



## **Exploring the School Grounds with a focus on Literacy and Numeracy**

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This practical workshop aims to engage participants in a variety of literacy and numeracy activities around the school grounds. The workshop will explore outdoor spaces through a variety of activities using our senses of observation, touch, feeling and communication and will encourage participants to engage with nature. This session will be of interest to primary teachers and would enhance any outdoor programme. Participants will be encouraged to share their own ideas and expand the ideas presented. Active participation is required to take fully advantage of the session.

# Exploring the School Grounds with a focus on Literacy and Numeracy

## Aims:

- Explore opportunities for learning in literacy and numeracy in the curriculum
- The focus will be on local environments particularly the school grounds.
- Discuss and experience a range of learning activities and share ideas

## Introduction and overview

**Language: A selection of the following will be presented.**

### 1) Find a 'Treasure' or 'Taonga'

**Listen ... Look...Touch - This activity is useful for creative writing and poetry**

- Select your own special plant ('special treasure or tonga' is the individuals choice.)
- Give this 'Special Treasure' a name  
e.g. Fern - Shelter from the storm, Kowhai – Tuis Heaven
- Ask questions for example:
  - Where did it come from and how did it get here, how long has it been here?
  - Find a buddy and share the 'treasure' and answers to the questions.
- Write down all the words you can think of that describes your treasure
- Develop a 4 lined poem using as many of the words as you can.

**Extensions:** Decorate your poem with sketches or rubbings.

- A digital photo of the object could be used to enhance the presentation
- Share your work with the class

### 2) Back-to-Back. (Select an interesting natural setting)

- In pairs sit back-to-back
- One person has a pencil and paper
- The other selects a natural object e.g. flower, bush (keep it small and simple)
- Sitting back-to-back the person then describes the object in detail to the other person using descriptive language.
- Be careful not to tell the other person what it is
- The person drawing can ask clarification questions e.g. does the line begin at the top of the page.
- Share the picture and swap over and discuss the descriptions which were helpful
- Share some of the pictures with the class once everyone has finished
- What do you both notice when describing your selected scenes?

**Note:** This activity improves with practice. Extend this activity to more complex and distance scenes.

### **3) Adjective Bingo: Oral language and observational skills**

- On your Bingo Card with 12 to 15 squares write your chosen adjectives
- Go outside and find an object that highlights the adjective
- Draw the object in the Square that matches the description e.g. soft, round, pointy
- Discuss the different objects that matched the descriptions

### **4) Big Fernie: Oral language and observational skills**

- Find a plant that has interesting shapes and textures
- Look closely at your plant
- Write down as many words as you can that describes the plant or tree
- Use heading such as: What does it feel like? What does it look like? What does it remind you of?
- Use these words to write a story or develop poem.

### **5) Poetree – Language Activity to stimulate descriptive words**

- Find a large tree or bush and spread the class around the tree at different spots
- Squeeze out every word possible that accurately describes the tree or bush
- Write down as many describing words as you can as a class or pairs
- Use these words in a story or poem
- Share the story or poems with the class.

**Extension:** Try using different objects you find in the environment

### **6) String Hike – Oral and/or written language to extend students imagination**

- Each group will need a length of string 3 – 5 metres and pegs to mark the journey
- Design a trail along the length of the string and mark significant sight with a peg
- Imagine yourself as a tiny person shrunk to the size of an ant.
- Your task is to travel along the string as tiny person or ant it is a great distance
- Describe your journey as if you were an ant or tiny person and pay particular attention to each small peg or cone.
- Write a short story as if you were a very tiny person keeping a record of what you see during your hike.

### **7) Word Sketching – A wonderful way to gather words for language tasks**

- Use a can or a circle and divide the circle into quarters
- Hold it up to the scene you want to record
- Write down all the words that describes what you see on the corresponding location.

### **8) Telling Stories – Useful for oral language skill development**

- Find a shady spot and sit together and create a story
- Many years ago, when the school was built .....
- Take turns to contribute in pairs or as a class
- Together create a story about its journey to this spot.
- Both look closely at the treasure, then close your eyes and feel it

## 9) Human Camera (Snap Shot) Adapted - Hillary Commission (1995) Kiwi Outdoors. p.84.

- Select three photos using natural scenes for a partner.
- Demonstrate care and support of a partner during an unsighted lead.
- Describe or draw one of the photos in detail.

### Learning Sequence

- This activity involves guiding (photographer) an *unsighted* partner (camera) to a scene and allowing them to open their eyes for 1-3 seconds to view the scenes and gently squeeze the camera's shoulders allowing the camera to open their eyes for 2-3 seconds.
- The camera then shuts their eyes again and the process is repeated twice more.
- Gather back at the listening circle and draw or describe the most vivid photo in detail.
- Retrace and revisit the photographs looking closely and appreciating other details you missed.
- Adapt these activities to focus on the particular area of study such as different shaped leaves or habitats of insects etc.

## 10) How Does It Feel? Adapted from Hillary Commission (1995) Kiwi Outdoors, p. 78.

- Describe the feelings after touching different textures, using adjectives.
- Demonstrate care and support of a partner during an *unsighted* lead.
- Develop a poem using the 4 -6 adjectives

### Learning Sequence

- This activity involves leading an *unsighted* partner to three different natural textures (leaf formations, tree bark, stones) in a defined area and allowing them to feel the textures. Record one word that describes the feeling of each texture.
- In listening circle explain and discuss some important things an unsighted person will need when being guided, for example a comfortable way of leading and communicating.
- As individuals spend 1-2 minutes exploring textures that would be suitable for a partner.
- Buddy up with a partner and agree as a pair on your own guiding procedures.
- Decide which partner will be the first *unsighted* person and who will be the *eyes*.
- Note the *eyes* must commit to guiding partner safely and must communicate clearly. (*Blindfolds are optional and keeping eyes closed can be a challenge in its self*)
- The *eyes* leads the *unsighted* partner to the different textures and records one word the *unsighted* person suggest from each texture.
- Swap roles
- Put all the words together in your pair and write a poem using 6 – 8 words
- Share your poem with another pair or group.
- Talk with your partner about any improvements or things you liked about your partners guiding techniques.

**Extension:** With your eyes open retrace and revisit the textures. Observe closely the shapes, colours and the way it feels.

**Note:** Emphasising senses other than sight is a way of getting learners to interact much more deeply with the environment.

## Numeracy

### 1) Discovery –Great for Maths and Language development

- Discover objects related to texture which could be described as: soft, rough, slimy, coarse, knobbed, furry, hairy, waxy, hard, rough etc.
- Discover objects related to shape which could be described as: round, triangular, pointed, curved, small, large, etc.
- Discover objects relating to density e.g.: spongy, solid, thick, compact, porous, lumpy, etc.
- Discover objects relating to temperature such as: hot, cold, moist, dry, wet, damp, cool etc.
- Discover objects relating to size such as: narrow, large, small, bulky, miniature, tall,

### 2) Estimation and Measurement

a) Estimate the girth of a tree: Answer \_\_\_\_\_

- Measure your tree: Answer \_\_\_\_\_

b) Estimate how height is your tree? Answer \_\_\_\_\_

- Use the suggested methods of measuring.
- How close were you?

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

c) Estimate your stride length. Answer \_\_\_\_\_

- Measure your stride length. Answer \_\_\_\_\_
- How close were you? Answer \_\_\_\_\_

d) Graph your groups pulse rates or breathing rates

- Standing
- Sitting
- Jogging

e) Running or Walking recording either personal or as a class.

- Graph times
- Calculate distances from one town to the other

**Key Ideas highlighting the benefits of School Grounds learning and connections with the natural environment and the community**

- **Holistic and integrated**
- **Local in the school grounds,**
- **Low cost, accessible and opportunity to revisit regularly.**
- **Observation of the little things.**
- **Slow the experience and a deeper appreciation.**
- **Sensory - using a variety of senses of touch, sight, hearing and smelling**
- **Skills Development - communication, observation, trust, responsibility.**