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PROMOTING WELLBEING THROUGH NATURE SCHOOL FOR YOUTH IN HELSINKI

ABSTRACT

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Promoting Wellbeing through Nature School for Youth in Helsinki
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The purpose of this thesis was to provide environmental activities in English to seventh and eighth grade students in the Helsinki region through nature schools. Additionally, the project's impact on the students' mood and feelings related to the natural experience was evaluated, and it was emphasized how important it is that such services are offered in Helsinki. The three objectives were to plan and implement three nature school lessons in English using environmental education approaches, to examine feedback from students and teachers, and to create a leaflet for future use.

The three nature schools were implemented in the spring of 2022, and the evaluation of the project took place over the course of the summer. The evaluation was based on observations made and daily diaries kept during the project's implementation days, and paper questionnaires filled out by the students and teachers at the conclusion of each project day. The results showed positive impact of the nature schools in the student's mood and stress levels. Additionally, most of the students and all of their teachers agreed that the existence of English language nature school programs in Helsinki is important in order to promote inclusion and connection between youth and nature through environmental education.

Keywords: Environmental Education, Youth, Nature, Wellbeing, Eco-Social Approach

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Youth Services of Helsinki offers a wide range of environmental and nature activities for the youth such as nature schools, nature camps, and activities related to sustainability in the Youth Environmental Space (Youth Helsinki, n.d). After browsing their official websites, I noticed the lack of nature schools offered in English and specifically to the English-speaking youth. A similar pattern can be seen while browsing theses in Theseus, a service that provides online access to theses and publications from Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland, where there are some theses involving young children and environmental work, but not enough which focuses on English-speaking and adolescent youth in general.

This thesis is a project-based study conducted in English with youth from 12- 14 years old living in Helsinki. Its topic is mainly environmental and nature activities with youth in urban settings and their outcomes to their wellbeing. Its primary purpose is to provide nature activities in English for youth living in Helsinki, in order to encourage their connection to and sensitivity to the nature. Following the project, their feedback was collected and interpreted alongside recognized journals to understand the project's effect on their wellbeing immediately after the project. However, it was not possible to make further assessment or assumptions about the long-term effects because of the project's limited time frame.

This Nature School program was initially offered aiming to reach the immigrant youth living in Helsinki. However, since the immigrant youth are part of the conventional school system, the program was open for all the schools in Helsinki to sign up for. This meant that even if the majority of students taking part in the project were native Finns, they were exposed to English and got to practice the language while learning about nature in a different way. The program consists in a 2,5-3-hour wellbeing promoting nature experience through fun and educational activities in the Edible Park.

Environmental studies have always been important to me. I used to study Environmental Engineering in Fluminense Federal University (UFF) when I lived in Brazil and after I started my Social Services studies in Finland, I have always wanted to combine elements of it with social work. I completed my third placement in the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit of Helsinki in the autumn of 2021, in which I had the opportunity to join in many nature schools in Finnish language in Meriharju Nature House. In the first weeks of the placement, the need of nature schools in English language was discussed and the idea of developing and implementing this project occurred. This paper was written by myself because it is a personal project to me that I was able to work directly with my previous placement institution.

2 YOUTH AND NATURE

When making the decision to implement nature schools in English for the youth, substantial research was done in order to understand better relevant topics such as Environmental Education, nature schools in general and the impact of nature on the wellbeing of the youth. These concepts will be elaborated on in the sub-chapters below.

2.1 Environmental Education

Environmental education, as stated by UNESCO in 1987, is a learning process that improves people's awareness of and skills concerning the environment and the challenges it faces, along with the skills and expertise needed to deal with those challenges (Boca, Gratiela & Saraçlı, 2019).

Environmental education in youth work strives to promote a more sustainable lifestyle while also assisting young people's development. The objective is to develop a worldwide attitude of respect for nature via personal and meaningful nature encounters, activities, and awareness. A young person needs understanding about natural processes and how we are related to them, in order to develop a positive relationship with nature (Youth Helsinki, 2022).

For those of us who live in metropolitan areas, the importance of soil, food sources, and the cyclical nature of fresh water have become textbook concepts (Van Matre, 1979.) Losing touch with nature, particularly in western nations, leads to a loss of knowledge about the environment and its surroundings which affects one's capacity to name or identify the most common species of animals and plants (White, Eberstein & Scott, 2018.)

In addition, if adolescents do not understand and care for the natural environment they live in, they will be less likely to show interest in adopting pro-environmental behaviors. According to previous research, the time that a young person spends

at school could be used to give chances for them to go outside in nature and to foster an interest in the environment and environmental stewardship (Harris, 2021).

2.2 Nature School as a concept

Finnish nature schools are environmental outdoor programs for school classes in natural environments. They promote and support the concept of sustainability, interest in nature and environmental sensitivity. Nature Schools are intended to contribute to the aims of the national curriculum in various subjects. According to The New Educational Curriculum in Finland, the goal of the school is to instill hope for a better future by building the groundwork for competencies and understanding of sustainability and environment (Halinen, 2018). The Finnish nature schools (luontokoulu [fin], naturskola [swe]) were brought to the country in the 1980's and were inspired by nature schools in other Nordic countries. Since 2007, nature schools have been clustered with comparable agents under the LYKE-network, a network for nature and environmental schools (Sjöblom & Svens, 2019).

Nature schools can be public or private, depending on whether they are funded by municipalities or non-governmental organizations. Activities for preschool and school classes are designed and presented by a nature school instructor during the programs, which can last from one to several hours (Sjöblom & Svens, 2019). A nature school day is full of hands-on learning. The nature school instructors are role models for appreciating the outdoors, participating in play, and participating in student discoveries and astonishment. During the program day, the nature school instructor assists the class teachers by preparing, providing teaching materials, and taking the lead in teaching. The strategy is not so much about emphasizing our environment's difficulties and dire predicament, or any associated guilt. Rather, it starts with the children, their environment, their daily routines, their knowledge, talents, and interests (Sjöblom & Svens, 2019).

The Nature School programs offered by the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit are advertised to all schools in Helsinki. The Meriharju Nature House, which is the main nature school location, is a member of the national network LYKE. Schools can apply for the programs during spring and autumn when nature school programs are organized. The programs offered are comprehensive, functional, and experimental environmental programs for 4th-9th graders. The excursions are guided by professional and inspiring workers. The aims of their nature school lessons are to support and deepen the students' relationship with nature, enable the environmental knowledge learned in school to be perceived into one's own life and strengthen the environmental citizenship by providing opportunities to have an environmental impact.

2.3 Nature and wellbeing in adolescent youth

The World Health Organization defines health as the “complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing” (WHO, 1946, p.1). Previous studies show that the youth involved in the nature schools have the opportunity to practice their daily physical activities, lower their stress levels and escape the distractions of their daily lives, and as a result improving their overall health (White, Eberstein & Scott, 2018).

Across the world, youth are having less opportunities to interact directly with nature. One of the main factors is the fast and continuous urbanization, since a high proportion of metropolitan areas are made of manmade materials and separated from natural systems and processes. Furthermore, the continued increase of sedentary activities (for example spending time online, playing computer- and video games and watching television) has reduced the time available for nature interactions. This has resulted in a large number of young people experiencing disconnection from nature which has been demonstrated to reduce not just a variety of health and well-being advantages for people, but also a decrease in emotional affinity for nature and both pro-environmental attitudes and behavior (White, Eberstein & Scott, 2018).

Nature schools are one option for parents to reconnect children with nature, establish a sense of place, and allow for growth and development through outdoor learning experiences. Research has shown a variety of benefits from being outdoors, particularly on mental and physical health. "In a review of the evidence supporting contact with nature for health promotion, Maller et al. (2006) identified physiological benefits; improved recovery time from mental fatigue, injury, and illness; improved positive outlook and life satisfaction; and the ability to cope with stress." More and more research is pointing to nature schools showing positive results in increasing focus, competences and ability to cope with stress (Harper, 2017), as well as developing children and young people's self-esteem and social skills (Maynard, 2007.)

Moving classes outdoors during the school day provides the extra physical exercise recommended for all of us, aiding in the fight against the rising number of cases of illnesses like obesity, diabetes and other problems related to the sedentary lifestyles of today throughout their lives (Nevin J. Harper, 2017).

2.4 Eco-Social Approach

From an eco-social framework perspective, structural social work mainly focuses on the social and economic structures as well as, most importantly, how nature and the physical living environment contribute to social well-being and social issues. The other primary component of the eco-social approach, the ecocritical viewpoint in social work, has its roots in both the ecological catastrophe facing contemporary civilization and the worldwide ecological movement that has been growing since the 1970s and 1980s. The method calls into question the whole paradigm and way of life of Western civilization, which is founded on the exploitation of both natural and human resources in order to achieve unremitting economic expansion (Närhi & Matthies, 2016).

The classic "social issue" of social policy has been redefined as an "eco-social issue," which is inextricably linked with ecological awareness. Social and environmental challenges are now viewed in social policy and social work as

components of the challenge facing the broader industrial "modern project." In addition to individual adjustments, a society that is degrowth-oriented, ecologically sustainable, and socially egalitarian needs structural reforms. Based on the principles of sustainable development, social work must evaluate its own acts and the evolution of society (Närhi & Matthies, 2016).

There is a growing awareness of the impact on mental health, with the distress, confusion and anxiety that follows the increased awareness of the climate and bio-diversity crisis, with concern often centered on how this is affecting children and young people (Hickman, 2020). In a time of intensifying environmental distress, if social work is to maintain its contemporary relevance and value, it must become a profession that incorporates and contributes to an understanding of the changing natural environment and how this is impacting humanity (Drolet et al.2015).

In accordance with the findings of the previous Youth Barometer 2021, the barometer from 2022 investigates the environmental concerns that young people in Finland have, as well as the climate anxiety issue. The report primarily emphasizes the feelings of grief, inadequacy, and satisfaction. Climate stress has been discussed in the recent years in Finnish and international research. The barometer's findings support the idea that climate anxieties have many aspects, and that young people's environmental anxiety is a serious phenomenon. Nearly 60% have disclosed having had feelings of concerns regarding the environment within the past six months (Nuorisobarometri, 2022).

3 PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE THESIS

The aim of the thesis was to provide English-speaking environmental related activities to young people from the ages of 12-14 years old living in Helsinki area, and to understand the impact of the project in the students' moods and feelings related to the nature experience, as well as highlight the importance of the availability of such services in Helsinki's urban settings.

The thesis had three clear objectives: 1) to plan and implement three nature school lessons in English using environmental education approaches, 2) to assess the received feedback from the students and teachers 3) to produce a leaflet for the professionals.

TABLE 1. SMART Analysis of objective 1: to plan and implement three nature school sessions in English language

SPECIFIC	The project was carried out by the thesis' author, with the supervision of the coordinator and an experienced youth worker of the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit of Helsinki. It took place in the Edible Park, and the activities were conducted in English.
MEASURABLE	There were three nature school days which had been confirmed with the school classes and the work-life partner beforehand.
ACHIEVABLE	The youth worker assisting in this program had participated in numerous similar excursions in Finnish language in cooperation with this same work-life partner. The activities were modeled after pre-existing activities and adapted to this nature facility.

RELEVANT	Because of the lack of these activities in English language by the Helsinki municipality.
TIME-BOUND	The project took place on 12/05, 19/05 and 25/05/2022

TABLE 2. SMART Analysis of objective 2: to assess the received feedback from the students and teachers

SPECIFIC	The feedback collection and study were done by the thesis author and alongside with existing studies was interpreted to understand the outcome benefits to the young people's moods and feelings after the experience.
MEASURABLE	The thesis author had weekly study sessions to read and write for this thesis.
ACHIEVABLE	The thesis author was an intern for the work-life partner and researched a lot of related materials in the previous year.
RELEVANT	The feedback assessment contributes to highlight the importance of the availability of this service in English language in Helsinki.
TIME-BOUND	The feedback assessment took place from 26/05/2022 until the middle of August of 2022.

TABLE 3. SMART Analysis of objective 3: to produce a leaflet for the professionals

	The leaflet was written and designed by the author of the thesis who also created and designed the program for the
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SPECIFIC	project. The leaflet was created after the project ended, on the summer of 2022.
MEASURABLE	The leaflet consists of a collection of short descriptions of the exercises used on the nature school program and recommendations for future nature school facilitators.
ACHIEVABLE	The structure of the leaflet was similar to ones done previously for other work-life partner's projects.
RELEVANT	The leaflet contributes to the continuation of this important project for the future.
TIME-BOUND	The leaflet creation took place from 26/05/2022 until the middle of August 2022.

3.1 The stakeholders

The primary stakeholder of this project was the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit of Helsinki and the three schools, who took part in the project and enabled the participation of the classes. The secondary stakeholders were the 12 to 14-year-old students, who participated in the nature school days.

3.2 Target group

The target group was originally 6-9 grade students with English skills, however the classes that signed up for the project were 3 classes from 6th and 7th grade: a 7th grade with 24 students, a 7th grade with 19 students and a 6th grade with 20 students, all accompanied by their teachers, and an experienced youth worker from the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit. This age group was chosen because of their crucial future role as environmental educators in a variety of

occupations, as well as their access to formal education programs (Ballantyne & Packer, 2002).

4 PROJECT PROCESS DESCRIPTION

A project is characterized as a temporary undertaking that is initiated with the goal of providing a unique product, service, and/or result. Implementing a project management process allows for the conclusion of this job (Dinsmore & Cabanis-Brewin, 2011.) This chapter is dedicated to explaining the project process, which includes the initiation, the planning, and the implementation. Additionally, for the reader to understand exactly what was done in the project days, the activities will be described in detail.

4.1 The need for the project

In Finland, a large portion of the country's recent immigrants are people who moved from cultures and environments that are distinct from those of the Nordic nations. Although there are indications of divergence among younger generations regarding nature, nature has traditionally played a significant part in the Finnish identity. In the meanwhile, it is becoming more commonly recognized that exposure to nature fosters psychological, physical, and social well-being and health. Additionally, contact with nature might play a crucial role when it comes to immigrant integration. Natural environments appear to be particularly important for immigrant adolescents to connect with and make friends across cultures. In this way nature may be a key tool for integration, which should be a resource available to everyone (Puhakka et al, 2021).

4.2 Project process description

Research of related literature and materials were studied from September until November of 2021, to strengthen the foundation of the project. They were searched in online databases such as EBSCO, Google scholar, Diakfinna, and some of the reading materials were recommended by the project supervisor and

other experienced project team members. After the project's approval, the location, project team and communication team were appointed.

Following the research phase, drafts of the project plan and the communication plan were created and eventually finalized (APPENDIX 1). The project plan is essential because it contains all the activities, tasks, and the resources necessary to complete the project (Project Manager, n.d) as well as the communication plan in which it is possible to market the project to the target group.

A training day occurred on the 9th of May from 10:00 until 12:30 with only the team members, in which it checked if the previously chosen activities would be suitable and achievable in the timeframe and location of the project. The project took place in the Edible Park in the 12th, 19th and 25th of May 2022 from 10:30 until 13:00. The progress of the students was monitored throughout the project days, and adjustments were made in between each project day since each class was different.

Materials needed for the project were mainly natural resources from the Edible Park such as herbs and plants. The Environmental Education Youth Work Unit contributed with lending the necessary educational materials and equipment's such as magnifying glasses, guksis, cloth and providing the funds for seeds and seedlings. The budget was 100 euros, which we received through BOSTI form - a purchasing form used by the city of Helsinki.

Since the project took place in the spring of 2022, I will interpret and compare the collected feedback with existing scientific research to write the final thesis, aiming to finish it by the end of August 2022.

4.3 Project activities

The activities were a combination of those that were already included in the Finnish nature school curriculum and others that were also based on the Earth Approach, an approach used in environmental education. The Earth Approach is a

form of environmental education developed as an alternative and more extensive approach to conventional environmental education (Johnson & Manoli, 2020).

When all the students and their teachers had been accommodated at the Edible Park, the project officially began at 10:30 a.m. A quick overview of the Edible Park and the program goals was presented. The set of rules they had to follow to and the opportunity for them to ask questions about the program came next to avoid any misunderstandings.

The rules for the students were:

- ❖ We all should take care of each other so that the group stays together and that everyone has the chance to do the activities.
- ❖ To respect the nature around us, we must leave all places in at least the condition they were in when we got there (taking all the trash to the suitable trash can).
- ❖ To respect each other, no physical or verbal attacks to your classmates. If you do, there will be a warning and the teacher will intervene.
- ❖ You can leave your backpack inside of the house in the Edible Park, especially if it is heavy or it will make it harder for you to walk around. We can all put the bottles of water on the table so we can drink it in case we get thirsty in between the activities.
- ❖ Phones should be in silent or in-flight mode and, preferably in a pocket with a zipper, so that it does not accidentally drop into a bush where it would be difficult to find.
- ❖ Please keep your keys, bus cards and other valuables in your backpack, we won't use any of these for the activities.

The **first activity** was the relaxation moment with 5 sensorial questions:

1. What do you notice first when you walked into the Edible Park?
2. What do you see?
3. What do you hear?
4. What do you feel (on the ground, in the air, etc.)?
5. What do you smell?

The relaxation moment aimed on lowering the students' levels of excitement, while assisting them to connect with the nature and perform the activities calmly.

The **second activity** was to collect different elements in the garden according to the color palettes. I distributed 2 color palettes to each student, and they had to search for interesting natural elements with the colors of these palettes in the Edible Park's premises and surroundings. After they collected them, they would put on the sheet I placed on the floor. If they finished the activity before the others, they would have the chance to receive another palette until the end of them. When they finished, we would carry small discussions about which colors were easy and the most challenging ones to find, and the justifications for their answers.

The **third activity** was connected to the second one, and it was about them creating art-craft, a mandala for example, with all the collected elements from the sheet and even more if they wanted to collect new ones. After it ended, we would ask them to share why they chose those elements and explain their art pieces.

The fourth activity was a photo scavenger hunt in the garden. We would randomly form four groups and ask each group to choose one representative to get scavenger hunt list and a marker. Then we would establish the boundaries, which was the Edible Park and give the instructions. Each list there were 10 items: an insect that you can name; an interesting rock; a flower or leaf; an herb with good scent; fungus growing on a tree; a cloud shaped like something; the most interesting thing for all the group members; a cool landscape; something that you can eat and a bird. Then they had to find each element around the Edible Park and take

a photo of it. In the end, each group had to select and show the most interesting element they found and tell us why.

The **fifth activity** was connected to our sense of smell. We distributed small pots (guksis) to each student and ask them to put different nature elements inside of it and to smell after. We encouraged them to put different elements together to make mixtures and to share with us and their classmates.

The **sixth activity** was to plant a seasonal plant. We distributed the gloves and gardening equipment's to all the students and split them into groups according to the number of adults. Then we would distribute the seeds and seedlings, and Johanna would instruct the groups on how to plant them. We told them that The Edible Park is open the whole summer and anyone can come to visit and check how the plants have been growing.

The **last activity** was to collect herbs for tea making in the lunch break. Johanna would take everyone in a tour around the garden explaining the names of the flowers and herbs and explaining which ones could be collected for tea. Everyone received disposable tea bags and cups with hot water so they could eat their lunches while tasting the teas.

In the end of the nature school day, the feedback forms and pens were distributed to the students and teachers that wanted to write, with the disclaimer that it was anonymous. After that, we gathered in the same spot we started the day and exchanged our last words and farewells.

4.4 Project implementation

In the end of 2021, I had a meeting with the youth worker, Johanna Ahtinen, to write an advertisement for the program. In beginning of 2022, the program was advertised in City of Helsinki's pamphlet for the youth services offered in spring 2022 and sent out by email to all public schools of the municipality. The schools had the chance to sign up through the online system, Kultus, from February 1st

and onwards. By the 2nd of March, after another round of advertisements, all three days for the program had been booked.

All the necessary materials for the planned activities were provided by the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit of Helsinki, which included seeds, saplings, gardening equipment, guksi's, blankets, color palettes, disposable bags for tea, drinking mugs, kettle etc. Additionally, they were responsible for providing a safety kit.

The Edible Park is a communal vegetable garden maintained by the Youth Services of the City of Helsinki located in Mustikkamaa near Korkeasaari. Free summer activities for young people are provided by the Helsinki's Youth Services in the Edible Park, including creative work, art and nature-oriented workshops, cultivation, and animal care. The Park is open for the public during their opening hours (Edible Park, 2022).

The nature school took place on May 12th, 19th and 25th of 2022 at the Edible Park. The dates were chosen to ensure the most ideal weather conditions and the peak time to cultivate. We also took into consideration that the Edible Park would be open throughout the summer so the young people would have the possibility of returning to check up on their plants and continue their experiences in contact with nature for a longer time.

5 PRODUCT PLANNING

The product consists of a simple leaflet containing all the activities performed in the nature school program days, with observations and instructions. Each activity day was followed by a meeting to discuss how to improve or change the program in order to adapt it to the youth's needs and interests based on their feedback and observations made by the professionals involved. Following the meetings, these changes would be written down along with other observations on how the exercise could be done in an easier or better way. The aim of the leaflet is to assist the future professionals of the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit who will conduct the program for the next years in the Edible Park since the program will be become permanent.

The leaflet contains illustrations and photographs taken throughout the program days in order to facilitate the understanding and visualization. The leaflet has an introduction explaining its purpose, followed by an introduction and explanation of the program, and finishes with suggestions as to how the feedback can be collected, and recommendations for future nature schools in English in the Edible Park. None of the participants can be identified from the photos used in the leaflet.

6 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT AND PRODUCT

6.1 Ethics of research

Recognizing my lack of experience in youth work, the activities planned was discussed with an experienced youth worker and environmental educator, who worked alongside me and provided guidance throughout the project, as well as ensuring that the work-life partner's values were represented in all aspects of the project.

Since the project and the thesis involve minors, all the adult participants underwent a Criminal Records check as demanded by the Act on Checking the Criminal Background of Persons Working with Children. To ensure the anonymity of the young people participating in the program, no personal data such as names of the individuals will be recorded (L 504/2002).

In accordance with the latest Youth Act, only with the approval of the young person, or, if he or she is a minor, with the consent of his or her guardian, information gathered during the workshop activity may be shared with another authority or other organization fulfilling a public role, which is why the school's sought permission from the participants' legal guardians in advance (L1285/2016 14. §).

The project took place during the students' school hours so extra permission papers was not necessary. An informative letter containing all the information about the program was sent to the schools, and then forwarded to all the participants' legal guardians beforehand. A research permit was applied for and granted by the municipality of Helsinki and Youth Services in December 2021 until June 1st, 2022.

The following principles serve as the foundation for the work of Youth Services of the City of Helsinki: actively promoting equality, human rights, and sustainable development; emphasizing young people's participation, equality, and

voluntarism; working primarily with young people during their free time; creating an environment that fosters learning; working with partners; concentrating on the needs of the most vulnerable youth (Helsinki, 2022). Taking these principles into consideration, the program was idealized to create activities in the nature in English, ensuring that the non-Finnish speaking youth would be offered the same services and not be excluded.

6.2 Risk assessment

Some risks have no direct influence on the project, but they can inflict extensive and long-term collateral harm outside of it. As a result of assessing the risks, we may minimize or mitigate the threat's influence on our project and get better results (Dobson, 2015). If the three different classes that signed up for the project had to cancel their participation for any reason, the project and the thesis writing process would have had to be postponed. In this case we would have had to wait until the Autumn, when the new school term had begun, in order to find other classes to participate, and another research permit application would have had to be submitted and accepted.

Because the project was carried out with a group of young people, there was a risk that they could injure themselves, have disagreements with their classmates, or refuse to cooperate during the activities. This would be mitigated by the presence of their class teacher, who is already familiar with them, and an experienced youth worker. The many months of planning that preceded the implementation were an important factor in the prevention of accidents taking place. A detailed risk management plan was created before the project implementation and attached as an appendix to this thesis (APPENDIX 2).

6.3 Evaluation of the project

After the project days, feedback was collected through paper questionnaires filled out by the students and their teachers. The questionnaires were distributed to the students and the teachers after the last activity of the program in the Edible Park, so they could fill them anonymously if they consented to do so. The teachers kept the students' legal guardians informed about the project and all the data being collected and asked for their consent beforehand. The cooperation of both legal guardians and adolescents is needed in order to gather data from the adolescents (Bates & Boren, 2019.)

The questions in the written feedback forms (APPENDIX 3) were carefully chosen to understand whether the students enjoyed the program, what elements and activities they liked and disliked about it, whether their stress levels and mood were positively affected, whether they considered the availability of projects in English language relevant, and if they had any suggestions to improve the program as a whole. The questions related to the activities were very important to the work-life partner, while the questions related to the mood/stress levels and availability of the program in English were important to this thesis.

The evaluation was carried out by observation, writing a diary, and analyzing the paper questionnaires filled by students and teachers after each project implementation day. The members of the project team discussed what had been observed in the nature school day, for example how the students' moods changed, if they seemed engaged in the exercises and enjoyed the experience, which activities they seemed to like more, if the activities were done in the best and safest way and if we should make changes in the program. Following this meeting, I wrote a descriptive diary on Microsoft Word of how the day went and stated our observations.

On the 12th of May nature school, we received twenty 7th graders accompanied by two teachers and two small dogs. The weather was cold for the springtime, but all the students participated in most of the activities, and they seemed relaxed and considerate from the first exercise. The class was mainly English-speaking, so they did not seem to have problems understanding the instructions or sharing their opinions throughout the day. Some were not familiar with

gardening which made the project team realize that preparing the soil was time-consuming and harder, especially for those who do not have experience with gardening. Some students did not understand the art-craft exercise well and decided to collect trash elements around the park, which reinforced that we should either have been clearer about the instructions or change the activity for the next group. We decided to not do the smelling exercise with the guksis due to a lack of time because the students took longer than expected to perform the photo scavenger hunt and the gardening.

In the end of the day, all the students wanted to fill out the feedback forms. According to their evaluation, 90% (18 students) answered that they enjoyed the nature school day while 10% (2 students) answered that they did not enjoy it. Some of their comments were important for the analysis, such as:

- ❖ “I think it's a great way to connect with nature especially the relaxation moment. Most teenagers are addicted to their phones, which makes them not really interested in nature.”
- ❖ “I got different experiences there.”
- ❖ “I didn't like the exercises and it was really cold. But I think this can be an important thing.”

Half of the students (10 students) answered that they felt positive changes in their stress levels, while 35% (7 students) did not know, and 15% (3 students) did not feel any change.

Most of the students (12 students) answered that they felt a little improvement in their moods, while 26.3% (5 students) answered they felt a definite improvement in their moods, and 10.5% (2 students) did not feel any improvement.

Most of the students (18 students) believed that the availability of the nature school program in English is important, while one student disagreed. Some remarkable comments related to that were:

- ❖ “Most of the nature schools are in Finnish, but people who don't speak Finnish don't have a chance.”
- ❖ “Because nature is important.”
- ❖ “Because then it means there are more people coming.”
- ❖ “Everybody could learn about nature and have fun.”

In the end, 11 students rated the program 4 out of 5, while 4 students rated it 3, 3 students rated it 5 and one student rated it 1. We received 19 answers settling the average score of the program from the first group as 3.8 out of 5.

On the 19th of May 2022 nature school, we received eighteen 7th graders and their two teachers, one of them an English teacher. The young people in this group were mainly Finnish-speaking students practicing their English skills, setting it apart from the group of the first nature school day. The weather was warm, and the sun was shining, different from what the weather forecast was predicting earlier in the same day. The project team made a few changes for this day, as we decided to not do the art-craft activity because the previous group struggled to pay attention on the instructions. This class seemed very interested in finding different herbs and edible flowers to put in their teas and in the gardening. We also changed the gardening activity, so the students used the previously prepared soil and planted saplings which gave us time to perform the smelling with the guksi's activity. One student got a small injury on a finger, which we addressed promptly by cleaning it and providing plasters from the first aid kit.

For the feedback time, some students did not want to fill out the form, assumably because of a lack of English proficiency, so we decided that for the next group they could write the feedback in Finnish if it made them more comfortable. In total, twelve students wanted to write their feedback and both teachers asked to fill out a form as well.

According to the students' evaluation, most of them (11 students) enjoyed the nature school day while 1 student did not enjoy it. Some of the relevant comments they made:

- ❖ "Because I don't want to study at school, I would rather be outside than inside."
- ❖ "There was so much to do the whole day."

Most of the students (8 students) did not know if they felt positive changes in their stress levels, while 3 students did not feel any changes and 1 student felt positive changes. However, most of them (5 students) felt improvement in their moods, while 4 students answered that they felt a little improvement in their moods, and 3 students did not feel any improvement.

Most of the students (9 students) believed that the availability of the nature school program in English is important, while 3 students disagreed. Some comments they wrote to justify their answers:

- ❖ "It was fun to speak English and we can study it."
- ❖ "Because more people are able to enjoy the experience."
- ❖ "Because it's important to learn English"

Most of the students (7 students) rated the program a 4 out of 5, while 3 students rated as a 3, and one student rated as a 5. We received 11 answers so the average score of the program as 3.8 out of 5.

Both teachers enjoyed the nature school day, and felt positive changes in their stress levels, and noticed improvements in their mood. Additionally, both believed that the availability of the program in English is important. The teachers commented:

- ❖ "Nature experiences in an urban environment are important for children and young people."
- ❖ "More inclusive. Also, this gives English teachers a chance to do activities outdoors and use English as a tool rather than an aim. More programs like this, please 😊"

One teacher rated the program 5 out of 5, and the other rated it 4 out of 5.

On the last day, May 25th of 2022, the weather was even better than in the second day of nature school. The sun was shining strongly, and we had to offer sunscreen for the students before starting the activities. There were nineteen 6th graders and one teacher accompanying them. They were mainly Finnish speaking students with extra English classes, and they had had other nature experiences beforehand. We decided to keep the art-craft activity since many more flowers had blossomed and there were other beautiful elements in the garden for them to use, and this gave more purpose for the color palette activity. They created a beautiful flower mandala which they called "Peace of Flowers", which was left in the Edible Park for them to come back to check on later in the summer. We decided that the teacher would split them in groups for the photo scavenger hunt so they could socialize and interact with other mates outside of their normal groupings in the class.

In the feedback time, 13 students wanted to write their feedback and I decided to ask for the teacher to write his feedback too. We received 14 filled feedback forms in total. According to their evaluation, most of the students (12 students) enjoyed the nature school day while one student did not enjoy it. Some comments written by the students about their experiences:

- ❖ "The nature school day was really fun, and I learned a lot of new things about gardening and plants. The instructors were also very nice!"

- ❖ “The place is very lovely and a good change from the city, the people were nice, and the activities were interesting. It's nice that a place like this is for free and open for young people and others.”
- ❖ “It was nice to do different things in nature. And the weather was good, so it made it even better.”

Most of the students (9 students) answered that they felt positive changes in their stress levels, while three students did not know, and one student did not feel any changes. Most of the students (8 students) felt improvement in their moods, while four students felt a little improvement and one did not feel any improvement in their moods.

Most of the students (12 students) believed that the availability of the nature school program in English is important while one student disagreed. Some comments they wrote to justify their answers:

- ❖ “Because it is good that everyone gets to experience this experience regardless of the language.”
- ❖ “It is good that you can learn 2 things at the same time, like English and gardening. It's important that people who don't speak or understand Finnish can still enjoy this moment.”
- ❖ “Because people especially young people need to spend more time in nature.”
- ❖ “It is important because many people in Finland these days might not speak Finnish or Swedish and it's good to let them have a chance to experience this.”
- ❖ “Because most people just watch their phones or other electrical things and stay inside especially young people so it's a good change to be outside and get to know the nature and gardening.”

Most of the students (8 students) rated the program a 5 out of 5, while four students rated as a 4, and one student rated as a 3. We received 13 answers so the average score of the program as 4.5 out of 5.

Their recommendations for the future nature schools were:

- ❖ “Maybe a little bit more of gardening. It was fun and it teaches young people about the nature.”

In total, of the students who filled out the feedback forms, 41 enjoyed the program, while 4 did not. 38 students felt a little improvement in their moods, while 3 were unsure, and 1 did not feel any improvement. 20 students felt improvement in their stress levels, 13 were unsure, and 4 felt no improvement. 39 students found the availability of the program in English important, while five did not. The students on average rated the program around 4 out of 5.

In conclusion, 43 feedback forms were collected from the students and three from the teachers. Analyzing the feedback, the majority of the students enjoyed the program, felt improvement in their mood and stress levels and thought that the availability of the program in English is important.

We received different kinds of feedback from the classes overall; two more positive and one more negative. Even on the day of the worst weather, the first group we received were mainly English speakers, therefore they did not face difficulties to understand the program and it was easier to connect with them since I speak English as well. The last group was a Finnish-speaking group from a special class which had 20% of their subjects in English, so they were also able to understand and engage in the activities, and the fact that they were younger, and the weather was great contributed a lot. Since the second group consisted of mainly Finnish speakers, it was harder for them to understand all the instructions and for me to connect with them due to my limited Finnish skills.

6.3.1 SWOT project evaluation

SWOT analysis is a simple but effective method for assessing the positive and negative factors that may be impactful for completing a project successfully. It is an acronym that means strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and it was used to assist the project manager to understand and analyze what went well and what needs to be improved (Project Management, n.d).

The project's strengths were as follows: the youth worker participating and assisting in the project has taken part in several similar excursions in Finnish language in collaboration with this same work-life partner; the activities were based on pre-existing activities for young people and adapted to this nature facility; the thesis author was an intern for the work-life partner, when she had the opportunity to participate in similar excursions and to research a lot of related materials in the previous year; both workers involved in the project having strong English skills and the youth worker is a Finnish native speaker which it was helpful to gather feedback in both languages from the students and their teachers.

While the project's short timeline; the participation of different classes on different dates, which required revisions to the program; and the author's lack of expertise in gathering feedback from young people were the main weaknesses. Opportunities include gaining experience in the field, developing activities suited for young people in that specific nature facility, and in general advancing as a professional. While the threats were external risks including insects or bystanders that might affect the program, lack of interested classes applying for the program, potential weather changes that could result in cancellations, and a lack of cooperation from the students and their responsible teachers.

6.4 Evaluation of the product

The project's final product was an exercise leaflet, including instructions and observations for every activity carried out across the days of the nature school program. Based on the request of the work-life partner, a leaflet was produced with

the aim to benefit other professionals in the field or anyone else with an interest in the topic.

A draft of the leaflet was shown to the coordinator of the work-life partner while it was being developed, and was changed in response to their input, which was that it should be mentioned that the exercises could be applied in any other urban settings and changed according to the target groups. Additionally, the work-life partner made favorable comments about the readability and layout of the leaflet, leading to the conclusion that the goal was reached of creating a useful, informative, and practical product for future use.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will be a review of the project and product process and will evaluate if they fulfilled the initial objectives stated earlier. Furthermore, it will examine what was learned, what could have been done differently, and give recommendations for similar projects in the future.

The aim of this thesis was to provide English-speaking environmental related excursions to young people from the ages of twelve to fourteen years old living in Helsinki area and understanding the impact of the project in the students' moods and feelings related to the nature experience, as well as highlight the importance of the availability of English-speaking Helsinki's urban environment. The aims were successfully achieved by implementing three nature schools in the Edible Park in English, collecting the feedback from the students and their teachers, and producing a leaflet with instructions and advice for future professionals in the area.

Writing this thesis taught me how to plan and implement a project in social services field and having a chance to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the project management course, youth work course and other subjects while guiding the nature schools. Moreover, I learned how to observe the different needs and interests of the target group, and adjust a program accordingly, to their benefit. I had the chance to practice my communication and guidance skills, and to put in practice all the multicultural competencies I had learned through the past internship with the same work life partner. Studies show that ethnic minorities still encounter conventional services that are based on stereotypes and baseless assumptions, and that these services fail to attend to the needs of these groups when it comes to culture, religion and language (Parrott, 2009). With this in mind, providing this service in English and taking into consideration the young people's backgrounds is essential attend their needs and ensure that the services are being provided equally to everyone.

7.1 Challenges

Theory differs greatly from practice, and some of the challenges faced in this experience were difficulties taking the role as an authority to the young people, as a young adult. Additionally, when collecting feedback, I faced challenges when the students were not willing to give feedback and I did not know how to motivate and encourage them to do so. One unexpected challenge was that the teachers informed they were going to come with two dogs to the nature school, which created some distraction from the activities at different moments in the day. At the time I was unable to prevent it from happening, but in the future, I recommend setting up rules to prevent similar incidents.

Another challenge faced was the unpredictability of how long each class would take to execute the activities, which made us skip some activities in some days or do them in slower or faster pace causing a little bit of stress on the professionals involved. There is no practical solution to this problem but planning extra exercises ahead to give to the groups that perform faster and skipping some exercises for the groups that take longer time can be some solutions.

Writing a thesis is a long and difficult process and would have been smoother having a co-author to lean on for support and sharing tasks with, giving different perspectives and sharing the responsibilities. However, the youth worker and the supervisor from the Environmental Education Youth Work Unit were very helpful in all the stages of the project and the production of the leaflet.

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APPENDIX 1. Project Plan Schedule

PHASES	DURATION	PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE
INITIATION		
Research about related materials	06/09/2021 - 31/01/2022	Maria Kataja
Approval of the project	19/10/2021	Annina Wallinsalo, Johanna Ahtinen
Appoint project team	19/10/2021	Annina Wallinsalo, Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
Appoint project location	19/10/2021	Annina Wallinsalo, Maria Kataja
Appoint communication and marketing team	19/10/2021	Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
PLANNING		
Create the project plan draft	19/10 - 26/10/2021	Maria Kataja
Create the communications plan	25/10 - 01/11/2021	Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
Visiting of the chosen project location		Annina Wallinsalo, Maria Kataja
Planning of the activities	17/01 – 05/04/2022	Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
Allocate and level resources	17/01 – 05/04/2022	Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
Finalize the project plan	07/02/2022	Maria Kataja
IMPLEMENTATION		
Training project day + acquiring resources/materials	09/05/2022	Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja

Project implementation	12/05, 19/05, 25/05/2022	Annina Wallinsalo (25/05 only), Johanna Ahtinen, Maria Kataja
Monitor progress	12/05 – 25/05/2022	Maria Kataja
ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION		
Collecting feedback from the students and teachers	12/05, 19/05, 25/05/2022	Maria Kataja
Assessment of the pro- ject	26/05 - 08/06/2022	Maria Kataja
Interpret feedback based on previous re- search	26/05 – 10/08/2022	Maria Kataja

APPENDIX 2. Safety plan of the nature school program

SAFETY PLAN FOR THE NATURE SCHOOL PROGRAM

RISK	RISK CAUSE	RISK PREVENTION	EMERGENCY RESPONSE
Hygiene	Dirty hands, possible spreading of diseases	Giving instructions for washing hands before the start of the program and before the snack time, using of hand sanitizer	Treating the client for appropriate treatment, if necessary.
Animals, plants, and passers-by	Insect sting, eating a poisonous plant or fungus, a passer-by behaving aggressively	Giving advanced knowledge and clear instructions about the activities to the participants, knowledge of the terrain, having the necessary materials to handle accidents. Calling the police in case a passer-by behaves aggressively towards the group, ensure that another adult will intervene and	First aid, tick removal tools, further treatment, if necessary, prompt to check for ticks at home (teacher)

		assist the instructor in the situation.	
Movement	Falling, fatigue, slipping, tripping	Checking the operating environment and its surroundings, giving advanced information about the activities to the participants, observing the participants (the group stays together), choosing the place of rescue, having patches, cleaning wipes, cold packing and dressing needs	First aid, further treatment if necessary
Instructor incapable of performing the activities	Surprising situation in the group (panic, etc.)	The presence of another instructor and the teacher, a mobile phone is included on the trip to get help if needed, interruption if necessary	First aid, further treatment if necessary
Diseases and physical disabilities	Latent, covert or diagnosed disease	Prior health information, required medications included with the client, in cases of diabetes making	First aid, further treatment, if necessary, these are the responsibility of the teacher

		sure that the snack break does not stretch too far	during nature trips
Social Problems	Surprising situations in the group (bullying, fighting, etc.)	Prior information about the participants, rules of operation	Intervening immediately, clarifying the matter with the teacher in charge
Weather	Rapid change of weather, intense sunshine, risk of slipping in the rain, thunderstorms and strong winds	Dressing instructions before the day of the program, observing the well-being of the participants, providing water, monitoring the weather, canceling the route or even the program itself if necessary	First aid, further treatment if necessary
Fire treatment	Negligent handling of fire, inexperience in the use of equipment	Instructions for using the equipment, the instructor will supervise the participants while using the equipment	First aid, proper treatment of burns
Equipment	Equipment in poor conditions, wrong equipment for the activities	Using the appropriate equipment, good instructions for the usage of them	First aid, further treatment if necessary

Accidents are prevented by following the general guidelines below:

1. A letter was sent in advance to the teacher in charge of the participant classcovering:
 - clothing and any necessary equipment
 - place of departure and return
 - arrival instructions (where the function takes place, public transportation in-formation)
 - advance information about the place and circumstances
 - operating rules and other instructions
 - contact details of instructors
2. Review and, if necessary, update first aid equipment and ensure that it is used and instructed by first aiders. Making sure that the first aid “passports” are updated too.
3. Get to know the implementation site in advance and obtain the necessary information, maps, etc. about the operating environment
4. Make an equipment list of tools, supplies, etc. needed for the function.
5. Ensure food hygiene and prepare the tea with the necessary equipment
6. When doing the program, etc., prepare with appropriate protective equipment
7. The instructor has a phone with them

For nature school days, preliminary information about the activity is already presented when the activity is marketed (for example in the brochures and onthe city’s website).

APPENDIX 3. Written questionnaires for the students

FEEDBACK survey

About the Nature School in English

1. Did you enjoy the nature school day? () Yes () No

2. Please tell me why you think this.

3. Which one was your favorite activity? You can select more than one, if you want to: () Relaxation moment
 - () Color Palettes () Art-craft with the nature elements
 - () Photo Scavenger Hunt
 - () Sense of smell using the guksis
 - () Gardening
 - () Collecting herbs and tea making

4. Which activity did you like the least? You can select more than one, if you want to: () Relaxation moment
 - () Color Palettes () Art-craft with the nature elements
 - () Photo Scavenger Hunt
 - () Sense of smell using the guksis
 - () Gardening
 - () Collecting herbs and tea making

5. Do you feel any positive changes in your stress levels?
 - () Yes, I do.
 - () I don't know.
 - () No, I do not.

6. Do you feel any improvement on your mood?

Yes!!!

No

Maybe a little

7. Do you think the availability of the nature school program in English is important?

Yes!!!

No :(

8. Why?

9. How would you rate the program?

1 2 3 4 5

Needs more improvement Great

10. Do you have any recommendations for the future nature schools in English?



Leaflet for professionals



Experimental exercises for nature schools in the
Edible Garden

Maria Clara Marcondes Vianna Kataja
Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

List of contents:

Introduction

Introduction of the program

1. Relaxation moment
2. Color Palettes
3. Art-Craft with natural elements
4. Photo Scavenger Hunt
5. Guksis exercise
6. Gardening
7. Collecting herbs for tea

Feedback moment Recommendations

Photo Scavenger Hunt list





Introduction



This is a leaflet explaining the activities implemented in the three nature schools in English in the spring of 2022 by Maria Clara Marcondes Vianna Kataja with the assistance of Johanna Ahtinen and supervision of Annina Wallinsalo.

The leaflet is part of a thesis that aims to provide English-speaking environmental related activities to young people from the ages of 12-14 years old living in Helsinki area, and to understand the impact of the project in the students' moods and feelings related to the nature experience, as well as highlight the importance of the availability of such services in Helsinki's urban settings.

It is intended to inform and guide professionals working in nature schools, such as youth workers, teachers and students in the field, as well as those with an interest in the subject, who want to familiarize themselves with guiding environmental education exercises for youth in English in the Edible Park.

Introduction of the program

When the students and teachers arrive, everyone should accommodate in the most comfortable part of the park. The instructors should present an overview of the Edible Park and the program that will take place on that day. It is interesting to share the reason why the program was created and its goals, so they can understand a bit more about how their nature school day will go. The instructors should also disclose about the set of rules they have to follow to and give the opportunity for them to ask questions to avoid any misunderstandings.

This is a simple example of rules:

We should...



- take care of each other so that the group stays together and that everyone has the chance to do the activities.
- respect the nature around us, we must leave all places in at least the condition they were in when we got there (taking all the trash to the suitable trash can).
- respect each other, no physical or verbal attacks to your classmates. If you do, there will be a warning and the teacher will intervene.
- leave the backpack inside of the house in the Edible Park, especially if it is heavy or it will make it harder to walk around. We can all put the bottles of water on the table so we can drink it in case we get thirsty in between the activities. Phones should be in silent or in-flight mode and, preferably in a pocket with a zipper, so that it does not accidentally drop into a bush where it would be difficult to find. Please keep your keys, bus cards and other valuables in your backpack, we won't use any of these for the activities.



RELAXATION MOMENT

The first exercise of the program is the relaxation moment. It aims on lowering the students' levels of excitement, while assisting them to connect with the nature and perform the activities calmly.

After the introduction, everyone all should gather in a comfortable part of the garden so the instructor can start to explain the instructions to the students. The instructor asks for them to find a comfortable spot in the garden surroundings, to sit and to think about these 5 sensorial questions:

- What did you notice first when you walked into the Edible Park?
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you feel (on the ground, in the air, etc.)?
- What do you smell?

Duration: 10 minutes

The professional should offer the seat bases, but it is allowed to sit on the grass or any part of the garden. It is important to observe if they aren't sitting next to each other or using their attention in other activities such as using the phone or talking with their classmates and ask for the teacher's assistance to intervene if necessary. After 10-15 minutes, the instructor blows the whistle, and everyone gather in the previous chosen spot to discuss about what they noticed, saw, heard, felt and smelled. It is important to make questions and share our own answers to the questions to encourage the conversation.

Color Palettes



The second exercise is to collect different elements in the park according to the color palettes. The instructor distributes 2 color palettes to each student and tell them to search for interesting nature elements with the colors of these palettes in the Edible Park's premises and to place them on the sheet. While they are searching, the instructor places the sheet on floor and if the weather is windy, put rocks in the corners of the sheet so it stays still. If some students finish the activity before the others, they have the chance to receive another palette until there is no more left.

When all the students finish, it is important to raise small discussions about which colors were easy and which ones were the most challenging to find, and the justifications for their answers. The discussion part is important because it makes them to think more about nature and to connect with the group. It is also important to set the boundaries of the search in the beginning of the activity to ensure that the instructor will be capable of observing and assisting in case of any emergency.

Duration: 15 minutes

Equipment:

- A sheet
- Color Palettes

Art-craft with natural elements



The third exercise is connected to the second one. The instructor asks the students to make art-craft with the elements collected and placed on the sheet. The art-craft can be anything they want, for example, a mandala or an abstract work of art. They can collect other elements if they find necessary, the important here is to use the creativity and work as a group. The art-craft should be placed far from the walking paths of the garden so it can remain there after the nature school day.

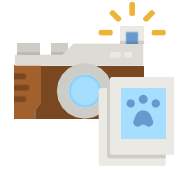
After they finish, there is a discussion time in which the instructor asks them to share why they chose those elements and to explain their art pieces. In the instruction time it is important to make sure that only natural elements are allowed, no trash or dangerous objects can be used. Also, to assist and engage all of the students in the exercise since some might lose their interest before others.

Duration: 20 minutes

There are no equipment necessary for this activity but they can be added to it in order to enrich the experience. Papers, water-paintings, glue, tape, markers are good ideas.



PHOTO SCAVENGER HUNT



The fourth activity is a photo scavenger hunt in the garden. The instructor randomly separates the students into 4 groups and ask each group to choose one representative to get scavenger hunt list (attached in this leaflet) and a marker. Each list there are 10 items: an insect that you can name; an interesting rock; a flower or leaf; an herb with good scent; fungus growing on a tree; a cloud shaped likesomething; the most interesting thing for all the group members; a cool landscape; something that you can eat and a bird. The instructor asks them to find each element around the Edible Park and use the leader's phone to take the photos. It is important to establish the boundaries, which is the Edible Park surroundings.

When all the groups finish, everyone gathers on the chosen spot of the beginning of the day and each group share and show the photo of the most interesting element they found and tell their justifications. The instructor should make more questions related to the search such as which elements were the easiest and the hardest to find, and what they individually found interesting.

Duration: 25 minutes

Equipment:

- Photo Scavenger hunt lists
- Markers

Guksis exercise



The fifth activity is connected to their sense of smell. The instructor distributes small pots (guksis) to each student and ask them to put different nature elements inside of them and to smell after, encouraging them to put different elements together to make mixtures and to share with their classmates.

After the time is up, the instructor asks for the students to clean their pots with water, collects the guksis back and have a small discussion with the students about the exercise.

Duration: 10-15 minutes

Equipment:

- Guksis



GARDENING



The sixth activity is to plant a seasonal plant in the garden. The instructor gathers everyone in the chosen spot, then distributes the gloves and gardening equipment to all the students and separate randomly them into groups according to the number of adults. Initially, the instructor should show the students on how to prepare the soil before planting the seeds, but it can be a difficult and long task for groups who are not used to gardening.

After, the instructor distributes the seeds and seedlings to the groups and explain on how to plant them. It is nice to say that The Edible Garden is open the whole summer and anyone can come to visit and check how the plants have been growing.

When the groups finish planting, the instructor can select one area for the students to put the equipment and gloves. And give them the chance of washing their hands if it is necessary.

Duration: 30 minutes

Equipment:

- Seeds and seedlings
- Gardening gloves
- Gardening equipment



Collecting herbs for tea



The last activity is to collect herbs from the garden for tea making so the students can drink it in their lunch break happening right after. The instructor distributes disposable tea bags and take everyone in a tour around the garden explaining the names of the flowers and herbs and which ones could be collected for tea, then the students choose which ones they want in their tea bags. While one instructor is on the tour, the other should be inside heating the water and preparing the cups on the trails, the honey and the disposable spoons to take outside and place them on the table.

After the tour ends, the instructor should distribute the cups and wood mixing tools to everyone and tell them that they can add honey to their teas if they want to. Then the students have their lunch break while tasting their teas.

It is important to tell me them where to throw their trash, and to include everyone in the tour even if they do not want to drink tea because it is interesting to know more about plants, flowers and herbs and it increases their interest in nature.

Duration: 30 minutes

Equipment:

- disposable tea bags
- cups
- disposable spoons
- honey
- electric kettles or any other water-heating device





FEEDBACK MOMENT



The feedback moment is essential in any project because it shows which parts were successful and which ones need changes or improvements, helping the project to always develop and suit young people's needs. However, it is not always an easy task to ask feedback from a young person, so it is advisable to collect different types of feedback. For example, if many students do not want to write their feedbacks, it could be interesting to ask for their opinion orally.

In the end of the nature school day, the instructor distributes the feedback forms and pens to the students and teachers that want to write, always with the disclaimer that it is anonymous. After they finish writing, everyone gathers in the same chosen spot in the beginning of the day and exchange the last words and farewells.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Recommendations



It is important to take into consideration the weather before starting the nature school day; for example, if it is too sunny providing sunscreen for the students is important. It is also necessary to have a safety kit at hand in case of accidents.



Setting up and preparing the equipment before the activity day begins prevents time being wasted and avoids issues of missing items.



Always remember to provide at least one or two examples of how an exercise is done after the explanation, in order to make sure the students have understood fully.



Setting location boundaries is important so that nobody moves out of view and do things that are out of your control, such as getting lost or performing other activities meant for other times.



Observe if the students are engaged in the exercises, and if not, try to motivate them into participating. Building a connection with the young person is important for them to feel comfortable, and for them to care about what you are telling.



For the feedback, the students who do not want to provide any formal type of feedback, such as in a form, can be motivated to give informal oral feedback. A simple thumbs up or down means more than no feedback at all.

Photo Scavenger Hunt list:

Edible Park Scavenger Hunt

- A bird
- An insect that you can name
- An interesting-looking rock
- A flower or leaf
- An herb with good scent
- Fungus growing on a tree
- A cloud shaped like an animal
- A cool landscape
- Something that you can eat
- The most interesting thing for all the group members

