Spring Seasonal Overview

Discovering Place

Transitioning into the spring season, Oxbow and the kindergarten teachers prioritized finding meaningful opportunities to engage students in building a relationship to place, including the regional community, the local watershed, local and native flora and fauna, and Oxbow’s Kids’ Farm.

By finding nature in their own schoolyard, looking at the earthworms that have emerged after a rainfall, the squirrel footprints in the mud, and even the cracks in the sidewalk, students learn that nature is all around them. This opportunity to have experiential connection to a place, with all senses engaged, inspires a sense of ecological identity and true sense of caring and devotion to nature, paving the way for stewardship and action (Pelo 2009.)

The spring season also focused on water as a critical component of a habitat, fostering an appreciation for water as a life-giving resource during a truly soggy season in western Washington.

This monthly spring EE program built a connection to place for the students and teachers through:

- **Learning about their local watershed** and finding connections through the rivers that flow through the landscape shared by Oxbow and Frank Wagner Elementary School. In February, the in-class lesson introduced the concept of a watershed and used maps and models to describe how water is pulled by gravity causing it to flow from high places to low places, and that small streams flow into larger rivers, eventually to large lakes and out to the ocean or Puget Sound. Students contributed to their own watershed map, locating the farm and the school and identifying the human activities, and thus the impacts, that take place along the river.

- **Identifying the rivers and lakes as habitats** through interactive games, macroinvertebrate investigation, and exploring the movement of energy through the food chain. During their field trip lesson, developed through a partnership with Nature Vision (https://naturevision.org), students make connections to bring them to the conclusion that all energy comes from the sun and travels up the food chain, and that some aquatic macroinvertebrates are more sensitive to pollution than others. Students participated in a stewardship discussion, learned that storm drains lead to the river, and shared ideas about how to reduce pollution and “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” and compost.

  Connecting video: “Let’s learn about animals in the water,” [https://youtu.be/5BGDaVE1ans](https://youtu.be/5BGDaVE1ans)

- **Experiencing where food is grown.** Continuing with the theme of apple trees, students visited Oxbow’s orchard in the spring. Through several lessons and activities, they applied their skills of scientific observation and recalled the patterns of what plants and animals need to survive. On the Kids’ Farm, they snacked, harvested, held worms from the compost system, and planted seeds, connecting full circle to the compost and soil that we investigated in the fall.

  Connecting video: “Welcome for your Spring field trip and Orchard lessons,” [https://youtu.be/vlz8uSo_YGc](https://youtu.be/vlz8uSo_YGc)

Resources: