

Recognition for Excellence in IBSE Certificate

Title of Activity	Smells of Spring
Age of Children	4-5 year olds
Duration of activity	30 minutes
How the activity was implemented	
<p>As part of a larger project on Funky Foods and Super Senses a group of 10 children were exploring the school grounds, using their senses. This was the fourth time the group had explored the school grounds together (called “Explorers”) to develop their observational skills as the seasons changed. The 4 week project was primarily to develop and extend the children’s speaking and observational skills. Prior to the activity we had discussed our five senses and the children had been told that they were not going to use their sense of taste outside during this session due to safety considerations. When they first went outside they were told that we were looking to see if anything had changed since the last time we had been out exploring the school grounds (5 weeks before). They looked at the photographs collected in a scrap book from the previous 4 sessions to aid comparisons about what they had seen. Having sat quietly and listened the adult wrote down all the things that the children heard. Next they had 9 photographs of things that might be growing in the school grounds – such as primroses and hazel buds – and the children spent 5 minutes in pairs looking for these before a group discussion. The children were then asked how they could share with their classmates the smells of spring and a child suggested making a collection of things they could touch and pick up and mixing it into a “potion” in a pot. Each child was asked to find a stick for stirring and given a plastic pot to collect their smells. All the children had their own smell pots and some chose to work individually whilst others worked with a friend.</p>	



Photo 1 – collecting smells



Photo 2 – looking for signs of spring. Is this a hazel bud?

There was lots of discussion as they added things to their pots and offered it to a friend to smell. The mud and rotting leaves were decided to be an unpleasant smell – a better smell for winter and wet weather it was decided- whilst the grass and some leaves were “nice and fresh”. The children were surprised that the spring time flowers, such as daffodils, didn’t have much smell. Someone realised that their smell got stronger when they stirred their pot with a stick. The session ended with all 10 smell pots being smelt by everyone and the best smell of spring decided upon before the contents were returned to a corner of the school grounds and the pots washed up ready for child initiated learning the next session, where the children could decide to continue making smell pots if they wanted.

Aspects of Enquiry

Authentic activity

The key question the children were asked to explore was **How can we share the smells of Spring?** The children were already familiar with their senses, although smell and touch were sometimes forgotten by some of the class. This activity was part of a bigger senses project linked to the school garden. It also engaged the children in the seasonal events of their daily lives; as such this is highly authentic as it made use of everyday observations that were part of the routine of their daily lives but they may not notice unless specifically focussed to do so. After smelling things around the grounds themselves, a child suggested making spring potions and then another child took this idea and it was developed into collecting things in a pot to smell. Although this was exactly what was hoped for – the pots were in my backpack – the children made it their own by collecting sticks to mix and mash their

	<p>smells in their pot, building on the young child’s natural schema of mixing many things together.</p>	
<p>Inquiry based activity</p>	<p>The children were challenged to be able to share the smells of spring with others and after an initial discussion about how to do this, one of the children suggested making their own smell pots. Prior to this challenge the children had completed an adult directed activity whereby they were blindfolded and asked to smell plants such as mint, basil and rosemary and describe what they could smell and whether they liked it. (see photographs 3 and 4 below)</p> <p>So the suggestion of making a smell pot for spring shows application of prior learning too.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="427 737 873 1073">  </div> <div data-bbox="976 737 1224 1073">  </div> </div> <p>Photo 3 Adult directed smelling herbs Photo 4 Smell pots</p> <p>The children were encouraged to discuss the problem and suggest ideas about how they could share their “smells of spring”. They then planned and developed their own pots and explored how the smell could be strengthened (by stirring with their stick) The children then evaluated their smells. Observations, both verbal and predominantly using their sense of smell were enhanced by this activity.</p>	
<p>Active engagement of the children</p>	<p>The children were highly motivated and involved. All undertook the activity with relish and stayed on task. It produced lots of impromptu language and discussion and provided rich opportunities for personal and social development as some chose to work together, comparing smells as they added them to their pot. The children showed a great attitude to learning – persevering when their smells weren’t quite as they hoped for.</p>	



Photo 5 choosing to collaborate



Photo 6 Helping each other

All the children took great delight in sharing their pots with each other at the end and at their insistence I still had to take a photograph to put in their learning journey. This prompted more discussion about the future of smelly photographs!



Photo 7 Checking it smells just right

<p>Collaborative group work</p>	<p>Due to the age of the children each child was given their own pot to collect their own smells in. Some chose to work alongside a friend and put the same things in their own pots. (see photo 5) The collaboration came from the children's willingness and want to share their smell pots with each other and me. At the end of the session they were all eager to smell each other's pots and sat in a large circle passing them around discussing what they liked and what they could see in the pots too.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="428 506 850 1073">  </div> <div data-bbox="932 506 1354 1073">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <p data-bbox="428 1083 748 1115">Photo 8 Sharing our smells</p> <p data-bbox="915 1083 1419 1115">Photo 9 Sharing someone else's smell pot</p> </div>
<p>Discursive argumentation and communication (talking science)</p>	<p>As speaking was a main objective of the larger project, this activity was to encourage the children to practise and develop this skill and begin to use scientific vocabulary in their discussions. Initially words such as bud, twig, branch were encouraged as the children observed signs of change. One of the children knew it was called spring and a few more knew what this was and what might be happening as a result. One child said "The flowers are starting to come out. I've seen them grow. Because it is the right time now. In winter it is too cold and in summer it is too hot." Another child suggested "The flowers are coming out because it is sunny and it is a little bit rainy so they get some water too." A few knew names of plants like daffodil and primrose and these names were modelled to those that didn't. Due to the age of the children the adult acted as the scribe to write down what they said – "My pot smells fresh" , "It smells like my garden" and "I can only smell the grass." - photographs were used as the main record of what they did. These photographs were later annotated with quotes from the children to add to their Early Years</p>

	Foundation Stage Profile.
Stimulating observation	<p>Prior to making the smell pots the children had walked around the grounds looking for changes since the previous session of explorers. The question what has changed since our last explorers session and a look at previous photographs prompted the children to notice that the sun was shining, birds were singing, and someone even spotted a bird with a twig in its beak. Although the children use the school grounds daily for playtime this was a very different experience as they were encouraged to look and comment on what they had observed. Listening to each other – and working in a mixed ability group – provided an additional aspect to developing their observational skills and the ability to talk about what they saw. Some children enjoyed using the binoculars just to lie still on their tummies and see what was going on around them and having a piece of equipment kept them focussed. Others loved using the hand lens to look closely at the buds and bulbs, prompting more descriptive and focussed language.</p> <p>This equipment wasn't necessary to the activity but just provided the children with a physical reminder that they were using their eyes to see what was all around them and to spot any changes from the last time they had looked.</p> <p>This activity encouraged the children to observe using a different sense and this added to their understanding of how to enquire about the world around them.</p>
Consideration of evidence	<p>The children quickly concluded that much had changed since the last time they were "Explorers". The most obvious and immediate observation was that the sun was shining now. This prompted one child to say that this was because "it is spring time" and others followed, offering their ideas and knowledge about spring – "baby animals are born", "birds are singing" and "there are daffodils". Finally the children concluded that this was because the sun was shining and it was getting warmer. The "Smells of Spring" activity encouraged the children to think about and collect evidence with respect to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What smells are associated with Spring What smells they liked and didn't like and to give reasons why How to make their smells stronger
Stimulating self-regulation	<p>Due to the age of the children, the activity was designed to be simple but to stimulate observation, especially to encourage them to talk about and discuss these observations. Having previously experienced smell pots the children had the necessary prior knowledge and they were able to transfer this to making their own.</p>

They were given freedom to do this without specific adult instruction. The challenge for the children was not just to go around the school grounds and smell things but to be able to share these smells with others and describe these and others Spring smells; this skill was used again at the end of the bigger project, which culminated with a sensory exhibition for the school and their parents.



Photo 10 Sensory Exhibition

Those children that chose to be the “experts” at the smelling table had to reproduce a spring smell pit to share (See photo 10)

How this IBSE activity has affected the children’s learning

The children were all highly motivated and engaged in the activity. It developed their observational and communication skills in a meaningful way. This was evident at the end of the 4 week project when the children held a sensory exhibition for the school and their parents and some children chose to make smell pots to have in the exhibition and talk about how they made them and why they made them (see Photo 10) The outcome of a sensory exhibition also provided the vehicle for the children to practise their speaking and listening skills we had been working on and to share their knowledge about their senses.

Although this was an adult directed task, some children chose to continue and develop this activity during child initiated learning making their own smell pots of their small outside area. When undertaking work on the senses with young children the sense of smell is often the most challenging to develop language - to extend it from “yuk” to “That smells like my garden”.

It shows the value of meaningful real experiences for young children. At the end of the bigger 4 week project the data showed that the lower attainers had made considerable progress in terms of speaking skills, and activities such as smells of spring contributed to this.

Development matters- Speaking	Number of children at the beginning of the project	Number of children at the end of the project
30-50 months	1	0
40-60+ months emerging	5	0
40-60+ months developing	13	10
40-60+ months secure	8	12
ELG	1	6

By the end of the project 64% of the class were secure at 40-60+ months or working within the Early Learning goals for Speaking (this was double the 32% of the class at the beginning of the project). This will provide firm foundations for future developments, especially in the development of talk for science and inquiry based problem solving.

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