

Nature in the Schoolyard

Materials

● Science observation tools such as bug boxes, magnifiers, field guides ● Clipboards or cardboard to hold journals and writing materials ● Camera, (optional) ●

Teacher Talk

“Show me where you found the insect (stone, seed, etc.)”
“Will another one be there?” “We will need to investigate with our field guide to identify that.”

Instructions

Record schoolyard observations of animals, birds, insects and plants on a calendar, graph, or in a journal.

Language and Literacy Extensions

Read *In the Tall Tall Grass* to illustrate the viewpoint of living in the grass. Look from an insects point of view and see many animals living in the tall grass.

Fleming, D. (1995). *In the Tall Tall Grass*. New York: Macmillian.

Helpful Hints

If you catch a creature, return it after a focused observation and discussion.

If the science tools and journals are not stored outdoors, store in a clear backpack to bring outdoors daily.

Have a discussion at group time about discoveries and observations.

Observation/Assessment

Describes observations

Uses science tools

What Children Learn

Creates field notes.

Draws representations of the natural world. Teachers must be aware of their own. preferences for or aversions to the natural world and its creatures. Try to avoid creating fears that might persist during childhood, particularly when you know insects and wildlife are not dangerous. Consider the following story.

A few children tugged at my side to tell me about a grasshopper on the slide. It was a very good viewing area for the children and the grasshopper. The borders of the slide gave a square foot of protected space to the grasshopper. The children leaned from the edges of the slide at various heights. I sat at the bottom of the slide. A crowd of two and three-year-olds gathered, watching for 35 minutes, nearly the entire playground time.

The grasshopper first froze as it tried to wait us out. Then it snatched a sliver of grass with its front leg. He leaped onto my hand, as the children watched my



welcoming reaction. Then the grasshopper did a giant leap onto my shoulder. The children’s eyes widened to see what I would do next. I turned my head to look eye to eye with the grasshopper. Then, a small child nestled her chin on my shoulder between the grasshopper and me to look him eye to eye. This spontaneous lesson ended with children closer to nature.