



SENSING NATURE PREVISIT MATERIAL

This program encourages children to use their senses in exploring the natural world. Students will review their five senses, learn about animal senses, and take an exploratory walk. The following activities adapted from *Fostering a Sense of Wonder During the Early Childhood Years* by Ruth A. Wilson, Greyden Press, 1993, will assist you in preparing the class for their visit.

Sharpen the sense of hearing

Engage the children in listening to heartbeats through a stethoscope. Have them listen to their own heartbeat, their friend's and the classroom pet's. Encourage them to listen for differences in their heartbeat and the heartbeat of the rabbit or guinea pig. Later, when the children go outdoors encourage them to listen for the "heartbeat" of a tree (best done in spring) and the "heartbeat" of the earth. They (and you!) may be surprised as to what you hear. The sense of hearing can also be heightened by listening to and joining in on repetitive sounds in such children's books as *Over in the Meadow* by Ezra Jack Keats.

Another listening activity involves having children close their eyes and listen for either environmental sounds or sounds made by the teacher (e.g. tapping a pencil, ringing a bell, etc.) Children can sit or lie on the floor with their eyes closed. They are asked to point in the direction from where the sound is coming. Individual children can be called on to identify the source of the sound (i.e. what made the sound you heard?).

Sharpen the sense of sight

Challenge the children to carefully attend to different colors and shapes. Bring in a variety of objects from nature. These could include seeds, pine cones, leaves, twigs, etc. Lay out on a table blocks or drawings of different shapes (square, triangle, circle). Ask the children to look carefully at the items from nature and match them with the different shapes. If they need help in getting started, you might show them how the end of a small branch is often shaped like a circle, and that many pine cones have a triangular shape.

Sharpen the sense of smell

Provide a variety of materials with pleasant, distinctive scents. Include items from nature such as a cupful of damp earth, freshly cut wood, crushed leaves, bags of herbal tea, and fresh flowers.

Sharpen the sense of taste

Introduce a wide variety of raw fruits and vegetables – both separately and in combination. You might include cucumbers, green peppers, raw potatoes, grapefruit slices, kiwi fruit, blueberries, cabbage, and other foods which may be new to some children.

Have children compare the taste of one piece of fruit to another one of its kind. You might choose an apple or an orange. Give each child their own pre-sliced piece of fruit. Ask the children to taste just one slice at first and eat it very slowly. Encourage them to pay close attention to how it tastes. Is it sweet; very sweet; a little sour; etc.? Then ask them to exchange a slice of their fruit for another. Does this slice taste a little different? Is it sweeter, a little more sour, etc.?

Sharpen the sense of touch

Use snack time to introduce a variety of textures as well as tastes. Encourage children to feel with their fingers and their tongues the textures of different foods. How does a cracker feel? How does the inside of an apple feel compared to the outside? How about the inside and outside of a banana? And doesn't a spoonful of ice cream feel wonderful when first placed in your mouth?

Animal Senses

Which senses does the rabbit depend on?
Connect the dots to find one! Color the rabbit.

