Expanding Your Toolkit

Teaching for All Learners in the Outdoors

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Outcomes

- Audience will be able to…
  - Identify instructional strategies for engaging English language learners and Special Education students
  - Communicate with families, teachers, and administrators about how your organization can serve these students
  - Acknowledge the value of these strategies for all learners, not just those with unique needs

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Foundational Framings

- You won't always know if a student has a disability or is an English learner, which is why these skills are so great—all students can benefit, even if they don't require modifications or accommodations.
- Some of these might seem very obvious, or already in your toolkit, but they take on additional purpose when you acknowledge that they are designed to improve participation from learners of all abilities.
- There's a lot of overlap between tools that work well for SpEd students and tools for English learners.
- Environmental education (and its related disciplines) lends itself well to providing important context for learners.
- Prepare ahead of time!
  - Talk to the teacher! Try to learn what kids are bringing with them to your lesson, event, or program—are they learning to read, or reading to learn?
  - Research the school's demographic make-up

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Abbreviations

- EL / ELL / EB / ELD
  - English learners
  - English-language learners
  - English Language Development
- SpEd
  - Special Education
- IEP
  - Individualized educational plan
  - A written plan developed by a school to describe the instruction, supports, and services kids receiving special education services need to make progress and thrive in school
- 504 Plan
  - A plan developed by a school to give students with disabilities the supports they need to succeed in the classroom
  - Not all students with a 504 plan will also have an IEP
- ASD / DCD / EBD / OHD / SLD
  - “Primary disability areas” defined in special education
  - Autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental cognitive disability (DCD), emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD), other health disabilities (OHD), and specific learning disability (SLD)

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Vocabulary

- Accommodations
  - Allow a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation.
- Modifications
  - An adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes the standard or what the test or assignment is supposed to measure.
- Assistive technology
  - “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.”
- Sheltered instruction
  - An approach to English language instruction that integrates language acquisition and content objectives.
- Context-embedded
  - Communication that provides supports to the learner that help make the information comprehensible, such as objects, visual clues, gestures, vocal inflections, or expressions.

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SpEd: Prepare students for the experience ahead of time

- Learners with developmental disabilities/Autism Spectrum Disorders or sensory concerns may find it intimidating to visit a new place or participate in a program not specifically designed for them.
  - Good options for these learners: quieter times to visit, sensory friendly restrooms (no auto flushers or hand dryers), quieter places, exhibits, or programs, options for return visits (from 15 minutes to five hours), areas or time for unstructured nature play
- Develop a social narrative introducing learners to the experience
  - Make this available on your website so learners have the option to prepare
  - Perfect collaboration for intern or external partner (i.e. GreenCorps)
- Communicate with the school and encourage guardians/parents to send along something familiar and comforting, or a favorite snack, to reduce anxiety.

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Example: Quiet Quilt

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Example: Secret Snack

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SpEd: Use accommodations for directions and transitions

- Use both oral and printed directions
- Highlight key words in directions
- Give directions in small steps using as few words as possible
- Number and sequence steps in a task
- Have a student repeat directions to check for comprehension
- Provide visual aids
- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another
- Provide additional time to complete a task
- Increase wait time for responses

Sample Fish Dissection Lesson Plan from Mission Science:
https://studylib.net/doc/8184209/fish-dissection---community-science-workshop-network

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SpEd: Provide a variety of sensory tools as part of the program

- Sensory tools are intended to promote regulation, improve focus, increase participation, and enable kids to be available for learning!
- Sensory tools that are easy to implement:
  - Flexible or alternative seating and groupings
  - Heavy (literally) work activities to provide proprioceptive input, such as carrying program supplies, stacking chairs after a program, or gathering rocks and logs
  - Nature-based manipulatives or fidget toys
  - Support vestibular input with movement! (Even simple outdoor activities, like rolling down hills or spinning in circles.)
  - Provide moments or spaces for sensory deprivation
  - Close looking to combat the “green blur”
  - Tactile teaching tools
  - Establish familiar auditory routines for students to follow
  - Have available noise reducing headphones for students who feel overstimulated by a new experience

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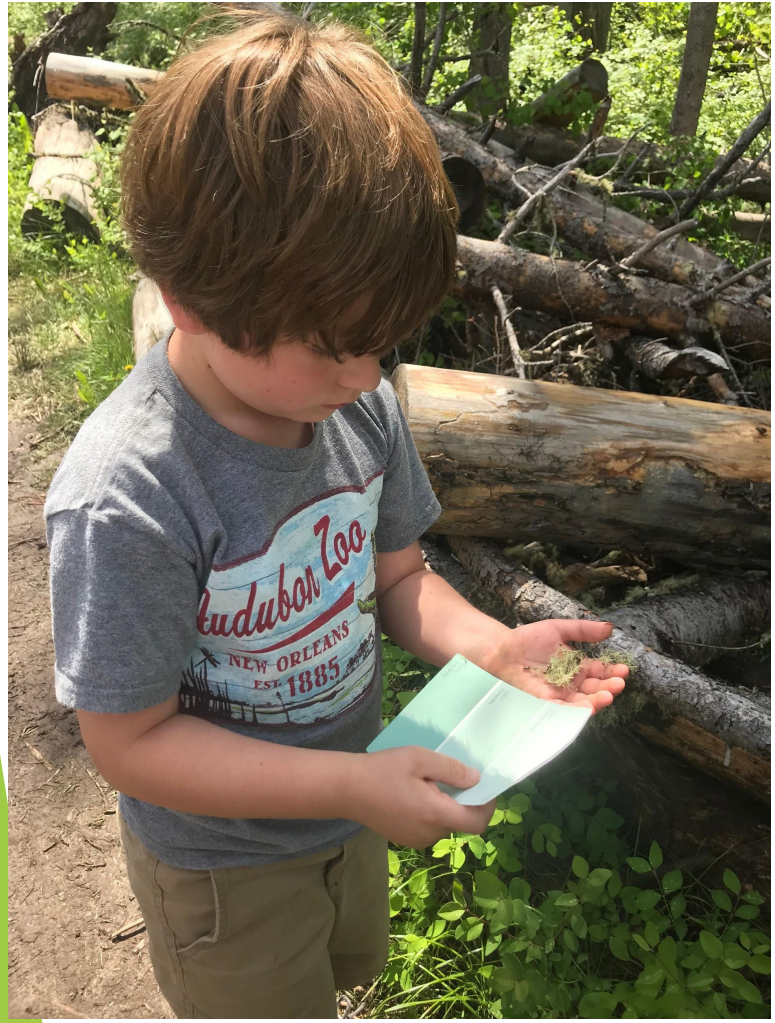

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ELL: Work with parents and teachers to pre-teach key concepts and vocab

- For abstract concepts, a long-term approach to developing students' understanding is best.
- Share with teachers vocabulary they can pre-teach before an out-of-classroom learning experience.
- Recommend a book list for teachers and students to read together before and after the program to deepen the learning experience.
- Remember to plan for adults in your programs (e.g. parents, chaperones). It's easy for them to check out; how might you encourage them to engage learners before and during the program to understand key concepts and ideas?
- If you plan to use groupings, and the program includes English proficient students, then ideally groups will include a mix of language abilities. Ask teachers to pair or group students ahead of time to allow students at various levels of English proficiency to communicate with other English learners and with proficient English speakers.

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ELL: Present information using graphic organizers and other visual tools

- Consider using content-embedded tools such as videos, documentaries, reenactments, images, diagrams, maps, and realia.
- Stop and talk with students throughout, taking time to further scaffold the information presented through visuals, gestures, and translation of key words, and to check students' comprehension.
- Graphic organizers can illustrate the concept as well as the overarching structure of the information being presented (e.g., classification, description, sequence, cause and effect).
- When students are asked to talk about the topic, the educator can use the graphic organizer to teach the necessary language structures.
  - For example, teaching the language of cause and effect might include phrases such as led to, which caused, and resulted in. Pairing the language teaching with the visual representation of the information in the graphic organizer supports both language and content learning.

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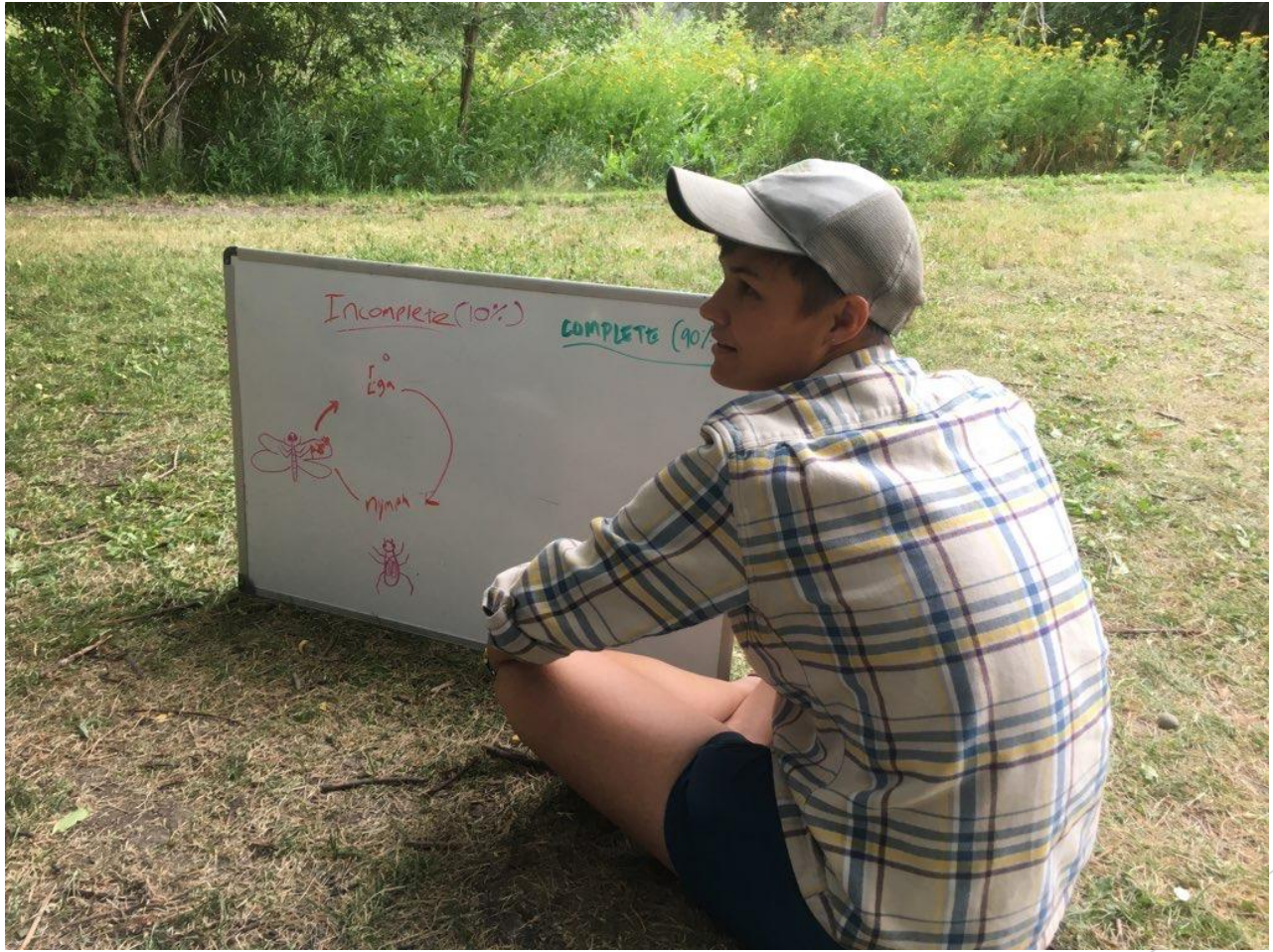

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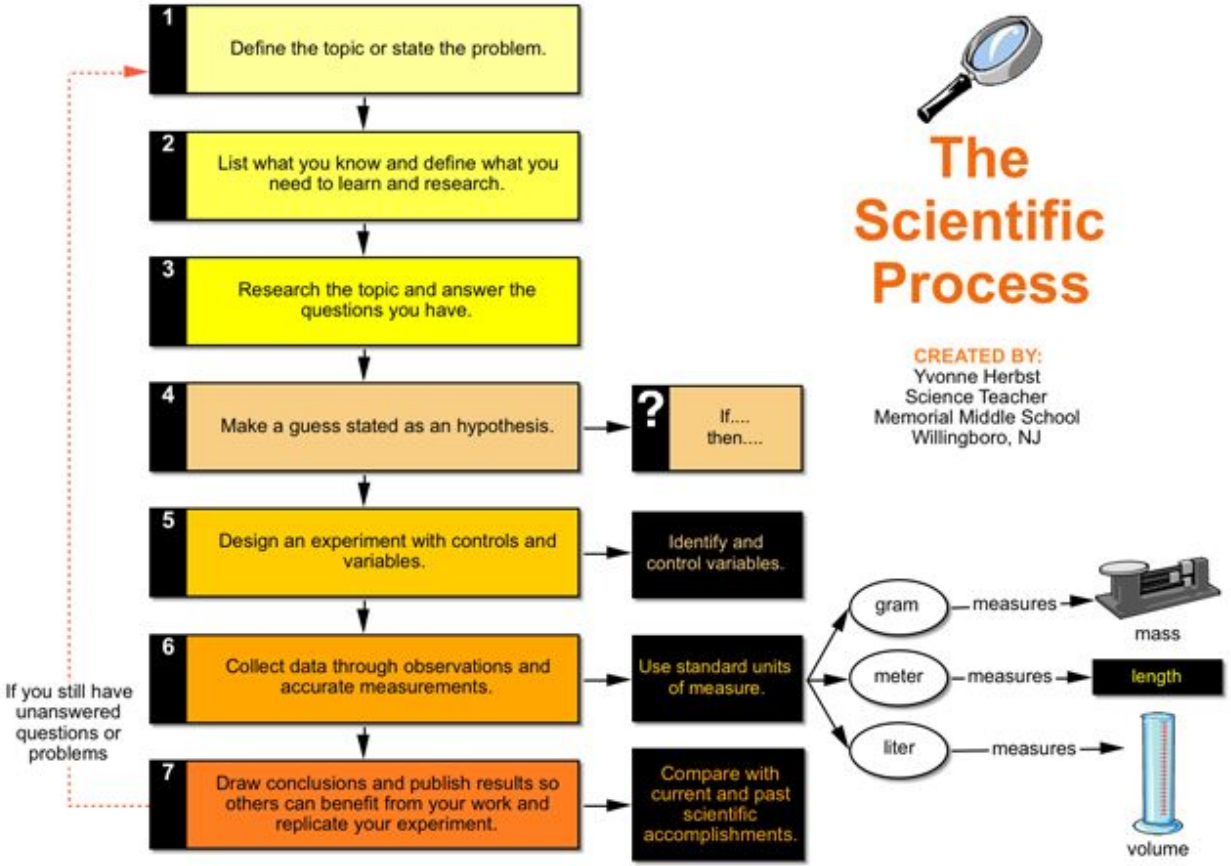

The Scientific Process

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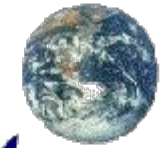
biologist: a person who studies living things

biology: The study of life

biome: the kind of environment, like a forest or desert, where certain kinds of animals and plants live



biosphere: the area around the surface of Earth where life exists

biotic: living or derived from living things

abiotic: not living nor derived from living things

BIO
Greek root meaning "life"

antibiotic: a substance that kills live bacteria

autobiography: a writer. account of one's own. life

biography: a writer. account of someone's life

biodegradable: able to be decomposed by bacteria or living organisms

biopsy: the removal of tissue from a live person or animal for diagnostic purposes

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ELL: Connect the content to students' background knowledge and experiences

- Some students may not be familiar with terms, concepts, and experiences related to the United States (or the dominant culture)
- Access the information learners *do* have, and then build any background knowledge that is essential for learning about the concept
- Open up space for students to share their knowledge or perspectives on a topic that may be different than those presented
- Object-based learning: select three or four items relevant to the lesson, such as maps, photographs, video clips, picture books, or realia, and use them to talk with students about what they know and what questions they have (e.g. NWR)
- Start with commonalities between a student's first language and English (e.g. Latin languages, Arabic roots)
- Familiarize yourself with culturally relevant or high-interest words
- Partner with organizations with existing programs to serve English learners

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Questions?

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