

GWOW (7/2014) Project/Lesson

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NNNC (Noon Nurture Nature Club)

OVERVIEW:

Nature is good for us...good for children. Research shows that it is important and fun for children to have frequent and varied opportunities for play i.e. to connect with nature outdoors.

Studies show children are spending less and less time in free play outdoors. If our next generation will be charged with caring for our increasingly changing and de-generating climate and environment, their love care and concern for the natural world must begin at an early age.

To care about something you must have a relationship with it. Children who regularly interact with nature are happier, healthier, more focused, self-confident, creative and cooperative. Additionally, they are better problem solvers and physically fit. Children who "connect" with nature have greater connection with the environment, their culture, community and the world at large.

Nature is everywhere and available e.g. right out your door, the playground, park and our neighborhoods. With NNNClub we want children to connect with nature and create a lifestyle where curiosity and frequent experiences with the nature world is "fun"amental to their life i.e. where they begin to feel interest, concern, caring and a responsibility to nature and the environment.

As the NNNClub educator, you will be reaching out to children and helping them overcome barriers that keep them inside and disconnected from the natural world. You will help lead the children toward an increased awareness of the rich, rewarding and diverse natural resources at their doorstep and in the process, increase their caring and concern to preserve it as young people and as future adults.

SUBJECTS:

Science, language arts, service learning, literacy, math

LEARNING BENEFITS of NNNClub participants:

A brief list includes e.g. observation, experimentation, cognitive skills, motor skills, creativity, technology skills, literacy skills, emotional development, perspective taking, imagination, gross motor skills, small motor skills, sorting, classifying

### GRADE LEVEL:

K-5 (elementary) Students will self-select/refer to join teacher lead activities during the noon hour i.e. recess time to participate and learn in the course of NNNClub activities.

### OBJECTIVES/KEY BENEFITS for NNNClub participants:

- \* Combine educator led nature/natural world activities with kid driven play i.e. spontaneous nature observations
- \* Share outdoor (nature adventures) with peers
- \* Experience the benefits of time spent together with others i.e. adults, peers outside
- \* Share knowledge with others
- \* Explain their nature “discoveries” with others
- \* Gain an increasing sense of “ownership” i.e. care for the natural world, their local environments and communities.
- \* Gain confidence and knowledge as they begin to see a place over many days, seasons and/or climates.
- \* Consider local nature restoration or service projects, improvements e.g. clean up in spring.
- \* Begin to experience activities in nature they have never done and push past barriers e.g. fear of the natural world.
- \* Discover and explore the natural world i.e. listen, observe, climb, play, talk, collect, find animal and plant life and in the process have lots of fun.
- \* Gain an appreciation for the wonders of the natural world and their own abilities.
- \* Begin to re-connect to the natural world, their local environment and communities.
- \* This time experiencing nature will allow their brain to integrate and expand on what was absorbed through more structured (i.e.class) activities.
- \* To increase and deepen children’s awareness of the interrelationships between them, their community nature and the environment etc.

### MATERIALS (Suggested):

- Small notebooks for field observations i.e. to record, review and report findings, observations i.e. what was found, smelled, heard, touched, or other items of interest.
- Pencils
- Local field guides e.g. trees, birds, insects, weeds, plants etc. (The educator has these for reference/inquiries.)

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- Small nets (to capture “specimens”
- Magnifying glasses (Note: these can be inexpensive and found on Amazon or other online resource.)
- Binoculars
- Bug boxes or individual “sample sacks”.
- Digital camera to record discoveries and activities
- Album or scrapbook to preserve samples or activities for all to view over time.
- Bell or whistle to call group back to sharing circle or to end each activity.

TIME: 20 – 25 minutes over noon recess 1 x weekly

Leader Notes:

- Start in nearby natural setting/location e.g. playground, path near the school etc.
- Plan on mini “themes” for each noon nature meeting e.g. looking for bugs, birding, collecting leaves/plants etc.
- Since it is during noon hour i.e. student free time, welcome all that have an interest. Overtime, the students with ongoing interest in this exploration of the natural world will undoubtedly continue to want to participate, others with less interest will fall away.
- To start the activity, explain the nature themed activity for that day to those gathered.
- Allow 10-15 minutes for free exploration of designated area to observe, to collect samples, for students to interact with the environment etc.
- Whistle or ring bell to call students back for a “sharing circle” to e.g. discuss and share discoveries, thoughts, experiences, ask questions etc. I would recommend as many children as possible be given the opportunity to share. As students share (in good weather) all participants could sit or stand in a circle.

Sample Lesson: A Bugs Life

- Build upon children’s foundational knowledge, logic skills, creative thinking and observational skills.

Procedure:

- Tell assembled children that scientists who study insects are called entomologists and today they will become min-entomologists. during today’s Noon Nurture Nature (NNNC) club activity.
- Tell them insects have 3 body parts i.e. head, abdomen, thorax and most have 6 legs.
- Give each (if not enough materials have the students pair up) a small magnifying glass, plastic baggie.

- Have children go (allow about 10-15 minutes) go off to find “insect specimens” or they may just observe them. Tell them to collect any specimens they may find i.e. “samples” to share in circle time.
- After 10-15 minutes ring bell/whistle to call all student entomologists back for circle sharing time.
- In “circle sharing time” provide an opportunity for participants to talk about e.g. any specimens found, their observations or other discoveries, question that may arise. Have field guides hand and if time try and identify any unusual (i.e. not obvious) specimens found. Students may also, use this time to write or draw in their notebooks. Students who do not wish to retain their specimens may offer to “donate” to the Noon Nature Nurture Club album.

Additional Noon Nurture Nature Club Activities/Lesson ideas to explore the natural world (and gain an appreciation for it) e.g.:

- Flora and Fauna Fun: students gather/explore plants and other fauna. Using clear vinyl self-adhesive paper, press, preserves, and identify collected samples.
- Partly Cloudy – Pretty Fun: Choosing a day with much cloud activity, ask students to “find” in the clouds (creative ideas are encouraged!) pictures. After a period, help student to identify cloud types and what they mean i.e. weather, impact on environment etc.
- Rainy Day Rain Gage: Get a 1 liter bottle, cut off top. Add 1/4” marks along the side with a permanent marker. Place in an open area (to collect any precipitation). After a period of time e.g. day, week, month measure rainfall.
- Noon Nature Scavenger Hunt: Prior to activity, walk the chosen environment you will use for the hunt. Make note of interesting or special natural/environment items e.g. knot on an oak tree, birch tree, ant hill etc. Make a list of things to “hunt”. Send students out to scavenge the area in teams of two or more. Have them mark as “found” items on the list with the location. Students who “observed” and found the most items on the list get a small prize.
- Ant Hill Antics: If you have an ant hill nearby set out to observe/experiment ant action i.e. what foods do they seem to prefer? (Try honey, bread crumbs, sugar, lettuce). Lay the food 1 “ apart. How long did they take to find the food? What did they like? What didn’t they like?
- Sensory Nature Walk: 15 minute activity. Ask the students not to talk, but to use their senses i.e. smell, listen, look, touch etc. May have them try each sense for 5 minute experiment or 15 minutes for all senses (w/out talk). Have them write or speak (in sharing circle). Have them observe record or share in their notebooks. You may wish to try this activity in different environments if possible e.g. field, wooded lot, path, near water or even the playground.

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Optional Noon Nurture Nature Club Student Observation Sheet (this may be used in lieu of a notebook):

You may prepare and hand out prior each activity (as appropriate) for each student participant:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Month: \_\_\_\_\_

Season: \_\_\_\_\_

See? \_\_\_\_\_

Hear? \_\_\_\_\_

Smell? \_\_\_\_\_

Touch? \_\_\_\_\_

Do: \_\_\_\_\_

Find: (collect any samples? What? Any surprises found or noticed?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Place specimen/sample in your own or NNNClub album.