

Ideas to start Environmental Inquiry in Kindergarten

Below is a selection of ideas from the book, *Natural Curiosity*. There is a link for this book in the educator's section of my blog. These are a selection of ideas to use for inquiries in September to start off the year. You can never really plan an inquiry unit as you have to wait and see what the children are interested in and the questions they have. This serves as a starting ground.

Focus on Plants, Trees, and Roots

- Begin an environmental inquiry on the seasonal growth of plants
- Start by asking the children what they know example: What is a tree? have children tell you what they know, draw a picture and scribe for them
- Respond to children example: I really like what you have drawn here. Can you tell me about it, why did you decide to draw it?
- Gather for a knowledge building circle and share ideas, when you put all the ideas together it gives you a better understanding of what the children know and want to know, ask the children again what they know about trees to begin the circle
- Ask the children questions such as; what are you interested in learning more about? Do you have any questions about trees? Is there anything about trees you want to learn more about?
- The children may be drawn to ask questions about trees or the inquiry could go into different directions such as animals that live in trees, etc.
- Homework assignment: ask the student to work with their families to accomplish three things, identify a tree in their life that is special to them, draw the tree, explain why it is special
- When students bring back work share with the class
- See where the conversation goes and what inquires, questions and ideas they have
- Experimental learning time: go out into the community and find a special park or area with trees, look at the trees examine the shapes, colours, sizes use your senses, have each child find a special tree or something special they observe and take a picture of it
- Back at class look at the pictures have children talk about why they chose their tree print the pictures and use oil pastels to draw what they saw or what they see in the photos
- Visit this same spot throughout the year and observe the trees seasonal changes
- Designing experiments: based on the children's ideas and inquires create experiments together in the classroom example; examining root systems in clear containers, magnifying glasses to examine differing parts of plants, sketching observations, planting apples seeds, etc.
- After further inquiry and investigation have the children draw a tree again like in the first part of the inquiry unit and scribe or have them label their work to see what they have learned and maybe what they want to learn more about, use this for assessment
- Stewardship: In the spring when it is Earth Day go to the special outdoor place

and take part in an environmental clean up

Inquiry Lab books

- Create inquiry lab books for each student where students can sketch their observations of the natural world
- Go outside and ask the children to look carefully at all the nature all around you and draw a picture of what you notice, it can be big or small, anything that captures your interest
- Knowledge building circle time: ask the children what they noticed today in the classroom courtyard, what do you wonder about what you noticed
- Display children's work and ideas