

GETTING YOUR MIND INTO THE FIELD

“One of the tragedies of schooling is the barrier between the accumulation of facts in the classroom and the meaning in the field” A. Storm 1970.

For the past couple of months we have been encouraging you to take learners beyond the classroom walls. Now would be a good time to tackle some of the practicalities and logistics of fieldwork. The “field” we are talking about here is the school grounds.

Field work is a method of teaching and learning and activities need to be well organised. Outdoor classes need not be extra-mural activities but part and parcel of a regular lesson. These lessons are an extension of what is taught in the classroom.

The benefits of using the school grounds are: you do not need transport; parent permission; it is free; teaching time and the curriculum is enhanced and the learner’s skills can be tested.

What should be done beforehand?

- With a lesson in mind teachers need to visit the site beforehand to assess the possibilities.
- Is the time of day suitable? What if it rains or the wind is howling?
- Do you need to inform anyone that you will be out of the classroom?
- Consider other classes to make sure you will not be disturbing them.
- Indoor preparation time will be needed. For example practice or demonstration of field skills, preparation of worksheets, gathering of all equipment (this may also include a small first aid kit) and books, explanation to the learners on how they will be assessed and the code of behaviour.
- Take along bottles of water and ensure the learners are wearing appropriate head and footgear.
- Take a camera.
- Is there a good meeting place to focus attention and wrap up the session properly?
- When you are at the site establish the boundaries so that you can monitor the entire group at a glance. You will need to visit each group or individual at least once during this time to check progress and provide advice.
- Plan sufficient activities to fill the time. Be careful not overload the programme – you can always come back another time.

The more frequently you take the learners outdoors the sooner they will become familiar with the practice and relax in these surroundings, the quicker they will get to work – knowing what to expect and what is expected of them.

For teacher workshops and training on aspects of outdoor education contact Jeanette Stewart at “Learning Through Nature” on 033 330 5980 or 079 184 5011 or enviro.education@telkomsa.net.
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