

Jazzing up collaborative teaching and learning

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Abstract

We have been grappling with a question that challenges many educators: “How can one make learning come alive and become ‘real’?” Starting with the assumption that Nature and the real world makes for a great classroom, we embarked on a collaborative, multi-disciplinary, inter-age group, and international learning activity called the Nature Learning Camp. The camp built upon earlier efforts at rainforest restoration by our students and ourselves at a site at Mandai, Singapore (www.reforest.org). What began as an attempt to bring students into the field to consolidate previous knowledge and to discover new facets of learning provided, upon reflection, a generalizable model for synergistic teaching and learning. We liken our roles as long-term teaching partners and collaborators to those of jazz musicians in an ensemble, whereby members of the collaborative team alternate takes support, lead, and inspire the group’s efforts.