

# *A Helpful Guide for taking Students Outside*

Adapted from The ABC's of Ecology ©2006, Ecology Education, Inc

Don't worry if your school doesn't border a National Park.

The majority of the activities in this book require a few trees near your school—they can be in the Public Right of Way in street tree pits, in a parklette, in your school yard or parking lot, or anywhere else nearby where you feel comfortable taking your students.

On the days when you are planning to take students outdoors, you may want to have an extra adult with you. This person could be an aide, ed-tech, or parent volunteer.

More important than having an extra adult is setting firm boundaries and expectations for student behavior. It is important that students understand that going outside is exciting, but it is not recess time.

## Here are some tips for managing groups outdoors:

### 1. Explain the structure of the outdoor activities before heading outdoors.

Give the students an idea of what they will be accomplishing in the outdoor segment.

### 2. Create small groups for doing outdoor work.

These groups could remain the same for the year and should include rotating roles for each student. The continuity of small groups is important for getting outside and starting activities quickly. Giving each student a specific job will help keep them focused when they are outside.

#### Sample roles:

##### Activity Explainer

*explains directions and keeps group on track.*

##### Data Recorder

*records data in the group notebook.*

##### Tool Trader

*responsible for any tools or instruments needed by the group.*

##### Reporter

*reports findings to the class.*

### 3. Form circles when explaining activities outside, or when students report their data.

A large circle allows everyone to see and hear each other. Make sure you are the one facing the sun so the students are not distracted by squinting into the light.

### 4. Have a signal for getting students' attention.

It is difficult enough to talk over students when you are indoors and even more difficult outdoors. Raising a hand or hooting like an owl will be more effective and also spare your voice.

### 5. Set boundaries for exploratory activities

such as scavenger hunts.

### 6. Make sure students are properly dressed for the weather.

### 7. Lastly, tap into the magic and mystery that most people and especially kids feel around nature!

Treat going outside as a valuable part of learning but also as the adventure that it truly is. This attitude will create an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement for the class-time you spend outdoors.

