2007

Using children's environmental literature and journaling to help students develop a sense of place in nature

Marcie Lynn Horsky

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USING CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE AND JOURNALING TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP A SENSE OF PLACE IN NATURE

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Environmental Education

by
Marcie Lynn Horsky

June 2007
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Approved by:

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June 7, 2007
ABSTRACT

This project was created for teachers to assist students in an outdoor setting to develop a sense of place within the natural environment using children’s environmental literature and journaling. This project uses three children’s books with themes relating to the natural environment, and pairs them with lessons and journaling techniques that have been created for specific outdoor environments. The journaling is intended to be an evaluation of the students understanding and connection to the local environment. Combining these activities with an immersion in the natural environment, children’s environmental literature and journaling is intended to be influential for students in developing a sense of place. The intention is that the development of a sense of place, which is known as a connection with the natural environment, will lead the students to establish environmentally responsible behavior.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Darleen Stoner for her continuous commitment to my project and my professional development in the field of environmental education. To my fiancé, Jon, thank you for disappearing whenever I needed time to work on my project and your always loving support. I would also like to thank the four mentors that I have had since high school who have inspired me to pursue a career in the environmental field: Mr. Robert Posgai, Dr. Jim Dooley, Mr. Al Parker, and Mr. Daniel Webster.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................ iv

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ............................................. 6
  Environmental and Outdoor Education ............................................ 7
  Environmental Literacy ................................................................... 10
  Understanding Environmental Sensitivity ...................................... 11
  Understanding a Sense of Place ...................................................... 14
  Use of Children's Environmental Literature ................................. 18
  Use of Journaling in Nature ............................................................. 22

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN OF PROJECT ............................................. 26

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS ............................. 34

APPENDIX A: LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES TO BE USED WITH CORRESPONDING CHILDREN’S ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE ................................................................. 37

APPENDIX B: CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION CONTENT STANDARD FOR SIXTH GRADE SCIENCE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ................................. 48

REFERENCES ...................................................................................... 52
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Children today identify with television, videogames, Internet and all things indoor and technological. Most have very little desire to explore the outdoors and some even have a fear of being surrounded by nature. Will children today develop an environmental sensitivity to a world they don’t know and fear? Do children have a sense of place, a bond with their local natural community, or is their bond solely with the inside of their entertainment room?

My personal intent for developing this project stemmed from my experiences teaching in an outdoor setting. My observations of students who came to outdoor school were that they, at age twelve, were experiencing nature for the first time at outdoor school. This was disheartening for me as I had the opportunity to grow up in nature. My youthful experience helped me to develop a sense of place in nature, which then led to a desire to protect the environment and to educate others about it. It is my intent with this project to help teachers give students today the same experiences that I had as a child.
and that have helped me to develop a sense of place in nature.

The purpose of this project was to develop a series of three lesson plans based on children’s environmental literature and journaling to be used in an outdoor environment and correlated to California State Science and English Language Arts Standards for the sixth grade. The goal of this project is to help students to develop a sense of place with their surrounding local environment. A sense of place as defined by Scott is as follows:

A sense of place is a sense of history, of human and non-human interaction, and the vital connection between where we live and who we are. This knowledge is vital to protecting our wilderness and our wildness, in the literal sense and the emotional sense. (2002, p. 5)

This sense of place in nature on a local scale would assist students to develop the desire to take action to protect the environment with which they have a connection.

A sense of place must begin, however, with the development of an environmental sensitivity. This environmental sensitivity, nurtured by the utilization of children’s literature, journaling and time spent in nature, may eventually lead to the students developing a
sense of place in their local community, and ultimately broadening their sense of place to include natural environments on a global scale.

The context of this problem is to address the current issue that today’s American youth are disconnected with the natural environment. Louv (2005) used the term “nature-deficit disorder” to describe this disconnectedness and determined that today’s youth are aware of the global threats to the environment but do not have a physical or intimate contact with nature (pp. 1, 2, & 34). This results in children not having a sense of place in nature.

In my outdoor teaching experiences, I have witnessed students’ affinity for being indoors and their connection to technology since they must go without their normal conveniences in the out-of-doors. I have utilized children’s environmental literature and journaling within outdoor lesson plans to provide a familiar classroom technique to connect the students to their learning in the natural environment.

The significance of this project is supported by the findings from a study done by Peterson analyzing the factors influencing the development of environmental sensitivity. Peterson (1981) determined that the most
significant variable influencing environmental sensitivity is participation in a major outdoor experience. It was also determined by Peterson (1981) that literature was another variable in developing an environmental sensitivity.

This project’s significance is also supported by Hungerford and Volk in a study done about changing learner behavior through environmental education. Hungerford and Volk determined that an instructor must go beyond helping a student to develop knowledge about the environment and environmental sensitivity and instead help them to achieve environmentally responsible behavior (2005, p. 323).

Hungerford and Volk stated, "Students must be given the opportunity to develop the sense of 'ownership' and 'empowerment' so that they are fully invested in an environmental sense and prompted to become responsible active citizens" (1990, p. 17). Hungerford and Volk have determined that environmental sensitivity by itself does not create responsible active citizens, but that it is an entry level to sense of place and finally environmental responsibility. Therefore combining children's environmental literature and journaling with the participation in an outdoor experience, whether outdoors on the school ground, at a park or nature center should
contribute to a heightened sense of place and even environmentally responsible behaviors.

Three children’s environmental literature books were reviewed and a lesson plan developed for each book. The lessons created utilize the environmental education objectives as addressed by The Tbilisi Declaration, a guiding document in environmental education, which are awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation (2005, p. 15). These objectives are the foundation for helping students to establish environmental sensitivity and a sense of place. The lessons occur out of the classroom in nature. Being surrounded by and learning about nature has the ability to help students develop a connectedness to the environment. In the end, this connectedness may result in a sense of place.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The use of children’s environmental literature and journaling, combined with the participation in an outdoor experience, is important for students in developing their environmental sensitivity. As mentioned in the introduction, an environmental sensitivity is the basis for establishing a sense of place, which is the intended outcome of this project. Activities created using children’s environmental literature and journaling, along with activities that support the development of environmental sensitivity and a sense of place, can serve in allowing students to develop feelings of respect, reverence, and responsibility for the natural environment.

These feelings may be influential in helping students to form a connection with the environment, known as a sense of place. The sense of place may help the students to foster a responsibility towards and understanding of our planet and its environmental problems. The following literature review provides a justification for the aforementioned collective approach. The literature review analyzes and explores the following topics: environmental and outdoor education, environmental literacy,
understanding environmental sensitivity, understanding a sense of place, the use of children’s environmental literature and the use of journaling in nature.

Environmental and Outdoor Education

To understand the significance of teaching and learning about nature within nature, one must first know the definitions of environmental education and outdoor education.

It needs to be said that not everyone has agreed on an exact definition of environmental education but there is one that has been widely embraced and was proposed by Dr. William Stapp and his graduate students at the University of Michigan in 1969. Although this paper was published over 35 years ago, it has been the basis for many of the environmental education programs created since then. Stapp et al. (1969) stated the definition as, “Environmental education is aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution” (p. 31).

Another defining moment for the field of environmental education took place in October of 1977. The
world's first Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, organized by UNESCO in cooperation with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), took place in Tbilisi, Georgia (USSR). This conference resulted in the creation of The Tbilisi Declaration, which is considered one of the most important documents in environmental education today. The result of this document gave much credibility and understanding to the field of environmental education. The Tbilisi Declaration endorsed the environmental education objectives of awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation, and outlined the following goals of environmental education:

- To foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic social, political and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas;
- To provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment;
- To create new patterns of behavior of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment. (2005, p. 15)
Outdoor education differs from environmental education in that it takes place in the out-of-doors. Environmental education does not necessarily need to be done in this fashion and can be done effectively in the classroom. Disinger (2005) credited Swan for his definition of outdoor education, originally published in 1975, as “the use of resources outside the classroom for educational purposes” (in Disinger, p. 19). Disinger agreed that outdoor education has been historically defined as an educational method or approach.

The first well-known definition of outdoor education came from by L. B. Sharp. Ford (1981) credited Sharp by giving his definition for outdoor education as follows:

Outdoor Education is a common sense method of learning. It is natural; it is plain, direct and simple. The principal thesis which underlies the implications of outdoor education for all subject matter, in all areas of study, and at all levels is: That which can best be learned inside the classroom should be learned there and that which can best be learned in the out-of-doors through direct experience, dealing with native materials and life situations, should there be learned. This realistic approach to education rests squarely upon the
well-established and irrefutable principle of "learning by doing." (p. 4)

The findings cited on environmental and outdoor education allows for a rationale to be determined that infusing environmental education with outdoor education is a logical step towards providing students with an understanding and awareness of their natural environment which may eventually lead to establishing a sense of place.

Environmental Literacy

It is the understanding of those who research in the field of environmental education that the goal of environmental education is to produce an environmentally literate citizenry. Elder (2003) gave the definition for environmental literacy as follows:

Environmental literacy is an individual's capacity to understand broadly how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably; to see connections and interrelatedness, and to act successfully on those insights in daily life. (p. 14).

It was noted by Elder that the test of environmental literacy is the ability of an individual to act
successfully in daily life in a way that is environmentally conscious (2003, p. 15).

As a basis for this project, for students to achieve this action-oriented responsibility for the environment, they must first be introduced to the natural environment and be allowed to develop an awareness of the natural world and a sense of place within it.

Understanding Environmental Sensitivity

Environmental sensitivity has received increasing consideration in the field of environmental education. The definition for environmental sensitivity has been explored and developed over time, but first appeared in the environmental education literature in the 1970s (Sward & Marcinkowski, 2005, p. 301). In the 1970s, however, the definition for environmental sensitivity was not clearly defined and often the word “sensitivity” was used interchangeably with words such as empathy and literacy.

Definitions for, along with variables contributing to, environmental sensitivity were discussed in a review of environmental sensitivity research done by Sward and Marcinkowski in 2005 (pp. 301-309). Sward and Marcinkowski determined that environmental sensitivity was most frequently defined as “a set of affective characteristics
that result in an individual viewing the environment from an empathetic perspective” (p. 303).

The data from the studies reviewed by Sward and Marcinkowski presented a list of variables that contributed to the development of environmental sensitivity such as participating in a major outdoor experience, favorable interactions with teachers, and the use of literature (2005, p. 304). This brief overview is not meant to reflect the full list of variables that contribute to environmental sensitivity, but rather, is representative of the ones that will be utilized in this project. These variables were originally presented by Tanner and Peterson in the early 1980s and were used in an interview and questionnaire research method to assess individual’s environmental sensitivity. Sward and Marcinkowski (2005) cited Peterson’s findings on a study of 22 participants, which found that the most significant factor contributing to the development of environmental sensitivity was the participation in a major outdoor experience, having a percentage of 91 (p. 304). Another important variable identified by Tanner in a study of 45 participants was that books contributed 29% to the formation of environmental sensitivity (in Sward & Marcinkowski, 2005, p. 304). These results suggest that
the combination of using children’s environmental
literature during a major outdoor experience, such as
attending an outdoor school, can be significantly
effective in nurturing environmental sensitivity.

Chawla (1998, p. 11) reported on a model created by
Hungerford and Volk in 1990 that environmental sensitivity
is one of the several variables that contribute to the
creation of a citizenry that will work to maintain a
healthy planet. Environmental sensitivity, however, is not
the only factor in empowering an individual to live an
environmentally responsible life. Other variables listed
that are associated with responsible environmental
behavior are as follows: in-depth knowledge about issues,
personal investment, knowledge of and skill in using
environmental action strategies, an internal locus of
control and the intention to act (Chawla, 1998, p. 11).

Hungerford and Volk determined what variables are
needed for a behavioral change, indicating that personal
responsibility is a contributor to responsible
environmental behavior (2005, p. 315). It seems, from the
research evaluated, that one could assume that personal
responsibility for a natural area could develop into a
sense of place.
In this project, it is maintained that the goal of environmental education programs, such as those given in the out-of-doors, is to invoke within students a sense of responsibility toward the environment, as noted by Sia, Hungerford, Tomera and Sivek (in Hwang, Kim & Jeng, 2000, p. 19). Environmental sensitivity alone does not necessarily determine that an individual will participate in environmentally responsible behavior. Therefore, this project has combined with environmental sensitivity another intended outcome for the students, a sense of place within the natural community in hopes of developing environmentally responsible behaviors.

Understanding a Sense of Place

Several definitions exist for the idea of a sense of place. The working definition for this project was given by Scott:

A sense of place is a sense of history, of human and non-human interaction, and the vital connection between where we live and who we are. This knowledge is vital to protecting our wilderness and our wildness, in the literal sense and the emotional sense. (2002, p. 5)
Moore and Wong (1997) also described a sense of place by stating that it is the feeling of belonging that exists between people and the environments in which they live (p. 65). Based on these definitions and the previously mentioned study by Hungerford and Volk (2005), which indicated that a precursor needed for a change to responsible environmental behavior is indeed personal responsibility for a natural area, the idea emerges that it is important to help students develop a connection with the natural environment. The connection that these students will develop is known as a sense of place with their surrounding natural environment.

When students develop a sense of place with the natural environment, they feel that it is their place and that they belong there (Moore & Wong, 1997, p. 65). Orr stated that there is a sensitive period during the elementary years when children are predisposed to bond with the nearby natural world (in Sobel, 2004, p. 20). Sobel (1993) described the process for development of sense of place as, “Developing a sense of place depends of the previous bonding of the child to the nearby natural world in middle childhood. The sense of place is born in children’s special places” (p. 161). Establishing a sense of place as a child, also referred to as a personal
investment with the natural environment, has been found to be one of the determining factors in establishing environmentally responsible behavior (Chawla, 1998, p. 11).

The American Forest Foundation (AFF) (2006) listed four goals in the Project Learning Tree, Exploring Environmental Issues: Places we Live module, which help students develop a sense of place and that are followed within the created lesson plans of this project. These goals are as follows:

(1) To teach students the skills and knowledge to be active participants in shaping their community,
(2) to connect students to the places they live (or to highlight that connection) so they will care about and influence the decisions being made about those places, (3) to give students an awareness of the environmental, social, and economic issues connected to community growth and change and, (4) to help students understand that their choices affect the environment and the quality of life in communities near and far. (p. 12)

The AFF concluded that the cornerstone for effecting community change is to understand place. A sense of place provides a sense of belonging and commitment to a specific
area. The AFF also determined why sense of place is important, "Feeling connected fosters a sense of caring for place, which promotes stewardship and the stronger the sense of place, the more an individual will care about and for their surroundings and communities" (p. 26).

The AFF stated that childhood exploration in the natural world can be a key ingredient in developing a sense of place and that there is a concern that many youths today are growing up with fewer connections to the natural world and are typically spending more and more time inside (2006, p. 27). Based on these findings it can be assumed that to develop a sense of place, students need to feel invested in their communities, and need not see them simply as interim stopping points on the way to somewhere else and they should spend time discovering the natural environments in their communities (p. 28).

There is a debate among researchers in the field of place study as to whether an individual's focus should be locally centered or globally centered when dealing with action and empowerment. Traina (1995) cited Berry (1991) as disagreeing with individuals who want to save the planet rather than save their local natural places. "If you want to do good and preserving acts you must think and act locally...this calls for local knowledge, local skills,
and local love that virtually none of us now has...” (Berry, in Traina, 1995, p. 6).

It is the intent of this project that the two techniques emphasized for use in the out-of-doors in this project are using children’s environmental literature and reflective, nature journaling. A student can begin the development of local knowledge, skills and love for a natural environment by participating in activities based on these techniques along with an immersion in their local natural environments. This local knowledge, skills and love for a natural environment then are the basis for developing a sense of place.

Use of Children’s Environmental Literature

A challenge lies with outdoor educators to find creative and effective ways to incorporate environmental education into the curriculum. One approach that is resourceful and imaginative is the use of children’s environmental literature to teach and to help students have a better understanding of environmental themes and issues.

O’Brien and Stoner (1987) credited Freedle as stating that children tend to respond better to literature than expository texts, and consequently they are more apt to
read stories than textbooks (p. 15). O’Brien and Stoner (1987) lent further support to the notion of using children’s environmental literature when they wrote that careful selection of literature, in addition to helping students to better understand environmental concepts, can arouse interest in the environment (p. 14-15).

Stoner and Morrison (1990) reviewed and put forth ten justifications for relating fictional children’s literature to environmental education (p. 6-7). The relevant justifications for this project put forth by Stoner and Morrison are as follows:

- Students can easily follow ecological concepts and ideas when presented as part of a plot.

- The stories allow students to develop their problem-solving skills in two ways: (1) analyzing the ideas and action of story characters and (2) considering personal choices and applications.

- The stories may assist students in developing logical thinking skills as they consider event sequence, cause and effect, and possible associations.
The stories demonstrate that environmental concepts are relevant and interesting and, thus, promote an increase in the interest in science.

Students can perceive how other people have emotions similar to their own and how their own emotions have been dealt with.

Students are able to perceive environmental concepts in terms that are developmentally appropriate. (1990, p. 6-7)

Kupetz and Twiest (2000) stated, "Teachers have a responsibility to expose children to the delights and mysteries of the great outdoors. Before children learn how humans impact the environment in harmful ways, they need opportunities to learn to care about it" (p. 62). Using children's environmental literature to create activities, to be used in an outdoor school setting, will help students to develop a sense of place. A sense of place results in students having a connection with the natural environment and therefore helps them to learn to care about the environment and the problems that affect it.

Studies have been done to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of children's literature to help students understand environmental concepts and to create an interest in the natural environment. Eggerton (1996)
stated that children’s literature could convey environmental and nature-related information in ways that foster sensitivity and curiosity. Kupetz and Twiest (2000) had similar findings:

Quality children’s literature is an excellent vehicle for extending a particular experience or introducing new ones. Building on outdoor experiences through books encourages children to explore more deeply what they have observed and experienced—concepts are reinforced, new knowledge gained, vicarious experiences provided. (p. 61)

In 1998, Chawla, after reviewing seven surveys, from several research studies, defined the sources that lead to environmental sensitivity or empathy toward the natural environment. An experience in the natural environment in some form or another was consistently listed as the most mentioned factor for developing environmental sensitivity; books or literature were listed in five of the studies, although it was a less significant factor (Chawla, 1998, pp. 11-20).

To further support the use of fiction literature to teach environmental knowledge, Drake, Hemphill and Chappell (1996) used a fiction novel as a springboard to environmental science experiments and discussions in their
high school classes. They found that teaching through stories is richer in understanding for the students, more interesting to teach rather that the traditional textbook methods and "using stories leads to a positive experience for all students and reveals new facets of students," (1996, p. 39).

The literature reviewed and cited here provides a rationale for using children's environmental literature in conjunction with an outdoor experience to arouse and nurture the formation of environmental sensitivity and ultimately a sense of place in students in an outdoor setting.

Use of Journaling in Nature

The use of nature journaling is not a new idea in the history of outdoor study. Leslie (2001) stated that throughout history, scientists, explorers, naturalists and curious adventurers have kept some form of written, and often illustrated, journal of their observations, experiences, or discoveries (p. 8). Nature journaling is a hands-on leaning experience where students create a product by themselves that can be kept for future review. Leslie (2001) listed the benefits of nature journaling as offering students a one-on-one connection with their own
immediate environment, integrating many disciplines, and allowing various styles of learning and all by being a wonderfully flexible teaching tool (p. 9). Leslie determined that a one-on-one connection with the students immediate environment was an outcome of journaling and the author assumes that a one-on-one connection is the same as a sense of place; therefore supporting the rationale for this project of students establishing a sense of place within the natural environment.

Hobart lent further support to the use of nature journaling as a teaching tool (2005). Hobart (2005) stated that journaling helps students to develop observation skills and a deep appreciation of nature, and is a useful tool to students whether they consider themselves to be artists or not (p. 30). The materials needed for nature journaling can be carried anywhere and used to record ecological information in many ways such as; color drawings, inventories of habitats, poems, comparisons of individual species, observations of change, and even individual feelings about relationships to the environment.

Dirnberger, McCullagh, and Howick (2005) found that nature journaling could help students use their time outdoors to change the way they view and understand nature.
and science (p. 42). They stated, "The journal is a tool for translating their experiences into verbal and visual language through processes that are both analytical and creative. At the same time it can bring to the surface feelings about nature" (2005, p. 42). They concluded that nature journaling could be a way to help students explore the connections between how they observe and reflect on natural phenomena and how they value the natural environment (2005, p. 42). The connection that these authors spoke about is, in fact, the sense of place that a student can achieve.

The benefits of journaling as determined by many researchers in the field of outdoor education are as follows; allowing students a one-on-one connection with their environment, integrating many disciplines, allowing for various styles of learning, the development of observation skills, and finally allowing students the ability to change the way they view and understand nature and science. It is the intent of this project to help teachers to achieve these benefits with students by utilizing journaling techniques along with children’s environmental literature within outdoor lesson plans. More specifically, helping teachers to formulate ways to assist students to establish a connection or a sense of place
within the nature environment is the overlying goal of this project.
CHAPTER THREE

DESIGN OF PROJECT

The goal of this project was to create three lesson plans, that focus on three children’s environmental literature books and utilize journaling techniques to be used in an outdoor teaching environment that will help students to develop a sense of place. Two of these lesson plans were created for specific habitat site locations, while the third is more general and can be used in most habitats within California. These lesson plans incorporated three elements of nature journaling, which included sketching, poem creation, and observation and recording.

These lesson plans are intended to first allow students to stimulate an environmental sensitivity which will enable them to become in touch with the natural environment and to help them develop a sense of place within the nature environment (see Lesson Plans in Appendix A). Each lesson plan will utilize reflective journaling questions, which the teachers may use as an evaluation tool for judging students’ progress toward the development of a sense of place. The goal of this project was accomplished by meeting the following objectives:
1. Establish a working definition for a sense of place. Scott described sense of place as:
   A sense of place is a sense of history, of human and non-human interaction, and the vital connection between where we live and who we are. This knowledge is vital to protecting our wilderness and our wildness, in the literal sense and the emotional sense. (2002, p. 5)

2. Create three lessons appropriate for students learning in an outdoor environment that incorporate and reinforce ideas and concepts found in each book.

3. Select three children’s environmental literature books with various themes and topics.

4. Explore and utilize three nature journaling techniques, a different one in each lesson, that help students to form a connection, or sense of place, with the surrounding environment.

   It is intended that the lesson plans in this project could be used in an outdoor teaching environment. The lesson plans were correlated to California State Standards for Science and English Language Arts in the sixth grade (see Appendix B). The lesson plans will help students
develop an awareness and empathy for nature, which will evolve into a connection with the natural environment around them, also known as a sense of place.

The criteria for choosing each source of children’s literature were that they focus on the natural environment, their ability to elicit an emotional response from their readers, and their appropriateness for developing a sense of place. The three lesson plans use three different children’s books, which correspond to three different types of habitats within California and will utilize reflective journaling techniques that can be used to evaluate the development of a students sense of place. The three children’s books that were used in this project are Just a Dream by Chris Van Allsburg (1990), The Tree of Time: A Story of a Special Sequoia by Kathy Baron (1994), and A Desert Scrapbook: Dawn to Dusk in the Sonoran Desert by Virginia Wright-Frierson (1998).

For the Just a Dream book by Chris Van Allsburg, a lesson plan was created which would elicit a change in the student relating to their view of the environment. This book is a behavior-changing story about a boy who doesn’t understand why his neighbor wanted a tree for her birthday until he falls asleep that night and is showed a grim looking future of a world without trees. The lesson plan
would allow students to analyze a specific area for its ecological factors that would affect the growth of a tree. The habitat best suited for this lesson could be a backyard or school ground habitat. The students would determine the best suitable species of tree to be placed in that area and can actually be part of the process of planting the tree if the teacher allows. The students would document this process before, during and after in a nature journal. This activity focuses on the students’ relationship with and attitudes towards the environment, while helping them to understand their responsibility to the natural world they live in and all the while developing a sense of place.

For *The Tree of Time: A Story of a Special Sequoia* book by Kathy Baron, a lesson plan was created that would give students an understanding of the timely life of a giant sequoia and the ecological factors influencing it as well as world events that have occurred throughout time during the life of one giant sequoia. This book shows an historical timeline of events of the world in relation to the growing timeline of one giant sequoia tree in Yosemite National Park. The timeline spans over 2000 years.
The lesson plan will give students the premise that they are to imagine that they are the first humans to observe a giant sequoia, and then they must decide how they would describe a giant sequoia to people who have never seen. This lesson plan will allow the students to spend an amount of solitary time with just a giant sequoia and themselves while they create a story in their nature journal that will explain what a giant sequoia looks like to someone who has never seen one.

This lesson will encourage students to understand how living things interact with each other and their surrounding environment, and it will give students a perspective of the world not in their immediate realm while connecting them to the history of the site helping them to establish a sense of place. This lesson could be used with any tree that has existed for a long period and does not require the teacher to travel to a giant sequoia grove.

For the A Desert Scrapbook: Dawn to Dusk in the Sonoran Desert book by Virginia Wright-Frierson, a lesson plan was created that will develop students’ observation and cataloging skills. This story is a scrapbook of observations of a desert habitat. It inspires the reader to come up with nature journaling techniques, to utilize
artistic talents and establishes a sense of place. This lesson incorporates discovery, observation, sketching, cataloging, and comparing of facets of the desert ecosystem. The students are able to spend an extended period in a desert ecosystem, even observing it at different times of the day, alone or with the aid of other students. This lesson is intended to inspire students to develop a curiosity for the natural world, but more importantly to encourage them to have empathy and respect for the environment as well as a sense of place.

The lesson plans for this project incorporate interdisciplinary learning and were correlated to California State Science Standards for grade six (California State Board of Education, 1998). The correlation to California State Standards will assist teachers in having a rationale for incorporating these lessons into a classroom setting and will make these lessons useful to a more broad audience of teachers. Full explanation of the standards that follow can be found in Appendix B.

The Science Standards addressed were 5a-e, 6b, 7a,g,h. The topics addressed consisted of standards in ecology and life sciences, resources, and investigation and experimentation.
The California English-Language Arts Content Standards (California State Board of Education, 1997), which were addressed for grade six, include those from the Reading and Writing section. From the Reading section, the following standards were addressed 2.4, 2.7, and 3.6. From the Writing section, the following standards were addressed 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, & 2.1 (California State Board of Education).

History-Social Science Content Standards for California, grade six are not addressed in depth by the activities. However, historical events throughout the world are mentioned with their relation to a giant sequoia on a timeline scale. Because of the minimal relation to the History-Social Science Standards, the specific standards are not mentioned.

From experiences working as an outdoor educator, the author has found it to be important to combine elements of environmental and outdoor education to help students develop a sense of place within the natural environment. Merging the use of children's environmental literature and reflective journaling, along with immersion in nature may effectively enable students to develop a sense of place in nature. Therefore, helping students to connect to natural places by creating lesson plans using children's
environmental literature and journaling so that they will develop a sense of place, which enables them to care about and influence the decisions being made about those places was the focus of this project. Using literature to create hands-on activities, that can be used in an outdoor setting will help students to develop a sense of place with the natural world, which should in turn help those students to develop concern for the environment and take action to solve its problems.
CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Many educators who work with students in an outdoor setting have had the opportunity to witness the change that takes place within students. These educators guide the process that students experience to develop a sense of wonder or environmental sensitivity for the natural world. This sense of wonder can be the basis for students to develop a connection with the natural world, or a sense of place. It is easy to conclude that children possess innate feelings of wonder and compassion for the natural environment when one observes students within nature. However, for the students to develop a sense of place and action-oriented awareness for the natural environment, they must be guided to participate in activities that will encourage bonds to be formed with the natural environment.

The previously mentioned idea is one that is evident among the literature reviewed in this project and is best expressed by Sobel. Sobel (1993) mentioned that a sense of wonder that is established in early childhood changes into a sense of exploration in middle childhood (pp. 159-160). Sobel proposed that as children grow to become adults they maintain the relationships that they made in their periods
of wonder and exploration while increasing their bonds to include new areas of significance (1993, p. 160). Finally, Sobel concluded that, "Feeling a sense of place in adulthood leads us to a commitment to preserve the integrity of the communities we live in" (p. 160). The sense of place that Sobel discusses which people retain to adulthood from exploration of nature as a child is the factor that will determine environmentally responsible behavior. It is ideal for all people to have environmentally responsible behaviors and these behaviors will begin in childhood with the development of a sense of place.

This project was developed for educators to utilize in an outdoor setting, with middle grade students. Through children's literature, nature journaling, and lessons specifically created for their ability to evoke curiosity about the natural environment, educators can help students to develop a sense of place within nature. Using children's literature to create hands-on lessons, which can be used in an outdoor setting, are intended to help students to become connected with the natural world, which should in turn help those students to develop concern for the environment and take action to solve its problems. Hungerford and Volk determined that having a connection to
the natural environment is a precursor for the changing of behavior towards a more environmentally responsible behavior (2005, p. 316). This more environmentally responsible behavior is the lesson that most environmental educators wish to impart to their students.

The children’s books and journaling techniques that have been chosen for this project are only a few of the many that incorporate the environment and help develop a sense of place within the natural environment. The lessons created based on these books and journaling techniques are meant to be used in an outdoor setting, but could easily be adapted for a variety of settings including nature centers, parks, or even the classroom.

The author of this project encourages anyone wishing to use or adapt the lessons in the project to be creative in doing so. The lesson plans developed for this project utilize only a handful of the techniques used in nature journaling. The author hopes that educators will find using children’s literature and nature journaling a useful tool to nurture a sense of place and that they will be inspired to consider both of these techniques in a variety of ways for their students.
APPENDIX A

LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES TO BE USED

WITH CORRESPONDING CHILDREN’S

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERATURE
Lesson One

Title: A Real Estate Agent for Trees

Children's Literature Used
Just a Dream by Chris Van Allsburg. This book is a behavior-changing story about a boy who doesn't understand why his neighbor wanted a tree for her birthday until he falls asleep that night and is showed a grim looking future of a world without trees.

Site:
Any natural terrestrial habitat within California where the students will have frequent access to, preferably near their home or school and in an area with trees.

Grade Level:
This lesson has been aligned with Grade Six Standards; however, it could be used from 4th-7th grade.

Duration of Lesson:
Two Hours

California Content Standards Addressed:
Grade 6 Science: Ecology 5a-e, Resources 6b, Investigation and Experimentation 7a,g, & h

Summary of Lesson:
Students will gain an understanding of the principles of ecology and the ecology cycle with specific emphasis on producers, namely trees. Students will observe and record the components of a forested habitat and determine the species of trees that exist there. Finally, students will decide what species of tree they would think would grow best in that habitat by making comparisons. Tools that will aid the students in deciding this species of tree will include using the children's literature and reflective nature journaling.

Lesson Goals:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
- Identify the functions of different organisms in a habitat.
- Identify biotic and abiotic factors and resources, which limit the number and type of organisms a habitat can support.
- Demonstrate knowledge of ecological concepts by investigating and determining the suitable tree species to be planted in the habitat studied.
- Identify producer species, specifically the tree.
- Begin the development of a sense of place within the natural environment.
**Materials:**
Field guides specific for locations (Age appropriate)
Each student has personal journal/writing utensil
“Everything is Connected” Word Scramble Cards
Laminated Poster/Dry Erase Markers
Hand Lenses/Specimen Boxes
Just a Dream book previously mentioned

**Anticipatory set:**
Word Scramble Cards
This is an activity where each student gets a card with a letter on it. The students are challenged with trying to figure out what the letters spell. The solution to the puzzle is “Everything is Connected.” This activity is designed to get the students thinking about the theme of the lesson-Connection to the natural environment or sense of place.

**Procedure:**
1. The lesson will begin with the anticipatory set described previously.

2. Hike to another location where students may sit for a few minutes and proceed to give a lesson about ecology on the back of the laminated poster. Begin by asking students to name things found in nature such as animals, plants, rocks, water, etc. Place the specific examples in appropriate categories on an ecology cycle drawing.

3. Once you have representation of each group, ask students to define what they think the function of each group is by asking such questions as, “How are an oak tree and a squirrel related?” and “What is the role of water in nature?” As the students state the function of each of those groups, write the name of each group on the poster that corresponds them to their proper ecological name (Producers, Consumers, Decomposers, Scavengers, Abiotic Factors). Then draw arrows to show how the flow of nutrients or energy is passed through this web. Briefly, draw a sun in the middle of the cycle and explain that energy enters the ecosystem as sunlight and is converted to chemical energy through a process known as what? Ask for responses, the correct answer is Photosynthesis.

4. Pass out student journals and have the students partner up to do a 15-minute cataloging of the habitat they are in, listing the components that were previously discussed. This is meant to be short and only an initial survey through listing or drawing which will begin establishing a connection with the habitat.

5. Call the students back with an animal call to an area with shade and ample sitting room and read the story Just a Dream. Make sure to say the book is only fiction, but trees indeed help humans and the environment in real life. Ask students why trees are important, what their connection is to the environment and what they think would happen if we didn’t have trees.
6. Tell the students they are going to do an indepth study of the habitat now, focusing on identifying the tree species and the needs of trees in general. Establish guidelines for observing living things; discourage students from pulling up any living things. Encourage them to get dirty and really explore. Distribute lenses, journals, specimen boxes, and field guides, and allow students to work in teams. They should determine the type of habitat and list its components. They should list and draw examples of plants, specifically trees, in the habitat. They should list and draw examples of the things that a tree needs to survive in this habitat.

7. Once there has been ample time for cataloging, bring students back to a circle to share their findings. Allow each group to share their findings with everyone. In particular students should have determined one species of tree that they felt best would grow in this area and should share that with everyone.

8. As a closure, students should independently draw or write a poem about the tree they would want to plant in this area indicating the species, its relationships with other parts of the habitat, and something interesting they found out during their investigations.

9. Finally, to assess the development of a sense of place, ask students the reflective journaling questions listed below and have them write the answers in their journal.

Methods of Assessment for Developing a Sense of Place:
Check journal for comprehension of ecology relationships, investigation discoveries, and final independent drawing or poem.
Confirmation that the final tree species that the group decided upon was one that could grow in this habitat.
Answering reflective journaling questions.

Reflective Journaling Questions:
Which tree species have you decided could live in this habitat?
What types of things does every tree need to survive and are those things different compared to the things people need to survive?
How are trees and people connected to one another?
What is your favorite thing you learned about nature today?
Lesson Two

Title:
Big Tree Time Traveler

Children’s Literature Used:

Site:
This lesson needs to take place in an area where there are Giant Sequoias, but could also be done with Coastal Redwoods as they are a close cousin and have many similar features. Ideal locations would be Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Yosemite National Park, or Sequoia National Park. If none of these areas are available, it would be possible for a teacher to use a very old tree in their immediate area.

Grade Level:
Aligned with California sixth grade standards but could easily be done with grades 5th-8th and even modified for high school.

Duration of Lesson:
Two hours

California Content Standards Addressed:
Grade 6 Science: Ecology 5a-e, Resources 6a & b. Grade 6 English Language Arts Reading 2.4,2.7, 3.6 and Writing 1.1,1.2,1.3, and 2.1. The Grade 6 History and Social Science Standards are reviewed in the context of an historical events; because of the superficiality of the timeline, the standards are not mentioned.

Summary of Lesson:
Students will gain an understanding of the unique characteristics of giant sequoias and the ecosystem in which they exist, and the way in which humans have interacted with and influenced this environment over time. Tools that will aid the students understanding the characteristics of giant sequoias and their connection to the environment will include using the children’s literature and reflective nature journaling.

Lesson Goals:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
• Understand the role of fire in the giant sequoia ecosystem.
• Identify specific characteristics of giant sequoias and the function they serve in an ecosystem; compare and contrast characteristics of a giant sequoia ecosystem with ecosystems that they are familiar with at home.
• Describe the history of human impact on and interaction with giant sequoia ecosystems.
• Begin the development of a sense of place with the natural environment.

Materials:
“Solo-hike” cards (giant sequoia facts pertaining to biological characteristics of the tree, fire ecology, historical facts about giant sequoias, animals that depend on the giant sequoias, habitat characteristics and size comparisons to a giant sequoia)
Laminated Poster/Dry Erase Markers
Tree of Time Book previously mentioned
Journals/Writing Utensils

Anticipatory Set:
Oral Tradition story of A.T. Dowd
-This is an activity where the students will be gathered in a standing circle. The educator will use the synectic approach of personal analogy and guided imagery. The oral tradition, relayed to the author by staff at Foothill Horizons Outdoor School, of Augustus T. Dowd is as follows but the reader should understand that because it is an oral tradition it would vary greatly.

A.T. Dowd was not the first person to see the giant sequoias as native Americans had been living near them long before, but he was the first white person recorded as seeing the giant sequoias. A.T. Dowd worked for the Union Water company in Murphys, CA. He was known for tall tales. One day he went hunting and shot a bear, but did not kill it. Looking down for the tracks, he followed them a great distance until he came upon what seemed to be a bark wall. He looked up and saw the largest tree he had ever seen. He ran back to camp to tell everyone else but they did not believe him. He tried to convince them to no avail, but finally was able to convince a few of his friends to help him find the bear. He pretended to lead them to the bear, but instead took them to the tree. This was around 1850. There was no previous recording of these giant trees, and the world did not even know they existed.
-After the story is told, ask the students if they have ever seen a tree bigger than a house, a whale, and even a train. Tell them they are going pretend they are A.T. Dowd and they will come upon the tree as he did over 150 years ago through the outdoor teaching technique of a Caterpillar Walk.

Caterpillar Walk
-Tell the students to look down until you let them know it is ok to look up. They should put their hands on the shoulder of the person in front of them and remember not to peek. Lead the first person to a giant sequoia and position them around the tree, still looking down. At your direction, have the students look up.

Procedure:
1. After the Anticipatory Set, lead the students to a stump of a giant sequoia that has been cut down. Have them sit in a circle on the stump and answer any questions
they have about the stump. Discuss the age of the tree and how they can figure
that out by counting the rings. Giant sequoias are often over 1000 years old, so
there usually isn’t time to complete the counting of rings. Go through a brief
history of the tree after you establish age and ask the students “What has this tree
seen in its lifetime?” Discuss why the tree might have been chopped down and let
students know they will see many examples of ways in which humans have
affected this environment. Some ways may be positive, and some may be
negative, and tell the students you would like them to think about reasons why this
ecosystem is important and how they think it should be treated which will begin
the development of a sense of place.

2. From the stump, allow students to go on a silent/solo hike. Big tree fact cards, as
described previously, should have been placed along the trail beforehand about
every ten feet. Another adult is required to help facilitate this activity and will
wait for the students at the end of their solo hike. Rules for the hike are:
   a. Quiet, stay by yourself
   b. Follow the signs on the ground
   c. Don’t talk to each other or strangers
   d. Have fun
Give a journal assignment that the students can complete while they are waiting
for others to be done. The journal assignment could be to draw a giant sequoia,
specifying three ways it is different from other trees, or list two interesting facts
about giant sequoias that they learned along the way.

3. When everyone has completed the solo hike, facilitate a sharing of what the
students learned or wrote. Allow them a short exploration time or play a game of
Camouflage to release some energy. Camouflage is a “hide and seek” game that
you can play with your students which introduces the ecological concept of
camouflage. The teacher must establish guidelines and boundaries before
beginning. The teacher hides his/her eyes and counts to ten, the students run and
hide, but the teacher stays in their spot. The teacher must then look for the
students from his/her spot and describe what the students are wearing and where
they are located which means that a student is caught or out and should come back
to the beginning spot. The teacher can give points to the winner and this
stimulates healthy competition.

4. Read The Tree of Time book, and then answer any questions they may have about
giant sequoias and their connection to the environment, the role of fire, or the
habitat because they will be writing a story about giant sequoias with facts they
have learned.

5. Give the writing assignment for their journals. Students should write a
three-paragraph story pretending as if they are the first person to see a giant
sequoia and how would they describe it to a person who has never seen one or
create a clearly labeled diagram about a giant sequoia, its parts, and relationships with the ecosystem. Students may move off to areas by themselves in the presence of giant sequoia. Check all students work.

6. Wrap things up by discussing how humans affect a forest and what they can do to care for the forest. Finally, to assess the development of a sense of place, ask students the reflective journaling questions listed below and have them write the answers in their journal.

Methods of Assessment for Developing a Sense of Place:
Completion of the journal assignment.
Participation in any of the discussions.
Answering reflective journaling questions.

Reflective Journaling Questions:
Would you build anything in this habitat?
How is fire important to this habitat and how has it changed the habitat?
Do you think other people should see this habitat or would you want to keep it’s whereabouts to yourself?
How have humans changed this habitat and do you think those changes were good or bad?
What is your favorite thing you learned about nature today?
Lesson Three

Title:
Desert Explorer

Children’s Literature Used:
A Desert Scrapbook: Dawn to Dusk in the Sonoran Desert by Virginia Wright-Frierson This story is a scrapbook of observations of a desert habitat. It inspires the reader to come up with nature journaling techniques.

Site:
Any desert habitat

Grade Level:
Aligned with California sixth grade standards but could easily be done with grades 4th-8th and even modified for high school.

Duration of Lesson:
One and a half hours

California Content Standards Addressed:
Grade 6 Science: Ecology 5a-e, Resources 6a & b. Investigation and Experimentation 7a,g, & h.

Summary of Lesson:
Students will gain an understanding of the desert ecosystem. They will observe and catalogue the flora, fauna and abiotic factors found in this habitat along with any ecological relationships they may observe. Tools that will aid the students understanding the characteristics of a desert habitat and its connection to the environment will include using the children’s literature and reflective nature journaling.

Lesson Goals:
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the characteristics that determine a desert environment.
- List the living components of a desert environment that they observe, along with characteristics of these species in relation to desert environments.
- Create a spatial map indicating where they are in relation to the things they discovered.
- Understand the concept of adaptation and how plants and animals adapt to live in the desert ecosystem.
• Begin the development of a sense of place within the natural environment.

Materials:
Journals/Writing Utensils
Field guide for desert environment (Age Appropriate)
Pictures of things found in the desert
Laminated Poster/Dry Erase Marker
Desert Scrapbook book

Anticipatory Set:
This activity is designed to get students thinking about the desert and help them realize they already know many interesting things about this ecosystem. A week before heading into the desert, ask students to bring in a picture of one thing that can be found in the desert from magazines or photos they have taken.

Procedure:
1. Review the basics of the ecology cycle and its components and draw the cycle on a large poster. Have students share the pictures that they brought in and have them place the pictures on the part of the ecology cycle where they think it fits. Discuss the relationships.

2. Ask students how plants and animals are different in a desert compared to a forest, beach or prairie. Use field guides and student picture as examples. Introduce the term adaptation. Ask students how animals and plants are able to live in this harsh environment and have them give you some examples of adaptations. (Examples: some species are nocturnal and burrow into the cool ground to avoid the heat of the day; cacti have spines to prevent animals from eating them to obtain water, but some birds are still able to create their nests in the cacti.)

3. This is the point where the educator would read the book A Desert Scrapbook: Dawn to Dusk in the Sonoran Desert, pass out journals, and give students the instructions for a journal assignment. The students should break into groups and create their own desert scrapbook in their journal. They should record observations of plants and animals, adaptations they find, and draw a map that includes all of their findings in their proper spatial relationship.

4. Only about an hour and a half total should be spent outside total because of the heat and sun exposure, so leave about ten minutes for a wrap-up and journal evaluation questions could even be done in a classroom. Have students share findings and interesting discoveries.

5. Finally, to assess the development of a sense of place, ask students the reflective journaling questions listed below and have them write the answers in their journal.
Methods of Assessment for Developing a Sense of Place:
Participation in Anticipatory Set
Completion of journal assignment
Answer reflective journaling questions

Reflective Journaling Questions:
How are desert plants and animals different from plants and animals you would find in a forest?
In what ways is the desert beneficial to humans?
What was the most interesting thing you observed in the desert today?
What were some of the adaptations you discovered?
What was your favorite thing you learned about nature today?
APPENDIX B

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION CONTENT
STANDARD FOR SIXTH GRADE SCIENCE AND
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
California Science Standards for Sixth which can be addressed are as follows:

Ecology (Life Sciences)

5. Organisms in ecosystems exchange energy and nutrients among themselves and with the environment. As a basis for understanding this concept:

a. Students know energy entering ecosystems as sunlight is transferred by producers into chemical energy through photosynthesis and then from organism to organism through food webs.

b. Students know matter is transferred over time from one organism to others in the food web and between organisms and the physical environment.

c. Students know populations of organisms can be categorized by the functions they serve in an ecosystem.

d. Students know different kinds of organisms may play similar ecological roles in similar biomes.

e. Students know the number and types of organisms an ecosystem can support depends on the resources available and on abiotic factors, such as quantities of light and water, a range of temperatures, and soil composition.

Resources

6. Sources of energy and materials differ in amounts, distribution, usefulness, and the time required for their formation. As a basis for understanding this concept:

b. Students know different natural energy and material resources, including air, soil, rocks, minerals, petroleum, fresh water, wildlife, and forests, and know how to classify them as renewable or nonrenewable.

Investigation and Experimentation

7. Scientific progress is made by asking meaningful questions and conducting careful investigations. As a basis for understanding this concept and addressing the content in the other three strands, students should develop their own questions and perform investigations. Students will:

a. Develop a hypothesis.
g. Interpret events by sequence and time from natural phenomena (e.g., the relative ages of rocks and intrusions).

h. Identify changes in natural phenomena over time without manipulating the phenomena (e.g., a tree limb, a grove of trees, a stream, a hillslope).

**California English Language Arts Content Standards for Sixth Grade which were addressed are as follows:**

**Reading**

2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)

Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They describe and connect the essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives of the text by using their knowledge of text structure, organization, and purpose. The selections in Recommended Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students. In addition, by grade eight, students read one million words annually on their own, including a good representation of grade-level-appropriate narrative and expository text (e.g., classic and contemporary literature, magazines, newspapers, online information). In grade six, students continue to make progress toward this goal.

**Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text**

2.4 Clarify an understanding of texts by creating outlines, logical notes, summaries, or reports

**Expository Critique**

2.7 Make reasonable assertions about a text through accurate, supporting citations

3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science. They clarify the ideas and connect them to other literary works. The selections in Recommended Literature, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve illustrate the quality and complexity of the materials to be read by students.

**Narrative Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text**

3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images

50
Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Organization and Focus

1.1 Choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.

1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions:
   a. Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.
   b. Develop the topic with supporting details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.
   c. Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.

1.3 Use a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns, including comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement by spatial order, order of importance, or climactic order.

2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive texts of at least 500 to 700 words in each genre. Student writing demonstrates a command of standard American English and the research, organizational, and drafting strategies outlined in Writing Standard 1.0.

Using the writing strategies of grade six outlined in Writing Standard 1.0, students:

2.1 Write narratives:
   a. Establish and develop a plot and setting and present a point of view that is appropriate to the stories.
   b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop plot and character.
   c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, suspense).
REFERENCES


