

Goals of Environmental Education

To enable children to experience, appreciate and begin to understand the natural world and its rhythms and cycles. It is NOT a collection of facts to be memorized, but an attitude toward the living and non-living world and themselves as learners.

Walks are consistent with grade level science curriculum. And they provide an active, hands-on learning. Walks provide chances for children to explore, discover, be curious and sharpen observation skills. It empowers children to realize that they can learn from their own experiences. They don't always have to be taught by someone else.

Tips for Walk Leaders

1. **Convey the excitement and fun of discovering nature.** Encourage children to talk about what they know in nature and to be proud of their knowledge. Ask questions that help children observe, assess, describe and enjoy what they have learned.
2. **Be Prepared.** Read the walk guide in advance and understand where you are going and what the activities you are directing. Compare similarities and differences. Leave the teacher with a list of students' observations, questions.
3. **Ask the children questions and wonder out loud.** Encourage children to ask and answer questions. Don't lecture, but observe and discover together. Listen and value children's observations, questions, and ideas. Give children opportunities to come up with ideas, make reasoned connections and draw conclusions. Encourage students to observe using eyes, ears, touch, smell. Never say their answer is wrong ("That's an interesting thought. Are there other ideas?")
4. **Don't worry about covering every item in the walk.** Often other interesting items appear. Be flexible and respond to the unexpected discovery.
5. **Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know".** Capture the questions on paper and encourage the children to research an answer.
6. **Observe nature without disturbing it.** Be respectful of the environment i.e. replace logs, don't collect flowers, insects, etc.
7. **Keep the walk within the specified time frame.** Set a time to return to the classroom and honor it.
8. **For an exceptionally spirited group,** refocus them by asking direct questions, completing their worksheets, engaging in a calm activity (listening with closed eyes, observing something small). Return early to classroom if students are having trouble.

9. **For a spirited individual**, redirect him/her by asking individual questions, giving him/her a specific task. Often children have trouble focusing outdoors in a space where they usually play. Don't be afraid to give two warnings to a child. It is unfortunate, but not unreasonable to return a child to the classroom (or teacher if s/he is outside) if they are consistently disruptive. Try to focus on children who are engaging and leave discipline up to teacher.

10. **Consider having your child in someone else's group.**

11. **Keep children safe.**

- a. Always have children under the supervision of an adult. Ensure
- b. children understand that they must stay with their leader.
- c. Caution children about poison ivy, stinging nettles, ticks, mosquitoes.
- d. Do not allow the children to pick up any trash. We do not want
- e. anyone to be hurt with a sharp or rusty object. It is valuable to wonder
- f. how it all got there!
- g. d. Ensure that nurse knows class is going out for a walk.