



Kindergarten Fall Nature Walk: One-Page Summary

This walk has different themes and activities, do in any order to avoid crowding among the groups.

One major goal is to have the children be calm enough to observe and know that a nature walk is different from recess time. Another goal is to look at a familiar area (playground and beyond) in a scientific manner.

This is a summary of the highlights. Please read the walk guide for background.

- Using smell and sound to observe. Find a spot where the kids can sit and close their eyes and take a deep breath. Let them **listen** for different sounds. They may want to identify the source of the sound. Let the express what they **feel** on their hands or faces. What do they **smell**?
- Collect some leaves from one spot. Ask where the leaves come from.
 - Pine needles are leaves
 - Talk about the variety of leaves
 - Each tree has its own leaf shape
- Step 2 (page 4) of the walk guide mentions a path through the woods. It starts behind the play structure goes a short way through the woods, over a bridge, continues as a mowed path through the meadow. The path does not pass the vines mentioned in the guide.
 - Talk about how view changes in the fall—can they see the open field?
 - Talk about changes in temperature and how their clothing has changed
 - Talk about how the plants look—many plants look dried up
 - Turn over a rock or log to see bugs
 - Look for trees that have leaves like the ones they found
 - Aspen tree with gall: insect laid egg with irritating chemical, tree responds with enzyme for protection and that makes a bulge. Larvae hatches, lives through winter and leaves gall as insect in spring. See picture 4.
- String circle to focus observation
 - Look for different types of leaves—grass blades are leaves. Leaves differ in shape, size color, texture and smell
 - Kids can talk about leaves. What makes the brown leaves different—they aren't attached to a plant or are dying.
 - Are there any animals within their circles? They can watch ants or bugs
 - What are the parts of a plant: roots, stem, flower, leaf, seed. You can dig a small clump of grass, shake off dirt and let the children examine the roots.
 - Point out the biggest stems—tree trunks. Can they find seeds? Look for some of the dried weeds—dandelions or clover.
- *Signs of Fall* worksheet. Are there leaves on the ground, dried plants? Complete the worksheet as a group. We do not do the list exercise mentioned on page 6.
- Mention that they will have nature walks in winter and spring. Can they predict how this area will change with the seasons?

KINDERGARTEN NATURE WALKS

Kindergarten Walks usually last 30 minutes and are based on:

1. Environmental Awareness

Sensory exploration/ Sense of wonder
Discover/ Joy of learning
Sharing the excitement
Experiencing nature's rhythms and cycles



2. Developing attitudes of respect toward

The environment
Each other
Themselves as learners

3. Observation of plants and animals sharing their schoolyard

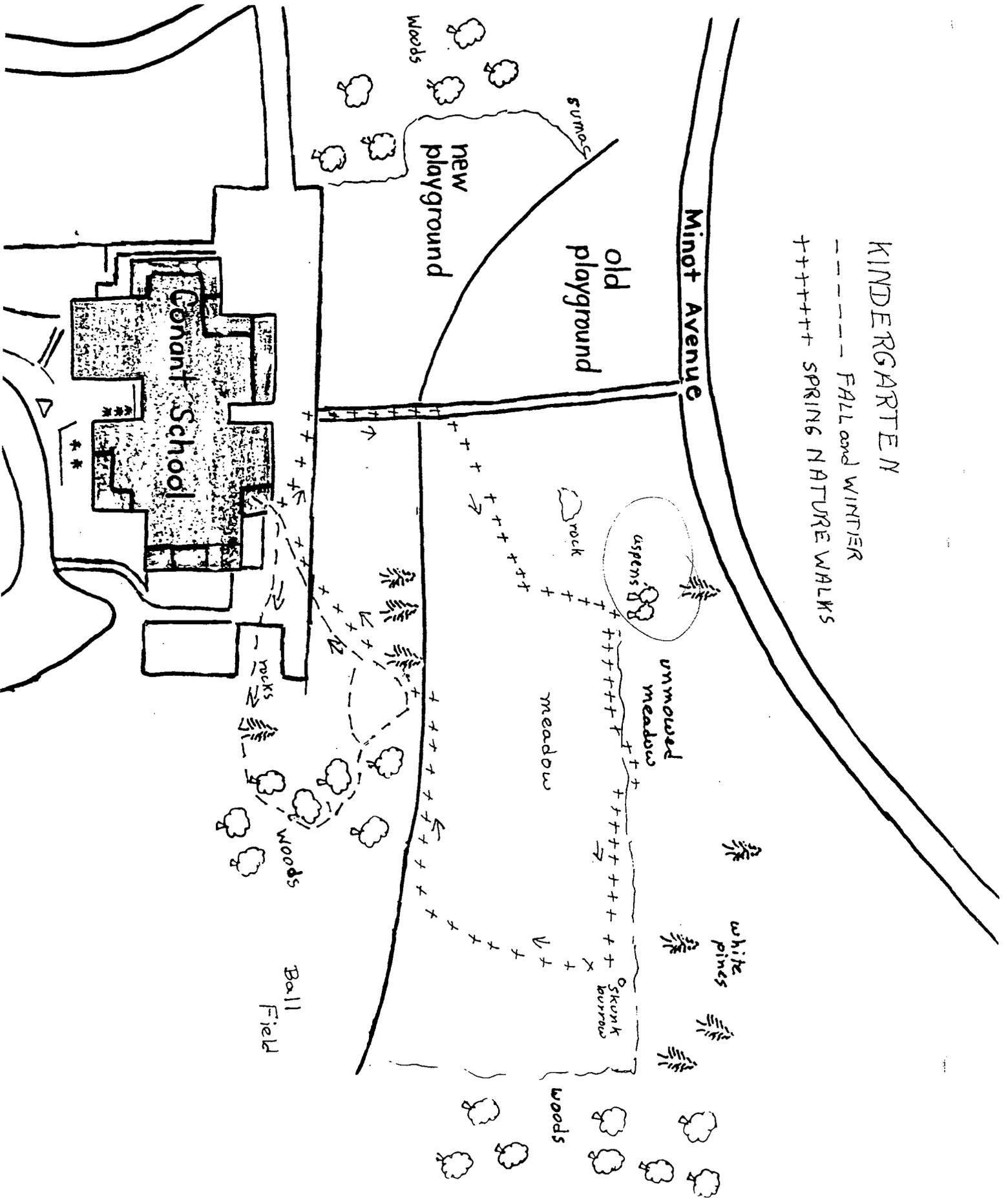
Look, listen, smell, and touch to explore their schoolyard
Make comparisons, note similarities and differences
Make connections and note interactions
Examine plant parts
Observe and share observations of seasonal changes
Discover how plants grow and change with the seasons

A major challenge is helping young children learn how to behave on a Nature Walk, how to focus, observe, wonder, and thereby enjoy exploring, discovering, learning and sharing.

Remember your main goal is that children enjoy discovering and learning from their own observations, not specific science content.
Be willing to:

Follow the children's interests and the unexpected discovery
Be flexible and focus on one or two concepts/activities instead of the three or four you planned
Don't stay out too long
Be enthusiastic and have fun
Communicate with the teacher





KINDERGARTEN

--- FALL and WINTER

+ + + + + SPRING NATURE WALKS

KINDERGARTEN FALL NATURE WALK

Walks should be scheduled during the last two weeks in October and when other children are not outdoors for recess.

Objectives:



Look, smell, listen, and touch to explore their schoolyard
 Observe signs of fall
 Compare seasonal changes by remembering summer
 Observe similarities and differences in leaves
 Examine and name plant parts
 Enjoy exploring and discovering



Before going out:

Ask children "Who likes to explore and discover outdoors?" Why? How do we discover outdoors? By using our eyes, ears, noses, and hands, and then thinking about what we have observed. If we look at the same area in different seasons we can notice changes and figure out what is happening to the plants and animals that live here.

Senses

How do children think scientists learn? Why, they use their eyes, ears, noses, and hands just as we do! And then they think about what they've observed to figure out how nature works. We are going to be scientists in Conant Schoolyard; we'll go outdoors on a Nature Walk now and again in winter and in spring to observe how the schoolyard and especially plants change with the seasons.



One other thing scientists do is record, or write down, what they discover. So we'll also record what we find and then back in the classroom we will write down after each Nature Walk what we saw, what we heard, what we smelled, and what we felt. We can draw pictures or do a wall mural of the schoolyard in each season. Recording is a good way to remember things, and makes it easier to compare and see changes from one season to another.

Recording

Ask children how they think they need to behave if they want to see and discover things in their schoolyard. Let them tell you that they need to move slowly and quietly. It is also important to share with others the interesting things they've observed, and to listen to friends' exciting discoveries. Children need to stay close together so they don't miss anything.



Kindergarten

Materials:

String circles (one per two students)
 Hand lenses (2 or 3)
~~Bug box~~
 Baggie for leaf collection
 Clipboard with paper and pencil
 Signs of Fall Worksheet
 Trowel



1. Walk slowly to the pine tree and have children sit down under the tree. Close their eyes and take a deep breath; what do they smell? What can they hear? Ask them to hold a fist in the air and raise a finger for each sound they hear. After a few minutes discuss the sounds they've heard. Give each child a chance to share .

Close their eyes again and feel around them. What can they find? Besides what they feel with their hands and depending on the weather children may feel the wind or warm sun on their faces as well as what is lying on the ground.

Open their eyes and look at the leaves around them. How many different kinds of leaves can they find? Make a collection of different leaves. Where do the leaves on the ground come from? This leads to a discussion of several concepts:

pine needles are leaves
 leaves come in different shapes, colors and sizes
 the leaves on the ground came from a tree
 each tree has only one shape leaf



Encourage children to discover where each leaf came from. Take one of each leaf shape with them as they explore and look for the parent tree. Include an aspen leaf in their collection.

2. Walk along the path into the woods exploring but keeping the group together. The path will loop back toward the playground.

Look through the trees to the playing field. Did the woods look like this the **first** day of school? Could they even see the ball field? What has changed? Was it dark when they ate supper last night? How about last summer when they had a cookout? How did they dress the first day of school? Did they need a jacket today? Why?

Help children to note and talk about changes in hours of sunlight and temperatures and visible changes in plants. Do these changes affect people and other animals living in their schoolyard? How?

There are several interesting vines (including an old grape vine) in the woods. Notice how vines grow by wrapping around tree trunks. You may find insects or other mini-creatures, see birds or squirrels; enjoy any such discoveries. Any interesting critters under a rock?

Continue looking for the trees which match leaves in the children's collection. As you emerge back on to the playground area, note the aspens which probably match one of the leaves found over by the pine tree. How did these leaves travel so far?

Many of the aspen leaves have a swelling on the stem. This is a gall and houses a tiny larva. The mother insect laid an irritating chemical with the egg; the aspen grew extra plant cell material around the egg to protect itself from the chemical. When the egg hatched the larva found itself in a cozy house surrounded by its dinner. It will live there all winter and emerge as an adult insect in spring.

3. What about leaves in the grassy area?



Lay out a string circle on the grass for each two children. How many different leaf shapes can they find? Have children pick one of each different leaf. How are the leaves different? (Size, color, shape, texture, smell). And yes, grass is a leaf.

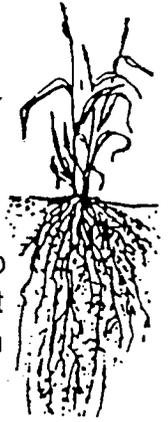
Let each child show their favorite leaf. Why is it their favorite? Who found the smallest leaf? The biggest? Why are many leaves green, but some brown or yellow? Are the green leaves still growing and hitched to the stem? Did the brown leaves grow here or come from another plant? Do the brown leaves feel like the green leaves? Are the brown leaves still alive and growing or dry and brittle?

Did children find any animals or signs of animals in their circle? Appreciate and take time to observe any ants, ant hills, earthworms, or other wildlife the children find. Children seldom take enough time now-a-days to enjoy watching an ant move about, perhaps carrying dinner.

What other plant parts can children name besides leaves? With the trowel dig up a clump of grass, shake off the dirt, and let children examine the roots with hand lenses. Encourage children to talk about roots and what they are observing. How many roots there are for a tiny clump of grass! Carefully replant grass and collect hand lenses.

What other plant parts do children know? Stem or tree trunk. What's the biggest stem they can find? Children may first look for wildflower stems, but will soon realize tree trunks are stems too.

Do they know any other plant parts beside root, stem and leaf? If you are lucky enough to spot a dandelion or clover blossom, show to children and make the connection with seeds. Otherwise talk about flowers and then encourage children to look for seeds. Let children explore along the edge of the woods and the brook for interesting seeds that blow in the wind, stick to clothing, or eaten by animals.



4. Gather the group in a circle and sit down. Ask children what they have seen, what was their favorite thing. Listen to answers. Then remind them that scientists always record their discoveries. Show them the Signs of Fall Worksheets and explain that as a group they can check off the things they discovered. Let children take turns.

Ask children what else they saw, what was their favorite thing? Write all contributions on a separate paper. What animals or animal signs did they discover? What interesting plants? Remember that back in class they will make a chart of all the things they saw, all they heard, all they felt, and all they smelled. Do they want to write down any of those things? How long a list do they think they will make, they found so many things!

How about the five lines on the Signs of Fall Worksheet? That is the space to write the five plant parts they saw and talked about. Can children name all five? Write plant parts on the lines.

Back in class children will draw a picture or make a seasonal mural of their schoolyard. Have each child hold up their hands like a camera, focus, and take an imaginary picture to help them remember. Ask children to describe at least four things they see in their pretend picture.

5. Return to class with their Signs of Fall Worksheet, list, and mental snapshots.



Back in class:

Follow-up activities are important not only to integrate the outdoor experience into classroom learning, but also to validate children's discoveries and themselves as learners. These activities will help children to be more focused and curious on their next Nature Walk.

Post Signs of Fall Worksheets and the lists groups made on their Nature Walk. Make a Class Chart of what children saw, heard, smelled, and felt in Conant Schoolyard in fall. Save to compare with winter and spring Nature Walks.

Either have each child draw a picture of the schoolyard in fall or do a class mural depicting Conant in fall. Encourage use of Signs of Fall Worksheets, other charts and lists, and their pretend snapshots to help children remember.



In addition teachers might wish to follow up children's exploration of plant parts by asking children to list plant parts they eat; today's children don't always associate lettuce in a plastic bag or beans from the freezer with plants growing outdoors.



roots----carrot
stem----celery
leaf-----lettuce
flower---broccoli
seeds----corn



Did anyone eat a plant part for lunch today? How about supper last night? What plant parts do they like best?



Environmental Aides should discuss with the teacher how the Walk went. The teacher needs to know not only what children discovered to plan effective follow-up activities, but how the children behaved. Were they able to focus or too easily distracted? What things especially interested children? Were particular combinations of children difficult to keep focused? Teachers are still learning which children work most effectively together.



Kindergarten children have a lot to learn about observing and discovering outdoors; parent and teacher working together can help children to be effective learners on future Nature Walks.

