
Trail Techniques - K-2nd

When working with young students who among us has not had the daunting two minutes of idle time between points of interest? What do you do between turtle pond and the snake pit when no birds are singing? Or how do you keep kids interested on that long trek from fuzzy bunny boulevard to spider web square and you have already smelled and touched all the white flowers? When nature is not cooperating, a couple of quick activities can help keep everyone focused.

On the trail:

- **Teachable moments are the key**

If you are trying to talk about wildflowers and a deer runs in front of you, change topics: focus on the deer. You can draw interest back to the flora by discussing how the deer eats many of the wildflowers.

- **Everything does not have to have a name**

Six year olds are not going to remember: false rue anemone; let them come up with their own name. Some students will try to name it Bob or Fred, but ask them to give it a name that describes the object. For instance: little white sharp leaf?

- **Interpreting for the primary years is hit and miss.**

If an activity or a topic is not working, change quickly. To make these quick transitions, it is essential to have many tricks up your sleeve. Sometimes you may only need a couple minutes of stalling time; other times may be more involved, such as getting from one place to another.

Green game - This game is perfect at the beginning of spring when everything is just starting to become green again. Whenever the leader says green, everyone has to touch something green. This game is great for redirecting attention. (You can obviously have many variations)

Owl game – The leader is the owl; whenever the owl hoots, the mice (students) must freeze to hide from the owl. If anyone moves, they are eaten by the owl. When a mouse is eaten, he or she stands by the leader. Depending on the group and time, whenever a mouse is eaten, it can turn into an owl and have a chance to eat mice.

Track making – This is a quick and easy activity. All you need is some dirt. You can either have the students make up a creature or pick an animal to make a track for.

Critter search – Even without trowels and jars, a simple act of turning over a log can bring excitement. Even if it is the millionth earth worm that they have held or the first millipede they have ever seen, this can lead to lifelong learning.

Using senses – This is not only for the kindergarteners but is important for the older kids too. Remember to have them smell the dirt, taste the leek, feel the water, look closely at the duckweed, or listen to the birds.

Change pace – This is great for getting from one place to another. If you have just seen tadpoles you can swim like them and then turn into frogs and hop.

Find similars – Have all the students find a leaf that looks like yours. If it is still attached to the ground, remind them not to pick it.

Quiet – I find it helpful to give students a time. We are going to be quiet for two minutes and see what we can hear. Depending on the group I may have them sit down and put a finger up for every new sound they here or we may walk along the trail.