

# TRAILSIDE LESSON PLAN

COURSE/PROGRAM TITLE: **Sensory**

DATE: **2019**

TIME: **45 min**

SESSION NUMBER: **1 of 1**

AGE/GRADE:

ENROLLMENT: 12

INSTRUCTOR(S): **Roslyn Dvorin**

PROGRAM PURPOSE: Children with a range of cognitive and/or physical abilities will explore the Trailside Sensory Trail using a full range of their senses.

SESSION CONCEPT(S):

- Use senses to learn about and explore the natural world around you.
- Make unique discoveries outside in the natural world that teach children careful observation skills.

SESSION OUTLINE (ACTIVITIES AND CONTENT, ATTACH ANY HANDOUTS):

- **SET UP PROPS ON TRAIL BEFORE GROUP ARRIVES:**
  - In one classroom set up some “touch” activities. Put out some furs, snake shed, and an antler to allow for a good range of different textures.
    - Additional/optional: use the sensory boxes with objects hidden inside and have the children use their sense of touch to identify what they are. Try to use natural objects such as feathers, snake shed, fur, etc.
  - In another classroom set out a scent activity with a few scents that the kids might be able to guess when practicing using their nose.
  - Bring out Identifier with you.
- Introduce self and Trailside, Watchung Reservation (this special park/ reservation is a place that is reserved or saved just for nature; plants and animals). Please come back again and visit us, the museum and trails are free and open just about every day.
- Today we are going to have fun learning how to use our senses to explore the world around us. What are our five senses? (Have children list them or call them out)
  - We are going to go on a nature walk and will use only four of our senses
    - Sight – point to your eyes
    - Touch – hold up and show your finger tips
    - Hearing -- grab on to your ears
    - Smelling – touch your nose
    - Taste -- but no tasting while outside, save this for your lunch time instead
- We are now going on a walk/hike
  - Go over applicable trail rules:
    - No running, stay on trail, do not touch or pick things
    - Tuck SOCKS into pants
    - Show/explain poison ivy – “leaves of three, leave me be”, rope = “hairy rope, don’t be a dope”
    - Be very quiet = you see more animals
    - Watch your step (tree roots, rocks...don’t trip)
    - Please stay behind the naturalist at all times

START HIKE AT: Sensory Trail Entrance Circle, Gazebo, or either Outdoor Classroom

## SUGGESTED HIKING STOPS:

- Walk through the sensory trail and stop wherever you see something appropriate for the sensory hike, and allow children to experience it. This can vary a lot by season. Make sure to stop at the gazebo area and use the sensory garden boxes for sight, touch, and smell!
- Also when at the gazebo area stop at the sound equipment, and have kids listen on one end while you play a sound with the identifier at the other end. Have them guess the sound. You can do birds, frogs, whatever kind of animal you think the group may especially enjoy, or be challenged by.
- Stop at one outdoor classroom, where you had set up some things to touch. Explain the various items such as furs, snake shed, antler, pinecone, wood, etc. Let kids feel these items and describe the difference in texture.
- Stop at another outdoor classroom and do some scent activities. Allow children to guess a few scents. You can do this in small groups or as one large group.
- **Example Hike (this can vary greatly depending on the season):**
  - Starting at the circle, continue onto the sensory trail to the first kiosk. Play one of the recorded messages, such as the Lenape track.
  - Continue on the path, on the right is a group of wild ramps, you can pick a very small piece to let the kids smell it, ask if it smells familiar to anyone, it smells almost like an onion or leek. But remember we never eat things we find outside.
  - Continue to the poison ivy sign, and explain that this is what poison ivy looks like if we see it anywhere else that is the only sense we will use to discover it, but on this sign we can also use our hands to touch it and feel what it actually feels like to help us remember it.
  - Walk down the trail and look for wineberry stems, these are good to point out because they have thorns and a bright red stem. We don't want to touch these they would hurt us! Only touch things when a naturalist says it is ok to touch.
  - Continue to box turtle sign, talk about box turtles (how they are native to this area, small, live on land in forests near water but they are not aquatic, they like to eat berries, mushrooms, and insects they find on the ground) and allow children to feel the sign.
  - Walk down the trail keeping your ears out for any special animal sounds. If you hear anything ask everyone to be very quiet for about 15 seconds and just listen. When this is done, ask everyone to share what they heard.
  - Near the outdoor classroom with the acorn seats, there is lots of moss have children feel this. Ask what it feels like. Would you like to use that as a pillow? Yes it is nice and soft.
  - You can stop in the classroom to do the touch sensory activity.
    - Stop at one outdoor classroom, where you had set up some things to touch. Explain the various items such as furs, snake shed, antler, pinecone, wood, etc. Let kids feel these items and describe the difference in texture.
  - Past the animal tracks sign is a hickory tree close to the trail on the right side, have children feel the bark ask what it feels like. It is very rough and bumpy.
  - Next there is the nuthatch sign, children can feel the bird and you can play the call on the identifier.
  - A few feet down the trail there is a witchhazel on the right side of the trail you can show the children the flowers, or leaves with gall depending on the season.
  - Next look at the red oak sign, they can feel the acorns on the sign and try to find a few on the ground to show them. Ask what these acorns are good for, explain that lots of animals use them as a great food source. Ask if they know what is

- special about the Northern Red Oak tree, it is our State Tree!
- Next is the nature's recyclers sign, they can feel the fungus on the sign, talk a bit about the importance of decomposers and their role in the forest ecosystem.
- Continue down the trail, children can feel the bark of the London Plane tree (camo bark also a good visual)
- Next is the white pine tree, this is a multi-sensory stop. Feel the pine needles (they are surprisingly soft), smell crushed pine needle, and feel the pinecones, and explain what is important about the pinecones (seeds inside – used for animal food, and how new pine trees grow)
- Continue, on the left towards the woods try to find a black birch that is accessible to pull a small twig off to let the kids smell the wintergreen scent.
- There is a sassafras tree on the right, show kids different shaped leaves, and you can also have them smell the twigs (fruitloop/lemon scent)
- Continue to gazebo area, stop and show kids the buck rub on the gingko tree near the gazebo area/paved circles.
- Do the sound activity with the identifier:
  - Also when at the gazebo area stop at the sound equipment, and have kids listen on one end while you play a sound with the identifier at the other end. Have them guess the sound. You can do birds, frogs, whatever kind of animal you think the group may especially enjoy, or be challenged by.
- Show the sensory raised garden beds and allow kids to experience them (touching, smelling, and seeing)
- Continue towards the next outdoor classroom to do the scent activity:
  - Stop at another outdoor classroom and do some scent activities. Allow children to guess a few scents. You can do this in small groups or as one large group.
- The hike time is likely over by this point; lead the group back towards the building. At the end of the hike, gather children together. You can ask what their favorite sensory item was, or what their favorite sense to use was. Do a tick check and remind the teacher to please fill out the evaluation form. Thank your group.

- **Sight:**

- Flowers of various colors
- Red cardinal
- Gray squirrel
- Green leaves
- Gray tree bark
- Poison ivy

- **Sound:**

- Bird calls
- Crunching leaves
- Wind blowing through tree leaves and branches
- Woodpecker pecking
- Wind chimes

- **Touch**

- Tree barks (beech is smooth, oaks are rough, etc.)
- Soft moss
- Spruce needles
- Buck rub
- Pine needles
- Rocks
- Pinecones

- **Smell**

- Onion grass
- Sassafras
- Black birch
- Evergreens

**Check for Understanding:**

Review our senses and ask the children what their favorite sense to use today was.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES: (How do you measure what they have learned?)

- What are our five senses?
- What are some things that we smelled? Heard? Saw? Felt?

RESOURCES USED [Materials, Books, Computer Files]:

- 2 different textured furs (rabbit, deer for example)
- Snake shed
- Antler
- Scent match up containers
- Identifier
- The following pages with lots of sensory examples
- Optional: sensory touch boxes filled with natural items.

**Naturalist can choose to bring the lists below (laminated) along with them.**

**LIST OF PLANTS FOR SENSORY WALK**

**FUZZY**

- Leaves – lamb's ear
- Burdock leaf
- Paulownia – underside
- Umbrella magnolia – underside
  
- Seeds – sycamore
- Fox tail grass seed head
- Inside Chinese chestnut burr
- Black oak acorn
- White snakeroot
- Thistle
- Goldenrod
- Milkweed seeds
- Locust pods
  
- Other – wineberry stem
- Oak galls on leaf
- Shelf fungus underside
- Turkey tail fungus top
- Feather
- Magnolia buds

**PRICKLY/SHARP**

- Thorns – Multiflora rose stem
- Wineberry stem
- Hawthorne stem
- Buckthorne stem
- Blackberry stem
- Black raspberry stem
- Hercules club stem
- Cat briar stem
- Osage orange
  
- Other – Chinese chestnut
- Sweet gum ball
- Black pine needle
- Holly leaf
- Canada thistle
- Beech nut buds
- Acorn point
- Burdock fruit
- Cryptomeria needles
- Sedge fruits
- Teasel

**SMOOTH &/or SHINY**

- Fruits- Chinese chestnut  
Acorn  
Berries
  
- Bark & Stems- smooth sumac  
Mutliflora rose – between thorns  
Similax  
Cherry  
Black birch  
Sycamore  
Beech  
Ailanthus
  
- Leaves- Beech  
Black oak  
White pine needles  
Black & red pine needles  
Grass  
Rhododendron  
Holly
  
- Animal Fur  
New scat  
Eyes at night
  
- Misc. Sun  
Stream  
Shale  
Quartz pebbles  
Jasper pebbles  
Snow  
Icicle

**FALL**

Nuts, seeds,  
Berries, fruit  
Leaves (pick  
up leaves  
& try to  
match to tree it  
came from)  
crunch

**WINTER**

Birds at feeder  
onion grass (smell)  
moss (feel)  
tree bark (feel)  
evergreen tree (smell)  
squirrel nests (see)  
tracks in snow (see)  
wind (hear)

**SPRING**

Herb garden  
(smell, touch)  
grass (feel)  
birds singing  
ant hills  
worm castings  
nesting materials

**SUMMER**

meadow  
summer berries (touch)  
butterflies  
flowers (smell)  
insects (hear)  
crickets (hear)  
woodpecker holes  
shade (feel coolness)

**OUTDOORS:** Sensory walk is largely opportunistic. Use the following as a general seasonal guide, a sample walk follows.

|                            | <b>Smell</b>   | <b>Touch</b>  | <b>See</b>   | <b>Hear</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| S<br>P<br>R<br>I<br>N<br>G | any flowers<br>herb garden:<br><b>mints, sage</b><br>fringe tree<br>at museum<br>Viburnum at VC<br>Juliana barberry<br>at Museum           | lamb's ear<br>dandelion flower<br><b>new pine needles</b><br>new pine cones<br>larch needles<br>buds on trees<br>birch catkins<br>tree bark | tree flowers<br>cherry<br><b>maple</b><br>cornelian cherry<br>(near loop in<br>chestnut field)<br>magnolia<br>paulownia<br>Pine and pollen tulip | bird<br>wind<br><b>running stream</b>                     |
| S<br>U<br>M<br>M<br>E<br>R | garlic mustard<br>spice bush<br>tulip tree bark<br>on small branches<br>field garlic<br>sassafras<br>black birch<br>fallen pine<br>needles | wineberry stems<br>holly leaves<br>pine needles<br>foxtail grass<br>paulownia leaves<br>elm leaves  | ground flowers &<br>colors<br>chick weed<br>cress<br>violets<br>spring beauties<br>dandelion<br>clover<br>worm castings<br>grasshoppers          | grasshoppers<br>crickets<br>bees<br>bird calls<br>cicadas |
| A<br>U<br>T<br>U<br>M<br>N | mugwort<br>wild mint<br>Queen Anne's<br>lace<br>field garlic<br>umbrella<br>magnolia<br>fruit and seeds<br>black walnut<br>husks           | chestnut burrs<br>acorns<br>beech nuts<br>dock seeds<br>sweetgum balls<br>pinecones<br>seeds inside)<br>turkey tail<br>crategous thorns     | birds at feeder<br>mushrooms/fungi<br>poison ivy vines<br>colors of leaves<br>sassafras leaf shapes<br>(look for tulip tree-cat mask             | crunchy leaves<br>crickets<br>migratory bird chirp        |

|                            | <b>Smell</b>   | <b>Touch</b>  | <b>See</b>  | <b>Hear</b>                                   |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| W<br>I<br>N<br>T<br>E<br>R | maybe not<br>appropriate<br>for this<br>season<br>spicebush<br>pine needles<br>Sassafras | moss<br>evergreen needles<br>smooth bare wood<br>tree bark:<br>river birch<br>gray birch<br>beech<br>oak<br>sycamore<br>dormant buds<br>of tulip like duck's bill | tracks in snow<br>birds<br>old nests<br>dry seed pods | wind in bare trees<br>wind in beech<br>leaves |