

Smokies to Schoolyards

Curriculum to help teachers make learning more local, personal, and relevant

Mapping with Your Eyes Closed

How often do we take time to be quiet and listen to the world around us? According to [The MindUp Curriculum](#) from Scholastic, “Mindful listening helps us choose which sounds to focus our attention on and helps us to be thoughtful in the way we hear and respond to the words of others.” Intentionally focusing on the sounds around us heightens our sensory awareness and makes us better observers —with or without our eyes open.

INVITE your students to investigate and explore the world around them *without using their eyes!* Have your students find a comfortable seated position anywhere in the room, and ask them to sit and just listen for 1 minute. Encourage them to close their eyes to help them focus. After the minute is up, ask your students to share what they heard and write a list on the board and discuss their observations together.

EXPLORE the sounds within your classroom by making a visual sound map. Practice modeling this journaling activity for your students on the whiteboard. Draw a dot in the middle of the board to represent yourself. Then, mindfully listen to the sounds of your classroom for 2 minutes and draw a map of all the sounds that you hear around you. Draw a different symbol for each sound. It’s not important to label the sounds during this part of the activity, but be sure to remember what each sound represents. The top of your page should represent the sounds you hear in front of you, the bottom of the page represents what is heard behind you, and the left and right of the page for what you hear on either side of you. (See example map below.) If you hear sounds repeated, draw the same symbol again and again, as needed. Think aloud and walk your students through your mapping process (i.e., note what you hear, where you hear it, what shape you need to use, what color, etc.). Hearing your thought processes as you model will help your students have a clearer understanding of the activity. Finally, create a legend for your map that includes each symbol that you drew and what sound it represented.

WONDER After you finish drawing your sound map, ask your students to discuss the similarities and differences between this kind of map and other maps that they have studied, seen, or created. Brainstorm with your students: Ask them to consider how it would look if someone did this activity outside in the schoolyard. Would the map look different or the same? Would they hear the same sounds? Would they hear any new ones? Would the sounds be different at different times throughout the day?

CREATE Armed with journals, pencils, and curiosity, lead your class of auditory investigators out to the schoolyard to begin their individual sound mapping exercise. Once you get outside, gather everyone together and explain the rules:

1. Find a secluded spot in the schoolyard away from your classmates.
2. Write the date and a title that says where they’re sitting, and then draw a dot in the middle of the page to represent yourself.
3. Draw different symbols for all of the different sounds that they hear in the directions on the page that they hear them.

Remind your students that they should try closing their eyes to listen deeply. Finally, give them a couple of minutes to find a spot somewhere in the schoolyard, set a timer for a minimum of 5 minutes, and let them map! (*We encourage you to create your own schoolyard sound map during this time to share with your students.*)

Corresponding Science & Engineering Practices (SEPs):

- Asking questions and defining problems
- Planning and carrying out investigations
- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

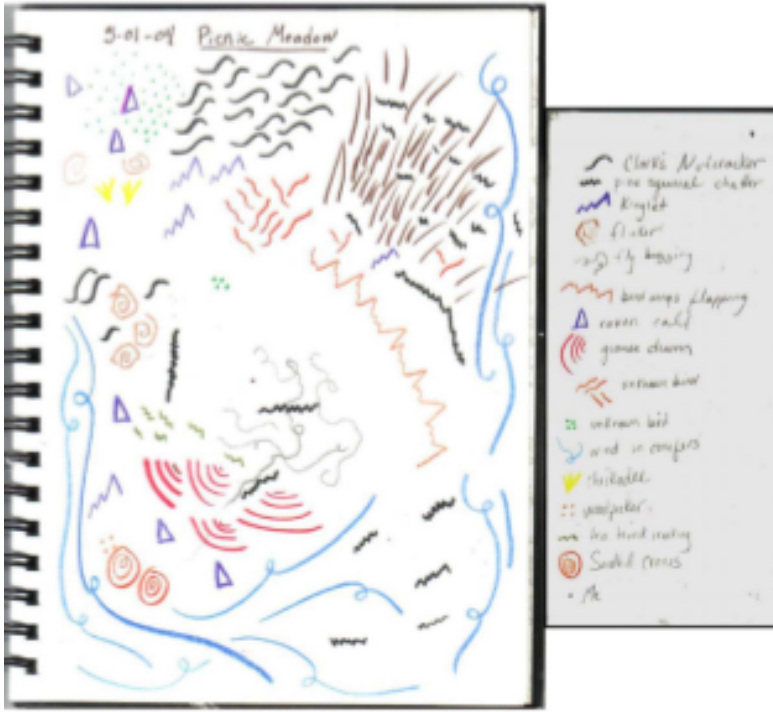
Corresponding Crosscutting Concepts (CCCs):

- Cause and Effect
- Patterns

Corresponding Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCIs):

- Life Sciences

REFLECT When time is up, gather your students together again. Ask them what they found in this activity to be challenging? What sounds were most surprising? What noises made your students want to listen and investigate more? What questions did the sounds provoke? What did it feel like to be silent in nature?



Example journal entry from "Sound Mapping: Watershed Focus"
(Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership)

SHARE When time is up, gather your students together again. First, give them time to create a legend for their maps. Then, have your students place their journals in a circle and take a gallery walk to see what their classmates heard. (If you made your own sound map, be sure to include it in the circle!) After everyone has a chance to view all of the maps, ask your students to grab their journals and compare and contrast their maps with a shoulder buddy. If you have a little extra time, you can let your students use colored pencils to draw over each symbol on their map with a different color to make them more exciting and easier to interpret. Feel free to share photos or scans of your students' journal entries with Tremont, as well! We would enjoy seeing what nature-based observations are being made outside of Great Smoky Mountains National Park!

Coordinating Academic Standards

If you would like to extend this activity over multiple class periods or adapt it to fit multiple subject areas, [Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership](#) provides a list of extension ideas in their "[Sound Mapping: Watershed Focus](#)" lesson plan.

Science

K.LS1.3 – Explain how humans use their five senses in making scientific findings.

K.ETS1.1 – Ask and answer questions about the scientific world and gather information using the senses.

BIO1.LS4.3 – Identify ecosystem services and assess the role of biodiversity in support of these services. Analyze the role human activities have on disruption of these services.

ECO.LS2.3 – Create a model of an ecosystem depicting the interrelationships among organisms with a variety of niches. Use the model to explain resource needs of these organisms.

ECO.LS2.10 – Plan and carry out an investigation measuring species diversity (richness and evenness) and density in a local ecosystem.

English Language Arts

SL.CC.1 – Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with varied partners, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own clearly and persuasively.

SL.CC.2 – Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media formats, such as visual, quantitative, and oral formats.

SL.PKI.5 – Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentation

