

## **Field Activity: Focus Activities —Tips and Tricks for the Trail**

**Goal:** To grab or focus the students' attention and to assist the students in recognizing that they will use 4 of their 5 senses on their walk.

These activities are designed to engage the students either at the beginning of your walk or at any time along the trail when you feel the need to gather the group together to refocus their attention.

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It is so important to connect with each student in your group right away. Make eye contact and say their names. Play one of these focus activities to tune everyone in and to get a feel for the strengths and weaknesses of your group.

Don't hesitate to let the day leader know if you have any concerns or difficulty, or if you anticipate a "problem" student after the classroom visit.

Make your expectations clear to your group. For example, say "I have only 2 rules: No running and, everyone stays behind me on the trail." Assign the parent to bring up the rear. You may prefer to have the students come up with the rules. They will usually add something about not hurting nature. If they miss some key safety items, you fill them in, ie: running, staying together.

Here are some suggestions to keep your group engaged:

- Give the high-energy student a job. Put them in charge of bug catching by giving them a Snapy, have them record the scavenger hunt by giving them a clipboard, etc. It is advantageous to have enough jobs for all the students in the group to elevate competition. (see Each A Specialist in your training binder).
- Make your group feel special. Say "We are so lucky today because we get to go this way or, we get to do this first....."
- Have the group pick a name for themselves; this works well if you suggest 2 names of something that lives in the Laguna such as bobcats, coyotes, otters, crawdads, etc. and they can vote by closing their eyes and raising their hands. Then when trying to gather them together you can say, "Bobcats come over here, look what Sally has found!"
- Find a way of catching their attention so they know when something is important. For example, you can say: "1, 2, 3, look at me." and the children respond with, "1, 2, eyes on you." Or, tell them that when you put one finger up, that means something very important is happening and they need to listen or come close to look. Lowering your voice to a whisper so that they have to stop and listen is a good strategy if things are

getting too noisy.

- Sometimes the obvious makes for the best conversations. Draw attention to a hole in the ground. Ask the question, “Who do you think might live here? What does it eat? Who eats it? How did it dig this hole? Where is it now?”
- Be present, respond to each student’s observations with enthusiasm. Showing excitement at a student’s discovery can go a very long way.

### **Raising Sensory Awareness:**

You can ask your students to sit while you do this exercise, which will heighten their sensory awareness in the field. This exercise uses counting. If there are 7 in your group, for example, have the group close their eyes and one-by-one, count from one to seven without counting at the same time as another member of the group. Include yourself and other adults too. If anyone says a number at the same time, the group has to start over again, until the group counts from one to whatever number of people there are in the group. Participants will want a few minutes to talk about what it was like to do this exercise. The leader does NOT start the counting – someone in the group does...

### **Shakers:**

**Give each student and chaperone a canister. Make sure there is an even number of cans, taking one for yourself if needed.**

**Say:** Here is a canister, everyone will get one, you can shake the can and listen to its sound, do not open it. Now, try to find someone in the group who has the same sound as your can. Once everyone has found their match, they can open their cans and see what is inside, smell the contents. The student that has a can that smells should let everyone smell it.

**Ask:** We will be using our senses a lot today, who can tell me what senses you think we will use.

Hearing, seeing, touching and smelling

There is 1 sense we will not use, who knows which sense we will not use?

Tasting

### **Take a Picture:**

**Students stand in a single line facing the docent.**

**Say:** Look at me closely; take a picture in your mind of what I am wearing and how I look. I am going to change 3 things about the way I look and you are going to have to guess what they are. Now turn away from me and wait till I tell you to turn back around.

Suggestions: remove your glasses, put your hat on backwards, change the location of your name tag, roll your sleeve up or down, pull your sock on the outside of your pants.

**Say: (when you are finished)** O.K. turns around. Raise your hand if you can see 1 thing that I changed about my appearance.

**Ask:** We will be using our eyes and other senses today, who can tell me what other senses you think we will use.

Hearing, touching and smelling

There is 1 sense we will not use, who knows which sense we will not use?

Tasting

### **Scavenger Hunt/ Detective Strategy**

We are going to be detectives today, looking for evidence of animals that live here. What kinds of animals live here? Think about the slide show, the migration game, and tracks.

**Prepare clipboard with scavenger hunt paper and pencil.**

This activity will help give your hike focus and is something the students can do individually or as a team. It creates a theme that runs throughout the hike and something concrete for them to do with the things they see and learn. It helps to reinforce their learning: They see it, they understand it, they write it down.

Write students' names at the top of the sheet. (This is also helpful in learning their names). Assign each student to be responsible for 1 topic box on the scavenger hunt paper. There will be more than 1 item in each box. You can assign 1 student to be the recorder or have each student write on the sheet as they find things. For second graders the docent should record what the students discover.

Read each box out loud, for example, **Something an animal left behind**, then ask, "Who would like to find this?" They may want to draw pictures instead of writing the words.

Give the Scavenger Hunt sheet to the teacher to take back to the classroom before leaving.

### **Color chips**

Hand-out 1 color chip to each student. Instruct them to find something along the trail that is the same color as the chip. When they find something, share with the group.

Discussion can be the some of the same concepts found in the Eye Spy Trail description (camouflage, adaptation).

**Each a Specialist** (see description in binder)

## **Riddles**

Kids love these riddles! Use riddles that you have made ahead of time, or brought along from the training binder.

Updated 1/07