Research shows that sit spot time is an opportunity for self-exploration, to develop a sense of self-awareness and an appreciation for a student's own space.

Sit Spot Pedagogy and Academic Alignments

Sit Spot Definition

At Merry Lea, a sit spot is a student-selected location in the outdoor classroom, which students routinely visit to sit and observe (usually between 5-15 minutes) on each program day. During this independent time, students do not interact with or participate in conversations with other students.

Research shows that sit spot time is an opportunity for self-exploration, to develop a sense of self-awareness and an appreciation for a student's own space. Each student will have a journal in which they can record their thoughts, their observations of what they hear, smell and see, pose questions or share their feelings. After the allotted time, students will have a chance to share in a whole group discussion about what they recorded or experienced during their sit spot time.

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Sit Spot Guidelines:

1. Student choice of spot

- Students should choose a spot that they find comfortable and interesting.
- Spots should be at least 8-10 feet from other students (further apart than this is even better).
- Educators should be able to see students (or monitor their location).

2. Student choice within sit spot time

Choice of position: Students are not required to sit exclusively, but should remain roughly in their spot. They may choose to be on their knees, lay down or re-adjust, as long as they remain on task. Students should not be walking around.

Choice of activity: There are many example appropriate behaviors during sit spot.

- Using a notebook to journal; drawing, writing, or sketching.
- Picking up and observing leaves, sticks, or other nearby objects.
- Lying on one's back, staring at the sky and leaves.
- Lying on one's belly, examining bark, dirt, etc.
- Balancing objects on a nearby branch
- Threading leaves onto a stick or pencil
- Quietly tapping on objects (note that this can become distracting if too loud!)
- Digging in the soil
- Re-adjusting and moving within their immediate spot.
- Creating sculptures, artwork, patterns, etc.
- And others!

3. Sit spot routine and structure

- Students will sit in the same spot each time they go out.
- Sit spot time is intended to be a quiet and reflective opportunity. Students should not talk to or intentionally distract other students.
- Early in the year, students sit for only 4-5 minutes, but eventually progress to 15 minutes or more, practicing and building their self-regulatory skills.
- Following sit spot, students come together for community time to share their observations together as a whole group.

4. Instructor's role during sit spot

Model sit spot expectations with the students.

- When introducing sit spots for the first time, demonstrate what they look and sound like by modeling the behavior.
- All participating adults should model sit spot expectations, including educators, aids, chaperones, etc., throughout the year. This encourages student engagement and participation with as few distractions as possible.
- Expect that it will take time for students to settle into the routine of sit spots. Allow students to practice.

Facilitate individual exploration and self-regulation with respect and care.

- Advise students to only contact you in an emergency.
- When student behavior requires redirection, address it in a way that minimizes distraction for others. For example, an educator may first quietly gesture from their own sit spot. If needed, the educator may quietly walk to the student, bend down and whisper with the student.
- Expectations may need to be revisited after long holiday breaks or as needed to reinforce appropriate sit spot behavior.
- The educator may determine that it is beneficial to have students change spots midway through the year.

Encourage inquiry and curiosity during community time.

- Validate students' observations, and show genuine interest in what they share. Ask follow up questions and encourage other students to do the same.

5. Connections to the classroom and academic standards

Sit spots are designed to hone students' observation skills, build familiarity with 'place' and develop kinship with natural places.

During sit spots, students use journals to record their observations and practice writing. In our experience, students become highly motivated to describe personal experiences in 'their' spots (Ex: "a mushroom is growing at my sit spot!"). Connections to Indiana Academic Standards and Preschool Foundations are clear.

When students journal at their sit spot, they regularly demonstrate connections to writing, vocabulary, grammar and usage, and more:

INDIANA PRESCHOOL FOUNDATIONS	INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS: KINDERGARTEN
English/Language Arts Foundation 1: Communication Process **ELA1.1** Demonstrate receptive communication. • Listen to and follow multi-step directions. • Demonstrate continual growth in understanding increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.	**English/Language Arts Foundation 1: Communication Process** **READING: VOCABULARY** **K.RV.1** Use words, phrases, and strategies acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to literature and nonfiction texts to build and apply vocabulary.
English/Language Arts Foundation 3: Early Writing **ELA3.1** Demonstrate mechanics of writing. • Create letter-like shapes, symbols, letters, and words with modeling and support. **ELA3.2** Demonstrate ability to communicate a story. • Use letters, symbols, and words to share an idea with someone.	**English/Language Arts Foundation 3: Early Writing** **WRITING** **K.W.1** Write for specific purposes and audiences. **K.W.2.1** Write most uppercase (capital) and lowercase letters of the alphabet, correctly shaping and spacing the letters of the words. **K.W.2.2** Write by moving from left to right and top to bottom. **K.W.3.2** Use words and pictures to develop a main idea and provide some information about a topic. **K.W.6.1** Demonstrate command of English grammar and usage, focusing on: • **K.W.6.1a** Nouns/Pronouns... • **K.W.6.1b** Verbs... **K.W.6.2** Demonstrate command of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, focusing on: • **K.W.6.2c** Spelling simple words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness.

When students use their journals to draw, press leaves or in other ways, they regularly demonstrate connections to life science, patterns, creative arts and more:

INDIANA PRESCHOOL FOUNDATIONS	INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS: KINDERGARTEN
Mathematics Foundation 2: Computation and Algebraic Thinking **M2.2** Demonstrate awareness of patterning. • Understand sequence of events.	**Mathematics Foundation 2: Computation and Algebraic Thinking** **COMPUTATION AND ALGEBRAIC THINKING** **K.CA.5** Create, extend, and give an appropriate rule for simple repeating and growing patterns with numbers and shapes.
Creative Arts Foundation 3: Visual Arts **VISUAL ARTS - CREATING** **VA:Cr1.1.PKa** Engage in self- directed play with materials. **VA:Cr2.1.PKa** Use a variety of artmaking tools. **VISUAL ARTS - CONNECTING** **VA:Cn10.1.P** Explore the world using descriptive and expressive words and art-making.	**Creative Arts Foundation 3: Visual Arts** **VISUAL ARTS - CREATING** **VA:Cr1.1.Ka** Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials. **VA:Cr2.1.Ka** Through experimentation, build skills in various media and approaches to art- making. **VA:Cr2.3.Ka** Create art that represents natural and constructed environments.

Students visit their sit spot throughout the year, building a deep understanding of the seasonal changes affecting that place and the organisms living there:

INDIANA PRESCHOOL FOUNDATIONS	INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS: KINDERGARTEN
Mathematics Foundation 3: Data Analysis **M3.1** Demonstrate understanding of classifying. • Sort a group of objects in multiple ways.	**Mathematics Foundation 3: Data Analysis** **DATA ANALYSIS** **K.DA.1:** Identify, sort and classify objects by size, number, and other attributes. Identify objects that do not belong to a particular group and explain the reasoning used.
Science Foundation 1: Physical Science **SC1.1** Demonstrate ability to explore objects in the physical world. • Use senses to describe concepts of weight, motion, and force. **SC1.2** Demonstrate awareness of the physical properties of objects. • Use evidence from investigations to describe observable properties of objects.	**Science Foundation 1: Physical Science** **PHYSICAL SCIENCE** **K.PS.1** Plan and conduct an investigation using all senses to describe and classify different kinds of objects by their composition and physical properties. Explain these choices to others and generate questions about the objects. **K.PS.2** Identify and explain possible uses for an object based on its properties and compare these uses with other students' ideas.
Science Foundation 2: Earth and Space Science **SC2.2** Recognize seasonal and weather related changes. • Communicate awareness of seasonal changes. • Describe how weather changes.	**Science Foundation 2: Earth and Space Science** **EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCE** **K.ESS.3** Investigate the local weather conditions to describe patterns over time.
Science Foundation 3: Life Science **SC3.1** Demonstrate awareness of life. • Ask questions and conduct investigations to understand life science. • Differentiate animals from plants.	**Science Foundation 3: Life Science** **LIFE SCIENCE** **K.LS.1** Describe and compare the growth and development of common living plants and animals. **K.LS.2** Describe and compare the physical features of common living plants and animals.
	Mathematics Foundation 4: Geometry **GEOMETRY** **K.G.3** Model shapes in the world by composing shapes from objects (e.g., sticks and clay balls) and drawing shapes.
Approaches to Play and Learning Foundation 1: Initiative and Exploration **APL1.1** Demonstrate initiative and self-direction. • Seek and gather new information to plan for projects and activities. **APL1.2** Demonstrate interest and curiosity as a learner. • Demonstrate an eagerness to learn about and discuss new topics, ideas, and tasks. • Use a variety of learning approaches, such as observing, imitating, asking questions, hands-on investigation, and active exploration.	

Because students participate in sit spot on each visit, students regularly demonstrate connections to self-regulation, understanding directions and more:

INDIANA PRESCHOOL FOUNDATIONS	INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS: KINDERGARTEN
Social Studies Foundation 2: History and Events **SS2.4** Demonstrate awareness of the functions of government. • Demonstrate an understanding of rules in the home, school environment, and the purposes they serve.	**Social Studies Foundation 2: History and Events** **FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT** **K.2.3** Give examples of classroom and school rules and explain the importance of following these rules to ensure order and safety.
Approaches to Play and Learning Foundation 3: Attentiveness and Persistence **APL3.1:** Demonstrate development of sustained attention and persistence. • Focus on an activity with deliberate concentration despite distractions and/or temptations. • Carry out tasks, activity, project, or transition, even when frustrated or challenged, with minimal distress.	
Social Emotional Foundation 1: Sense of Self **SE1.1** Demonstrate self awareness and confidence. • Identify self as a unique member of a group that fits into a larger world picture. • Show independence in own choices.	
Social Emotional Foundation 2: Self-Regulation **SE2.1:** Demonstrate self control. • Manage transitions and adapt to changes in schedules, routines, and situations independently. • Regulate a range of impulses. • Regulate own emotions and behaviors with others with adult support when needed.	

Following sit spots, students share observations and nature connections during a community reflection time, practicing their speaking and listening skills:

INDIANA PRESCHOOL FOUNDATIONS	INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS: KINDERGARTEN
English/Language Arts Foundation 1: Communication Process **ELA1.2** Demonstrate expressive communication. • Describe activities, experiences, and stories with expanded detail. **ELA1.3** Demonstrate ability to engage in conversations. • Stay on topic in two-way conversation that involves multiple turns. • Communicate actively in group activities. • Answer questions posed by adults or peers. • Ask questions for understanding and clarity. • Make on topic comments.	**English/Language Arts Foundation 1: Communication Process** **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** **K.SL.1** Listen actively and communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. **K.SL.2.1** Participate in collaborative conversations about grade-appropriate topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. **K.SL.2.3** Listen to others, take turns speaking, and add one's own ideas to small group discussions or tasks. **K.SL.2.5** Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges. **K.SL.3.2** Ask appropriate questions about what a speaker says.
Mathematics Foundation 1: Numeracy **M1.3** Recognition of number relations. • Correctly use the words for position.	**Mathematics Foundation 1: Numeracy** **NUMBER SENSE** **K.NS.9** Correctly use the words for comparison, including: one and many; none, some and all; more and less; most and least; and equal to, more than and less than.
Mathematics Foundation 4: Geometry **M4.1** Understanding of spatial relationships. • Use position terms such as above, below, beside, and between.	**Mathematics Foundation 4: Geometry** **GEOMETRY** **K.G.1** Describe the positions of objects and geometric shapes in space using the terms inside, outside, between, above, below, near, far, under, over, up, down, behind, in front of, next to, to the left of and to the right of.
Social Studies Foundation 3: Geography **SS3.1** Demonstrate awareness of the world in spatial terms. • Develop concepts and describe location, directionality, and spatial relationships. **SS3.3** Demonstrate awareness of environment and society. • Begin to describe the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment.	**Social Studies Foundation 3: Geography** **WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS** **K.3.1** Use words related to location, direction, and distance, including here/there, over/under, left/right, above/below, forward/backward, and between. **PHYSICAL SYSTEMS** **K.3.5** Describe and give examples of seasonal weather changes and illustrate how weather affects people and the environment. **ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY** **K.3.7** Recommend ways that people can improve their environment at home, in school, and in the neighborhood.
Science Foundation 5: Scientific Inquiry and Method **SC5.1** Demonstrate scientific curiosity. • Discuss ways that people can affect the environment in positive and negative ways.	

Overall Academic Standards Connections

			How students use their journals				How students interact with their space				Community time	
			Journaling: connects to **writing, vocabulary, grammar and usage,** and more		Using journals to **draw, press leaves or in other ways:** connects to **life science, patterns, creative arts** and more		**Visiting sit spots throughout the year:** builds understanding of **seasonal changes** affecting the place and **organisms**		**Participating in sit spot each visit:** connects to **self-regulation**, **understanding directions** and more		**Community reflection time: sharing observations, practicing speaking and listening skills**	
		GRADE LEVEL	PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN	PRESCHOOL	KINDERGARTEN
SUBJECTS COVERED	**English/ Language Arts**	Communication Process	✓	✓							✓	✓
		Early Writing	✓	✓								
	Mathematics	Computation & Algebraic Thinking			✓	✓						
		Data Analysis					✓	✓				
		Geometry						✓			✓	✓
		Numeracy									✓	✓
	Visual/Creative Arts	Creating			✓	✓						
		Connecting			✓							
	Science	Physical Science					✓	✓				
		Earth & Space Science					✓	✓				
		Life Science					✓	✓				
		Scientific Inquiry & Method								✓		
	Social Studies	History & Events							✓	✓		
		Geography									✓	✓
SKILLS USED	**Approaches to Play & Learning**	Initiative & Exploration					✓					
		Attentiveness & Persistence							✓			
	Social Emotional	Sense of Self							✓			

SOURCES

Kindergarten

- Indiana Department of Education (IDOE): Indiana Academic Standards English Language Arts: Kindergarten
- IDOE: Indiana Academic Standards Fine Arts - Visual Arts
- IDOE: Indiana Academic Standards Mathematics: Kindergarten
- IDOE: Indiana Academic Standards Science: Kindergarten
- IDOE: Indiana Academic Standards Social Studies: Kindergarten

Preschool

- IDOE: Indiana Early Learning Foundations
- IDOE: Indiana Academic Standards Fine Arts - Visual Arts