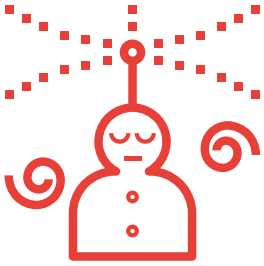


Enhancing Sensorial Connectedness

Getting in touch with a local ecosystem

RELATING | Connectedness

What you will need:

- Up to 12
- Group & individual
- 6 hours execution
- In situ bags

Related Tools:

Cultivating Awe

Menu:

"Understanding comes with experience. Feeling connected comes from being in touch. To enhance a sense of being part of the ecological environment, this tool will foster students' awareness of their senses. For it is merely through their sensing that they will experience connectedness with the environment in need of care.

—Yolanda van Ede

I. Overview

In today's world, it is becoming increasingly important for individuals to develop a deeper understanding of their connection with the environment. Enhancing sensorial connectedness is a transformative approach that invites students to engage with a local ecosystem, fostering a sense of interdependence and appreciation for the natural world.

This tool provides students with the opportunity to observe and reflect upon the interdependence of ecosystems and their own place within. It immerses students in sensory experiences and exploration while collecting materials from their surroundings.

The act of gathering materials not only serves as a means of hands-on exploration but also sparks contemplation. In this way, students not only deepen their individual connection with the environment, but also lay the foundation for meaningful discussions and collective understanding.

Learning outcome

- The student has a keen sense of being connected with a larger ecosystem

II. Learning Activity

Registering a variety of sensorial perceptions and free associations of environmental qualities.

1. Registering Sensorial Perceptions

2 hrs

Gather at the chosen location together and notice the materials around (e.g., on the beach, look what has been washed ashore). The materials can be 'natural' (e.g., seaweed, shells, crustaceans, feathers, etc.) or 'waste' (e.g., plastic items, cans, etc.). Registering sensorial perceptions, the emphasis is first on sight: what, what kind, where and how much?

After observing the surroundings and observed materials, students will move on to the sense of touch. This will begin with noticing wind direction and force, air and water temperature and the texture of the sand, both dry and soaked. Instruct students to differentiate between haptic touch, cutaneous touch and kinaesthesia.

Next, register smells, sounds and, if hygienically permittable, taste.

Throughout this process, it is important for students to be fully present and actively interact with their environment, paying close attention to their own bodily sensations. Encourage them to take note of any sensations that arise, which can later be reflected upon in class or discussed with their peers.

Tip: read more detailed descriptions of haptic touch, cutaneous touch and kinaesthesia.

2. Gathering Materials 1,5 hrs

The students collect materials and record their location and quantity in relation to the environmental qualities observed. While collecting materials, they take note of their own sensory experiences of haptic and cutaneous touch and the thoughts, associations, stories and memories that come to mind.

Touch, being a unique sensory experience, can be shared among students either in the moment or later during class discussions. This allows for a collective exploration and understanding of the tactile sensations encountered during the material-gathering process.

3. Filling Bags 15 mins

Students choose materials to bring to the classroom.

Instruct students to remain aware of their surroundings and the objects they are collecting. They should continue to reflect on both, register their thoughts and, if desired, share their thoughts with those who are physically close to them.

Once the materials are collected, they should be placed in a bag to take back to class. Students may choose to share a bag for collecting the same kind of objects, or they may opt for individual bags for specific types of materials.

4. Reflection and Presentation 15 mins

Upon returning to the classroom, all students empty their bags and place the collected materials on the tables.

Each student then chooses one object from their collection and presents it to the group, sharing their reflections on the sensory experiences, associations, and memories associated with that particular item.

The presentation should last approximately 10 to 15 minutes and include a question-and-

answer session for further discussion and exploration.

Tip: to prepare the presentation, students use the reflective questions provided.

5. Collaborative Artwork Creation

2 hrs

Invite students to form teams of three, based on the common interests and themes identified during the individual presentations. Working together, they will create a collaborative piece using the materials collected that reflects their shared ground.

Conclude by having the different groups present the collaborative artworks to each other, allowing for a collective appreciation and discussion of the diverse interpretations and expressions.

Tip: during the creation process, encourage the students to engage in discussion and reflection.

III. Assessment

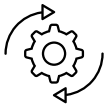
In a tool for enhancing awareness of connectedness, the empirical, sensorial learning process itself becomes a matter of assessment. In Step 4, this is further elaborated by the individual presentations, where students are to reflect on their sensorial experience with the environment and objects.

Purpose

Assessment *as* learning aims to strengthen the learning process and the development of metacognitive skills. It empowers students to direct their own learning and to become independent, critical self-assessors.

Roles

Self-assessment



Characteristics

Self-regulated

Materials

Reflective questions

Assessment

Reflective questions

In preparation of the individual presentations, take the following questions into consideration:

1. What, at arrival, was your first impression of the site?

2. What were your first sensorial experiences? Check the seven senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, haptic touch, cutaneous touch and kinaesthesia.

3. Which sensorial experiences were related to which environmental qualities?Think of all elements and objects encountered.

4. Do you discern an order in your sensorial experiences?

5. What were associations, memories, stories, etc. that came up with your sensorial experiences? Try to explain why, where they came from.

6. Why did you opt for a particular material to collect?

7. How does the analysis of your sensorial experiences relate to your first impression of the site?

IV. Key Advice

Tips for engaging in discussion and reflection (Step 5) can be downloaded below.

Key Advice

Descriptions of haptic touch, cutaneous touch and kinaesthesia (Step 1)

Haptic touch refers to the sense of touch that involves the perception of texture, shape and size. To register a haptic touch, students should pay attention to the physical properties of the objects they are touching. They can explore the texture, shape and size of the object by running their fingers over its surface, feeling its weight and temperature and noticing any other tactile sensations that arise.

Cutaneous touch refers to the sense of touch that involves the perception of pressure, vibration and temperature. To register a cutaneous touch, students should pay attention to the pressure, vibration and temperature of the objects they are touching. They can notice the sensation of pressure against their skin, the vibration that occurs when they tap an object and any temperature changes that they feel when they touch different materials.

Kinaesthesia refers to the sense of body position and movement. To register kinaesthesia, students should pay attention to the movement of their bodies as they interact with the environment. They can notice how their body feels when they walk on different surfaces, lift and carry objects of different weights and move their body in different ways.

Overall, to register these sensory experiences, students should pay close attention to their own bodily sensations and actively engage with the environment. They can take note of any sensations that arise and reflect on their experience later in class or discuss it with their peers.

Key Advice

Tips for engaging in discussion and reflection during the creation process

1. Selection of Materials
Consider the meaning and symbolism behind the chosen materials and how they connect to your shared interests.

2. Variances in Sensory Experiences and Perceptions
Engage in discussions about how your individual sensory experiences and unique perspectives shape the artwork and contribute to a diverse artistic outcome.

3. Significance of the Ecological Site
Reflect on the impact of the visited ecological site, exploring how it has influenced your understanding of the environment and inspired your creative process.

4. Personal Views on Environmental Issues
Foster an open and honest dialogue, sharing your individual viewpoints on environmental concerns and acknowledging the diverse perspectives within the team.

5. Reflection on the Learning Journey
Take time to reflect on the overall learning event, considering the insights gained, challenges encountered, and lessons learned both at an individual level and as a collaborative group.

V. References

Howes, D. (2003), Sensual Relations. Engaging the Senses in Culture & Social Theory, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Howes, D. (2022), The Sensory Studies Manifesto. Sensorial Revolution in the Arts and Human Sciences. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.