



Air Quality



Sensory mapping and clean air exercise

KS1 and KS 2 appropriate

Concepts, skills, and qualities taught:

This exercise may be used to instil a greater awareness of one's surroundings and to highlight the impact of road traffic on air quality. It can be linked to discussing the children's experiences of travelling to and from school and an introduction to new or existing Park and Stride sites or walking zone maps to promote safer walking routes to school. This activity may also promote well-being in children by highlighting the calming properties of spending time outdoors in pleasant surroundings.

Where: Green or quiet area of school grounds and an area close to (but at a safe place to observe) a busy road.

Numbers required: For 1 person or more

Suggested age range: Ages 5 and up

Materials needed: Clipboard, paper, pencil(s)

Time required: From 4 to 10 minutes for each site is good, depending on the group's age and interest level.

The activity:

You will need to select two different areas of the school to carry out this activity;

1. a green outdoor area of the school e.g. on a sports field, in a nature area or corner of playground located away from roads and close to tree/s or hedge and
2. a more built up or concreted area - possibly a car park - close to a busy road.

Take the group of pupils to the green area first. Explain that they are going to experience the location using all their senses other than by just seeing with their eyes.

Give each pupil a piece of paper with an X marked in the centre. Tell the participants that the paper is a sensory map and that the X represents them and marks where they are sitting. Tell the children that they won't be making a detailed drawing but will use simple marks to represent each sound, feeling or smell that they experience. The location of the mark on the paper should indicate the direction and distance of the sound from the pupil's location. The size and intensity of the mark can represent the strength of their experience. For example, a few dark, wavy lines could represent a strong gust of wind, or a lightly drawn, musical note could indicate a distant singing



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bird. Making simple marks keeps the focus on their senses rather than on drawing.

Tell the children that they have one minute to find a suitable place to sit and to remain in their spots until you signal that the activity is over.

Ask them to take a deep breath in through their noses and see what they can smell.

Ask them to close their eyes and to see what they can hear. To help them increase their hearing ability, ask them to make “fox” ears by cupping their hands behind the ears. This hand position will create a greater surface area to capture sounds. Then show them how to cup the hands in front of the ears (palms facing backwards) to hear sounds behind them more easily.

Ask them what they can feel against their skin e.g. a breeze against their cheeks, warmth from the sun, cold or damp air.

Once you’ve called the group back together ask them to divide into pairs, each to share his sound map with a partner.

After players have shared their maps, you can ask them questions such as:

- Did the air smell of anything?
- Did you like the smell?
- What did you feel on your skin?
- What sounds did you hear?
- What sound did you like best?
- How did you feel sitting quietly in the green area?

Repeat the exercise close to a busy road.

Then ask the children the following questions:

- What were the differences between your experiences in the two areas?
- Which area did you enjoy the most?
- Did the air smell different at the sites or did it make you cough at either of the sites? Why do you think this was?
- Do you feel safer or calmer in one of the areas?
- What is your favourite route to or from school?
- What do you hear, see and smell on your way to school?
- What do you not enjoy when you are travelling to school?

This may initiate discussions about cars being the main source of air pollution in towns and the adverse impacts it has on our health. Choosing to travel on quieter streets, away from busy traffic is a more pleasant experience and is better for your health. This may also lead to talking about how travelling actively is good for the environment and keeps you fit.