soil might include earthworms, insects, and fungi, aiding in decomposition. Non-living things include grains of sand.

### Site #2 Soil near a disturbed area such as the playground or access road (sand/gravel/clay)

- *Is sand soil? Does the soil change as we dig deeper? Are there any living things in the soil? How is this different from being at a beach? Are more or less plants growing in the sand compared to a grassy area?*

### Site #3 Soil from edge area or woods (mulch)

- *What do you see on the ground covering the soil? Where do all the leaves go over time? What might we find under the leaves? Does the soil change as we dig deeper? How?*

#### Decomposing Log

- *What is happening to the log? What does the ground under the log look like? Can you find any living things? What does it mean to decompose? Carefully place the log back as found.*

## Wrap Up

• 2-3 minutes

- After students complete their worksheets, discuss findings and discoveries.  
*What about soil surprised you on our walk? What type of soil do you feel is best for planting?*

This summary does not replace the Walk Guide. Activities, their order, and duration will vary depending on your group dynamics and weather.

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