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Making sense of the sensory

Dr Heather Prince
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Justification and meaning for learning and pedagogy, and wider understanding of issues?

Through experiencing nature do young people actively seek a relationship or connection with it?
Justification of learning and pedagogy

Creativity

Ownership

Progression

(Graham, 2014)
Pedagogical approaches

Curiosity, exploration, inquiry, experience, communication

Forest school?
Nature kindergartens?
Bush kinder?
Outdoor play?
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Sensory activities: derived from writings and practice such as Steve van Matre (Earth Education) and Joseph Bharat Cornell. Now often not (or wrongly) attributed and many practitioners are devising their own activities.
“All young children are ever-present reminders of the fact that their senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling pay an incredible role in what is learned and retained” (Kalisch, 1999, p.30)

“Multisensory experiences in nature help to build the cognitive constructs necessary for intellectual development” (Louv, 2008, pp85-86)
Knowledge, understanding and awareness

Collecting, sorting, classifying leaves by shape, smell, touch

Counting to assess dominance or abundance

Species identification

Research design critique

Science, maths, language & communication, creativity

'arco iris'

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Raising awareness about disabilities

Observation of deprivation of a sense on other senses, body movement & cognition

Disabling the enabled

Mask making: design & technology

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Activity: Orienteering in a small area of woodland

Co-construction of narratives about equality, diversity and inclusion.

Creative but nauseous students!
Experiences in nature are indispensable foundations for the individual development of attitudes and values towards the environment (Bögeholz, 2006).

To enhance sustainability, education and learning must play a key role in changing attitudes and behaviour (Cooper, 1998).

Outdoor experiences that involve understanding and experiencing nature can change behaviour and attitudes and are key attributes of sustainability (Barnes & Sharp, 2004; Prince, 2017).

‘Naturalistic necessity’ (Kellert, 2012)
“Ways of seeing’ privileges sight relative to other sensory modalities” (Macpherson & Minca, 2005)

“Touch assumes a proximal and performative form of knowledge that exceeds representation, thus breaks a distance between subject and object” (Goeser, 2014)

‘Haptic’ experiences

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Colour as a multispecies sensory process or network that generates biosemiotic material effects with their own metaphorical meaning (Yates, 2013)
Concluding thoughts

Sensory activities outdoors enhance interest and motivation (as in other outdoor experiences) and cognition, although evidence is needed.

Link between sensory activities and increase in pro-environmental behaviour is complex.

Can be in local and familiar environments, low cost, with limited teacher expertise (survey 2017) and address core curriculum areas.
Wild is a child

Wild is a child who stays out until dark
Wild is the child that lights fire with bark
Wild is a child with mud on their knees
Wild is the child who climbs up in the trees
Wild is a child a long way from home
Wild is the child with no need for a comb
Wild is a child who wipes their bum with a leaf
Wild is the child who uses a stick to brush their teeth.
Wild is a child who sleeps under the stars
Wild is the child who keeps tadpoles in jars
Wild is a child who fell out of a tree
Wild is the child with their own parking space at A&E
Wild is a child that I would like to be.

References


Goeser, A.H. (2014). A haptic geography: How it feels to be Outward Bound. Unpublished PhD, University of Nebraska, US.


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References (continued)


