

People and Places Project Go! Event - East

Who

Teachers from the East of Scotland

Where

Hermitage of Braid

When

15th November 2012

Why

Time to reflect on the possibilities of a place based approach to outdoor learning

“A hidden gem
in the city – can
we get a pizza
delivered?”



C R Webb



If you go down to the woods today....

Why do you teach where you do? What makes it special? What or who lives there, has lived there, might live there? Aline from BigWorld Adventures in Nature and myself, Caroline from Grounds for Learning, spent a day supporting teachers on the People and Places project to think about these and other questions, as they prepare to build their curriculum around the possibilities of a place near them.

We set up our base among the beech trees in the Hermitage of Braid and as Aline prepared a meal of vegetable broth, baked apples and bananas I walked along the river to meet a group of teachers and Sally from the Forestry Commission.

We set off back to camp with a simple task of introducing themselves to each other along the way - choosing a new partner every time they passed a pink ribbon. Much laughter and conversation followed, but as they talked they forgot to notice the world, and pink ribbons around them. To tune into the space we therefore spent the final part of the journey in silence - just looking for something 'nice'. The difference in feel of these two parts of the journey was palpable - everyone slowed down and when we arrived we shared our thoughts about the place, what we had noticed and how we felt. Everyone mentioned the different effects of having a directed task vs an open ended one - saying that having time to themselves allowed them to appreciate their surroundings and open their senses. Some however said that even the open ended task was too restrictive!

We spent time introducing ourselves to each other and the site, sharing knowledge, thoughts and questions before splitting into clusters and building shelter. Once complete we reflected on how they had changed a space into a place, how the open ended nature of the task sparked questions ranging from who managed the land, the age of the trees, tree identification, prevailing wind direction, problem solving and their feeling of being hidden in an

Fact:
Oaks only
produce
acorns after
80 years

oasis in the middle of the city. With the possibilities of following the questions that come from interactions with the environment, as opposed to predetermined ones, becoming apparent we stopped for a break with food and drinks next to the fire.

After break, we spent time as a group, in pairs and on our own tuning into the space. We did 3 short exercises that could be replicated with any class. The movement of the remaining leaves on the trees were beautiful.

The final part of the day was thinking about the possibilities of the space - what excited or interested them. The full list can be seen below and highlights the range of possibilities and interests that even a small group can have. Each one is different but equally valid and each one will produce motivated and meaningful working if allowed to pursue them. The groups shared their findings and were left to ponder how to make this work within a class -choosing just one or letting each child follow their own interests.

By 5pm we said good bye and good luck to the group -it was dark and cold but hopefully they would return home with renewed energy for their People and Places Project and excited to find the possibilities of a place near them.

Go for a walk listening to the archers.

can I have a snooze?



Possibilities of a place

To end the day we shared ideas of the possibilities of the place they had started to get to know - just a few of the ideas the group would like to do include:

Finding out more about the place: hunt for wildlife (insects and birds)/ bug hunt 2/bat hunt/look for animal evidence/ see a red squirrel/ find out the age of the tree/ feel the bark/hug a tree

Spending social time there: bring family/kids/friends/dog 5/talk to other walkers

Being creative: wood carving/mud art/ make pictures/write in the stuff on the ground/ make a leaf hedgehog/angel/picture/tower/painting/ bark rubbings/ sketch a tree 2/3d art 2/ make a song using leaves/sticks etc/ mud pies/ make potions/ make a den 2/ tarzan swing 3/hammock/ tell kids a story/make up a story/ write a poem/ ghost stories around the fire

Be active: roll down the hill 2/ mud slide/sledging in the snow/ make an obstacle/balance along logs/make a balancing game/ run 4/ Biking/skip/ climb a tree 4/ Shoogle down a hanger/ dig a hole 2/ make bows and arrows 2/spears/ sword fight with sticks/shoot a gun/ create a camouflage outfit/ paintball 2/manhunt 2/ tree tig/ kick the can/ Mudfight/ treasure hunt/ orienteering/ Acorn rounders/jenga with wood/sticks/eye spy/charades/ play hide and seek 6/ sneak up on someone

Be calm: read a book/ sit quietly 2/ left alone/go for a quiet walk/sleep/ lie and look up at the trees and sky/ watch leaves fall off trees/ hide under the leaves/ take a walk along the path listening to the archers/ashes/have a snooze/ cuddle my husband (for warmth)/ do my weekly plan

Explore the river: skim stones 2/ play pooh sticks in river 2/ Throw stones in the river 3 /paddling/ build a bridge/dam/ look under rocks in river

Explore 2

Camp out and have a fire: midnight walk 2/ camp out 4/ look at stars/ make a big fire 3/ try to start a fire using twigs/chop wood/eat bake potatoes 3/ crisps/sausages 2/ more chocolate bananas/ midnight feast/ drink hot chocolate/warm apple cider/diet coke/ get a pizza delivered/toast marshmallows 2/ forage for food

Explore the leaves: bury someone in them/ roll around on them/ collect them/ throw them about/ kick them as you walk/have a leaf fight/ parachute - leaves on top/ gather leaf mould for the garden

Shout at top of voice/shouting competition/
sing the rude alphabet song

Play jenga
with
sticks

I'd like to
cuddle my
husband...
for warmth!