



TINY SIGNS OF HOPE

GRADE: Early Years - Gr. 2

TIME: 30-45 minutes

THEME: Environmental Learning

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Science, Language, Arts, Social-Emotional Learning

MATERIALS:

- Clipboards or firm writing surfaces
- Paper
- Pencils or crayons
- Optional magnifying glasses
- Optional cameras or tablets
- Optional collection containers for non-living, loose materials, if permitted by your school

LEARNING GOALS:

- notice evidence of life, change and seasonal processes outdoors
- practise careful observation using their senses
- recognize that living things respond to changing conditions in different ways
- notice simple examples of connection, preparation, renewal and care
- use observations as evidence for their ideas
- develop language for talking about hope and possibility
- connect their outdoor discoveries to ideas from elin kelsey's presentation

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

After listening to elin kelsey's presentation, Hope Grows Outside: Finding Hope in a Changing World, learners head outside to search for small signs of life, change, connection and care.

Students practise slowing down and looking closely at an outdoor place. Instead of searching only for things that are green, growing or beautiful, they discover that change is happening everywhere, including during autumn.

A seed waiting for the right conditions, an animal preparing for winter, leaves becoming part of the soil, or someone caring for a garden can all help learners think about how living things respond to change.

The activity introduces a simple idea:

Hope can be small. Sometimes we have to look closely to find it.



TINY SIGNS OF HOPE



BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE:

After elin kelsey's presentation, ask learners: **What did you hear that made you feel curious or hopeful?**

Explain that hope doesn't mean pretending that everything is perfect or that problems don't exist. Hope can also mean noticing that things can change, living things can respond, and our actions can make a difference.

Tell learners:

We're going outside to become Hope Detectives. We're going to look for tiny signs that something is living, changing, preparing, connecting or being cared for.

Introduce four simple things they can look for:

-  **LIFE:** Can you find evidence that something is living?
-  **CHANGE:** Can you find something that is changing?
-  **CONNECTION:** Can you find two things that are connected or depend on each other?
-  **CARE:** Can you find evidence that a person or another living thing is caring for something?

Explain that there are no perfect answers.

Their job is to look closely and explain what they notice.

TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

Head outside to a schoolyard, garden, courtyard, nearby park or another accessible outdoor space.

Begin by slowing down.

Ask learners to:

- **Look up.**
- **Look down.**
- **Look closely.**
- **Listen.**

Then begin the Tiny Signs of Hope search.

Look for LIFE

Learners might notice:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| • birds | • grasses |
| • insects | • animal tracks or other signs |
| • moss or lichens | • seeds, cones or nuts |
| • fungi | • plants that are still growing |
| • evergreen plants | |

Ask: **How do you know something is living or has been here?**

Look for CHANGE

October is full of change.

Learners might notice:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| • leaves changing colour | • decomposition |
| • leaves falling | • changing temperatures |
| • plants dying back | • puddles, frost or moisture |
| • seeds moving | • animals preparing for colder weather |
| • fungi appearing | • changes in how people use outdoor spaces |

Ask: **What is different now than it might have been in summer?**



WHAT WILL WE LEAVE BEHIND?



TAKE IT OUTSIDE:

Look for CONNECTION

Encourage learners to find things that seem connected.

Learners might notice:

- a bird using a tree
- seeds being moved by wind
- insects beneath fallen leaves
- fungi growing on wood
- leaves becoming part of the soil
- an animal using a plant for food or shelter
- people using trees for shade or shelter

Ask: **What is connected to what?**

Look for CARE

Learners might notice:

- a garden being maintained
- a newly planted tree
- a protected natural area
- someone picking up litter
- an animal caring for its young
- a bird feeder
- plants being protected
- people leaving habitat undisturbed

Ask: **What tells you that someone cares about this place?**

Choose One Tiny Sign of Hope

Ask each learner to choose one discovery that caught their attention. Spend another minute looking closely at it. Ask:

- **What do you notice?**
- **What is happening?**
- **Is something changing?**
- **Is it connected to something else?**
- **Why did you choose this as your tiny sign of hope?**

The goal isn't scientific perfection. It is helping learners notice, wonder and begin explaining their observations.

BACK INSIDE:

Add learners' drawings, photographs or observations.

Under each one, complete:

- I noticed _____ and
- this gives me hope because _____.

For younger learners, educators can record students' spoken responses.

Then look at the collection together.

Ask:

- **Did everyone find hope in the same thing?**
- **Which signs were easy to find?**
- **Which did we have to look closely to notice?**
- **Did anyone find hope somewhere unexpected?**

Return to the idea from elin kelsey's presentation:

Hope doesn't always have to be something big. What small things did we discover happening all around us?



TINY SIGNS OF HOPE



QUESTIONS TO PROMPT THINKING:

Notice

- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What is moving?
- What has changed?
- What did you almost walk past?
- What did you notice when you looked closely?

Life and Change

- How do you know something is living?
- What is changing because it is autumn?
- How might this living thing be preparing for colder weather?
- What might happen here next?

Connecting Back to the Presentation

- What did you notice outside that reminded you of something elin talked about?
- Did you find hope somewhere you weren't expecting it?
- Has your idea of hope changed?
- What is one hopeful thing you want someone else to notice?

Connections

- What is connected?
- Who might use this tree, plant or space?
- Where could an animal find food or shelter?
- What might happen if one part wasn't here?

Hope and Possibility

- Where did you find hope?
- What surprised you?
- What shows you that life continues even when the season changes?
- What could happen next?
- How can people help care for this place?

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS:

Tiny Hope Walk

Take another short walk later in Take Me Outside Week.

Challenge learners to find one Tiny Sign of Hope they didn't notice the first time.

Ask: **Was it new, or was it there all along and we just hadn't noticed it yet?**

This reinforces the value of repeated observation.

Hope Through the Seasons

Choose one tree, garden, patch of ground or other accessible outdoor place. Photograph or draw it in October.

Return in: winter → spring → early summer

At each visit ask:

- **What's different?**
- **What's still here?**
- **What's happening now?**
- **What might happen next?**

Create a class record showing how the place changes throughout the school year.

Share a Tiny Sign of Hope

Learners can create a small card featuring their observation.

- On one side: Draw your Tiny Sign of Hope.
- On the other: I found hope outside when I noticed...

Display the cards at school or share them with another class.



TINY SIGNS OF HOPE



ADAPTATIONS & ACCESSIBILITY:

Learners don't need to cover a large area to find tiny signs of hope. A single tree, garden, patch of grass, planter or accessible outdoor space can provide plenty to investigate.

Consider:

- selecting a clearly defined accessible observation area
- providing seated observation locations
- allowing learners to remain in one spot and investigate closely
- pairing learners as Hope Detective partners
- using picture cards for Life, Change, Connection and Care
- providing magnifying glasses or other observation tools
- allowing drawing, pointing, photography, movement or verbal responses instead of writing
- providing a quieter observation space for learners who may find a busy schoolyard overwhelming
- giving learners one category to search for rather than all four
- allowing additional processing and observation time

Where possible, adapt the outdoor experience so learners can participate outside rather than replacing it with an indoor alternative.

TEACHER NOTE: TALKING ABOUT HOPE

This activity isn't intended to teach learners that everything in nature is fine or that environmental challenges can be solved simply by "thinking positively." elin kelsey's work encourages a more active understanding of hope, one that makes room for environmental challenges while also noticing evidence of resilience, cooperation, regeneration, positive change and possibility.

For young learners, keep this concrete.

Instead of telling learners: "This is hopeful.", ask: "What do you notice?", and then: "What does that make you think might be possible?"

Learners may also notice something concerning: litter, a damaged plant, very dry soil, habitat disturbance or another environmental problem. Don't redirect them toward something more positive.

Instead ask: What did you notice? Why do you think that matters? What could help? Is anyone already helping? Is there something we could do? This allows learners to recognize both challenge and possibility.

The goal isn't to find proof that everything is okay. It is to help children discover that even in a changing world, they can pay attention, understand what is happening, notice responses and recognize that change is possible.