



Cultivating Mindfulness Outdoors

by Sabrina Carlson

On September 27, 2016 18 students of Kinsey class 5-3 headed out for a walking field trip on the Flagstaff Urban Trail Sinclair Wash. We wanted a simple trip to begin the year and help cultivate mindful and peaceful community for the students in the class.

After an introduction to the Arizona Trail and our expectations for outings, we grabbed our backpacks and headed out. Our first stop was a section of the Urban Trail very near the school where thick patches of western poison ivy was abundant. We paused to look at it carefully, without touching, and discuss how to identify it, and the consequences of getting the oils on your skin. The teacher shared a scary story of a boy at her son's summer camp who ate poison ivy on a dare. Yikes! It earned him a visit to the Emergency Room. I think our conversation really made them think, and will hopefully avoid itchy skin in anyone's future.



The Bell Game

Once we arrived at a quieter section of the trail, we practiced mindful walking. We timed ourselves for 5 minutes to walk slowly and silently, just listening to the sounds of our feet on the dirt and the world

around us. We were amazed at how many things we noticed when we walked without talking!



Making a sound map.

A bit farther up the trail we found a good spot to play the Bell Game. The object of the Bell Game is to carry the bell from your spot to a friend on the other side of the circle without the bell ringing. Everyone stays very quiet to be able to hear if the bell makes any sounds. We added a little extra difficulty by having to walk over a raised cement cap. Everyone really enjoyed the game and loved the challenge of trying to keep the bell silent.

Next we made a sound map. Students sat facing north, and drew a compass rose on their paper to show direction. Then they placed an X in the center of the paper to represent

themselves. As they sat silently and listened to the world around them, they made symbols to represent each sound they heard. A chirping bird might be a check mark, or wind in the trees might be swirls.

Our last activity before we walked back to school was the game “helium sticks.” A group of participants must lift a tent pole up over their heads and return in safely to the ground with each person only placing once extended finger on the pole AND with no team member losing contact with the pole at any time during the whole process. This is the kind of activity that can really bring a group together, or spark some unfortunate arguments.



Communicating with teammates!

This group did incredibly well. Not only did they figure out new ways to communicate, but they got closer to the objective than any other group of students I’ve seen yet!

We returned to school feeling centered and peaceful, excited for many more outings to come this school year!



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