

Visit to 6th grade class at Washington Middle School

20 students

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I had 55 minutes with the students, we started with a discussion about scientists and specifically earth-scientists: what do they do and why do they do it? Their role was to propose fields of study and it worked pretty well. I then showed pictures from my field work and of colleagues. The plan was to let the students comment on the pictures and to answer their questions about them, but it fell flat as there was almost no reaction from their part (unlike a private school 6th grade class visited earlier this year). A well-built story about a field expedition could have probably captivated them more.

Afterward we reviewed the basic concepts of plate tectonics and the students split into three groups to play with lego+playdough mock-ups of Wallace Creek. It worked rather well but here a second person might be helpful to run the exercise as the students were not intrinsically captivated by the exercise but more by playdough wrist bands.