

5TH GRADE ECO TREKKERS AT BALTIMORE LAB SCHOOL

Adapted from BCPS Science Curriculum & Coyote's Guide to connecting with Nature by Jon Young, Ellen Haas, and Evan McGown

The objective of this quarter-long course is to use movement to investigate our environment, closely study the interconnected relationships in our ecosystem, and become aware of our impact on the ecosystem.

Why almost daily nature observations?

Each day our eco trekkers return to a spot they have chosen in the outdoor rain garden in front of our school. They set up their own seat and observe something that no one else can see. They return to the exact spot each day. We mapped spots in the beginning of the year in order to find them again easily. The goal of our sit spot is to let nature or our environment enchants us. We are our most alert here. We also feel ownership of this space for it is from here that we tell our own story.

The trekkers find their spot and begin with 30 seconds of stillness and quiet. They then let their senses and awareness take off. There are, at times, specific objectives of their observation to build experience to take back to the classroom but often their observations and stories become the classroom.

Daily Stories

Reporting from your sit spot is a very valuable field inventory. When we come back to share, the students build self-expression skills. They also start to build self-confidence in the validity of each person's experience. We ask ourselves what can we learn from someone else's story.

"Perception is the ability to read the environment. It is making sense of the environment through the stream of messages coming into the brain from the eyes, nose, mouth, hands, skin, and the whole body...It is the brain's picture of the world and the organized relationship of one sensation to another. Perception is the foundation on which all learning is based." – Sally L. Smith, *No Easy Answers*

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