



Walk Around the Block

Learning Goal:

To engage and motivate students for the need to learn how they, (and others,) respond and relate to nature within their daily surroundings.

Use this field experience as a “Minds On” activity where appropriate before getting into specific curriculum learning. See Suggested Critical Challenges for Walk Around the Block, sheet for the learning that could follow this field experience.

The intent of “Walk Around the Block”, is to get people to realize subconsciously they prefer an environment that have more “natural” elements surrounding them. (Whether it is a housing development with trees around or a mall with “placed” nature.)

Keep in mind:

78% of the Canadian population lives in an Urban area.

Census Canada 2000

PRE TRIP:

- know the “block” you want to observe: be sure there is enough variety in the immediate environment to elicit an assortment of responses.
- tell students “we are going for a walk around the block”. In this case, do not say why, other than to make observations. If too much is explained ahead of time, the responses may be biased.
- have students work in pairs, alternate role of recorder and observer.
- students will need the “Walk Around the Block” Observation Sheet, pencil and appropriate clothing apparel for the weather conditions.
- decide if additional data may need to be collected depending upon your learning expectation needs. (You may wish to do the additional data on another walk.)

TRIP:

- as you “walk around the block”, have the group stop at each site.
- to do full inventory of the senses (sight, smell, sound feel and taste), the group will have to be silent at some point and the people observing smell and sound, will find the senses intensify if they close their eyes for a moment
- be sure to record information on the observation sheet

POST TRIP:

- have the students rank the sites you visited from “best liked”(1),to least liked (4)

- have them circle the words they like or have a positive feeling about
- show the results on a tally chart for all to see

Debriefing ideas to elicit :

- Are those words “best liked” linked with nature or the natural environment?
(Chances are, the “best liked” site is also the site with the most positive words association and are linked with nature)
- Is there a specific association with the words they did not circle?
- How does this have implications for planning the surroundings in which we live?
- If we know what we prefer, then can we not plan for this?

SUGGESTED CRITICAL CHALLENGES FOR WALK AROUND THE BLOCK

Grade 1: Connections to **The Local Community** (OE: recognize that communities consist of various physical features and community facilities that meet human needs,) **Characteristics of Living Things** (OE: investigate needs and characteristics of plants and animals, including humans)

This could be used for data collection to be recorded on a neighbourhood map. Neighbourhood Map be sure to include the use/learning of mapping conventions checklist to help with the creation of the map. (Title, Legend, Scale, Direction, Borders) How would your neighbourhood map be helpful to people? The trip could be repeated several times to observe human and natural changes in the community linking to Daily and Seasonal Changes.

Critical Challenge: Decide what would be the best plant or tree to cultivate in your neighbourhood, (give a choice of 2 or 3 examples, such as the butterfly bush to attract butterflies or a cedar tree to attract cardinals).

[Criteria to consider may include, what birds or other animals would you like to attract that have the potential to grow in your neighbourhood? How would people like to interact with the plant? Base this on the evidence from with walk with what is there and what is absent. What do students consider an “attractive” plant.]

Grade 6 Biodiversity using observations to see what natural elements exist in the “block” as a precursor to a challenge of designing how to increase biodiversity-what plant species need to be cultivated in order to increase the variety of birds that visit the site. (OE: assess human impacts on biodiversity, and identify ways of preserving biodiversity.) This could also be a weak link to Canada’s Links to the World (OE: explain the relevance to Canada of current global issues and influences)

Critical Challenge: Design a natural area for your school site to encourage at least 2 types of birds to live on that site. [Criteria to consider: what species of birds can live there (needs around climate, food, territory etc., which species do you want why? Where else in the world does this species live?)

Grade 7: Connections to **Interactions in the Environment** (OE: demonstrate an understanding of the interactions between and among biotic and abiotic elements in the environment) and **The Themes of Geographic Inquiry** (OE: analyse current environmental issues or events from the perspective of one or more of the themes of geographic inquiry). The walk around the block provides the positive context of interacting with nature.

Critical Challenge: For your local community, identify an area that is faced with a threat to living things or the loss of plant an animal life. Examples to consider include an area under development, downtown, industrial sites. [Criteria to consider: current land use, future land use, surrounding area, the nature of the threats? (air pollution, water pollution, loss of habitat, high density social issues)]