Investing in Nature

A Partnership for Plants in Canada
Un partenariat canadien pour les plantes

Colour Me

Art and Science

Source:

Celebrating Ecoschools: Festival Ideas booklet, Toronto District School Board and Earthwalks, Institute for Earth Education

Basic Description:

This activity is in the same vein as the numbers scavenger hunt, where students are encouraged to 'see' nature differently. In this case, students are asked to look closely to find the rainbow of colours found in a superficially-green dominated landscape.

Materials:

- Paint chips, in rainbow colours- available from a local hardware store, cut into individual pieces
- A soft bag for the paint chips to go in

Time Allotment: 15- 30 minutes per session.

This is a short activity that can be used in conjunction with others on a hike. To be even more effective, you could play two rounds of this activity- one in a natural area of the grounds, and one in an area that is formally planted, with lots of colourful blooms. Again, the independence level of the class will determine how much time to allot. Younger kids will need more guidance and more time to complete the activity.

- Introduction- 2-3 minutes
- Activity- 10-15 minutes
- Debrief- 5- 10 minutes

Procedure:

Introduction:

- Take the group to a naturalised area of the grounds, an area less likely to have a large variety of obvious colours (field, meadow, forest)
- Ask the group what colours they can see from their circle (likely you'll get responses of green, brown, blue, white)
- Tell the group that in fact there are pieces of the rainbow hidden all over this area- by looking especially closely, they can find all kinds of colours
- Challenge the students to find as many different colours as they can- selecting a colour chip and matching it as closely as possible to a colour in the surrounding area. When they think they've found a match, have an adult confirm the match and give them a new chip

Activity:

- Have the teacher of the class put the students into pairs, and assign 2 or 3 sets of pairs go searching with a parent volunteer or their teacher
- Set some kind of boundaries to keep the searchers within view
- Give the groups as much time as they need to have discovered at least 3 or 4 colours or until a significant number of searchers get bored or distracted, whichever comes first

Follow-up/Discussion:

- Bring the class back into a seated (or standing) circle
- Ask all the pairs who found one colour match to raise their hands (hopefully, all will do so). Continue to ask until the pairs have run out of colours. Get a few pairs to share (by explaining), where they found their colour. Ask if they were surprised where they found it.

- Ask the students which was the most difficult colour to find? Why? What was the easiest? What surprised them about their search for colours? Encourage even the quieter kids to share what they found.
- Ask if they were a plant that wanted to stand out in this area what colour would they want to be? If they wanted to be as invisible as possible? Ask for ideas about why plants might want to stand out, or be camouflaged? When time is up, or stories have run out, congratulate everyone for doing a great job
- Consider pointing out that nature makes sure to have lots of different kinds of plants, and with so many kinds of plants, we can be sure to find all kinds of colours.
- Continue on to the next area if playing again

Extensions:

- Bring the class out to the grassy playing field to repeat the activity. Have the children compare how easy it was to find colours in their schoolyard than at the Arboretum/Botanical Garden (of course, it should be much harder at school). Have the students make suggestions as to why it might be more difficult (fewer types of plants to choose from).
- During art, have the student paint or draw their favourite colour from the activity. When dry, hang the paintings in an arc across the class wall in rainbow order, emphasizing all the colours found in nature