Lesson 16: LET'S EXPLORE THIS PLACE WITH POETRY

TIME: 20 to 25 minutes
PURPOSE: to teach the children about their local habitat and encourage them to use their sensory experience of place as material for writing poems

Materials

boom box
music
copies of the poems you will use (to paste in their books)
glue sticks
any other books filled with flora and fauna local to your area
Optional:
paint, markers, crayons

Suggested Books, Music and Poems

At the Playground
by William Stafford

Away down deep and away up high,
a swing drops you into the sky.
Back, it flings you in a sweep
all the way to the stars and back
—Goodbye, Jill; Goodbye, Jack:
shuddering climb wild and steep,
away up high, away down deep.

At the Sea-side
by Robert Louis Stevenson

When I was down beside the sea
A wooden spade they gave to me
To dig the sandy shore.

My holes were empty like a cup.
In every hole the sea came up,
'Til it could come no more.

Lemonade Stand
by Myra Cohn Livingston

Every summer
under the shade
we fix up a stand
to sell lemonade.

A stack of cups,
a pitcher of ice,
a shirtboard sign
to tell the price.

A dime for the big,
A nickel for small.
The nickel cup’s short.
The dime cup’s tall.

Plenty of sugar
to make it sweet,
and sometimes cookies
for us to eat.

But when the sun
moves into the shade
it gets too hot
to sell lemonade.

Nobody stops
so we put things away
and drink what’s left
and start to play.

What to Do

You may want to walk outside before or after this lesson.

1. Begin the lesson by asking the children to find their bubbles and to move however they wish in rhythm to a song about place. We recommend Joe Scruggs’ song “Almost Home” or James Taylor’s “Carolina In My Mind.” Ask them to listen to the words as well as move to the music.

2. Once the kids have left their bubbles and entered circle time, invite them into a conversation about the meaning of the song. Shift the focus of the talk to place. Where do we live? What do we like about home? What animals do we find here? What’s the weather like? What flowers grow here? Which plants? What bugs bug us and what bugs do we love? Write their thoughts down as you go.

3. Read the poems above or share some poetry about your local area. Invite the children to identify and describe the setting of each poem.
4. Once the children are settled, begin to write a collaborative poem. Here are some suggested prompts:

This place sounds like______________.

When it's hot I ________________.

My favorite critter likes to visit me in my sleep to ________________.

I like to walk around and look at______________ and talk to______________.

5. Try to use a color, a critter or a sound in every line. Encourage the use of images and metaphors:

The sunset reminds me of______________.

In the heat, I feel like__________.

6. Make copies of your collaborative poem and have the children paste them in their poetry books. Encourage the children to illustrate the poems with sketches, paint or collage.