**Activity: Observation skills for navigation**

**Learning intention:**

* Develop students’ observation skills.
* Develop students’ understanding that navigation is about being aware of the surroundings and where they have travelled.

**Description:**

* At the beginning of a bushwalk ask students to point out some of the physical features they can see about the beginning of the track, e.g. the direction the track is heading, the type of terrain they can see, and significant features that could be used as markers. Introduce the idea that navigation involves being aware of one’s surroundings as much as it involves reading maps and using compasses.
* Walk for 15-20 minutes and stop the group in an appropriate place where there a distinctive feature, e.g. a viewpoint, a track junction, a change in vegetation. Ask students to describe what they can see and some of the features that they have walked past. Ask students to note where the sun is in relation to where they are standing and what the wind direction is. This is a good time to introduce them to using the sun to find north.
* Walk another 15-20 minutes. Stop in an appropriate area. Hand out laminated sheets of A4 paper and a whiteboard pen to students (they can work in pairs or individually). Ask students to draw a map of the walk to this point including as much detail as they can remember (about 5 minutes). Ask students to share their maps in the group.

**Safety considerations:**

* Ensure students have the appropriate equipment and skills for the chosen walk and that all school policy requirements have been followed for the type of trip you are taking. A trip of this nature would either fall within an off-site day trip or an off-site residential multi-day trip (EOTC Guidelines, 2009, pp 26-27) or visit <http://eotc.tki.org.nz/EOTC-home/EOTC-Guidelines>)
* Check the requirements of your own school policies when planning such a trip. See the EOTC Guidelines, 2009 for further information or visit <http://eotc.tki.org.nz/EOTC-home/EOTC-Guidelines>
* Stop the group at points where there is enough space to gather comfortably away from steep or slippery ground. Ask students to put on warm clothing if needed to do the map drawing activity.

**The supervision structure used for this type of trip should take into account the following:**

* The competence of the staff.
* The competence of the volunteer assistants.
* The genders, ages, behaviour, and ability of the students.
* Any special medical, educational, or capability needs of the students.
* The duration and nature of the activity (for example, land based, water based).
* The nature of the site.
* The site requirements (e.g. permits).
* The contingency options.
* The level of first aid cover required for the activity.
* The access to emergency services.
* The season and the weather forecast (EOTC Guidelines, 2009, p. 42).

**Equipment:**

* Laminated sheets of blank A4
* Whiteboard markers (these can be cleaned and used in other activities).

**Location:** A bush or park walk.

**Time:** The activity can be incorporated into a walk.

**Student processing / reflection:**

* How does observation add to navigation?
* Was there anything students noticed about the area they were walking through they had not expected?
* Any observations or comments about the activity?

**Possible adaptations:**

* As a classroom activity when introducing navigation before the trip, ask students to map their route to school, noting as much detail as possible on their map.
* When in the bush ask students to observe and list specific details, e.g. how many different trees / ferns / flowering plants / introduced plants.
* Carry out a sound log (link to sound log activity) to focus listening skills as well as observation as another strategy for navigation.