

## APPLYING SESSION TO INSTRUCTION

The session is not over! A critical phase of learning anything new is *application*, when the learner takes new knowledge and applies it. There's some application in the session, but, with all professional learning for instructors, the rubber meets the road (or trail) when instructors apply what they've learned to their instruction, and keep thinking about it and discussing it with their peers. If you want your instructors to try out new activities/approaches, program leader support is crucial. Even if they're excited by new ideas, it's easy for instructors, especially veteran instructors, to keep doing what they've been successfully doing already, and not try out new activities/approaches. Below are a variety of follow-up activities and discussions to dig deeper into the topic, and help you facilitate thoughtful implementation.

- **Discussing Implementation of Journaling Activities.** Assign your staff to each try out a *journaling activity*, either the same activity, or different *journaling activities*, during your next student program, and to write in their journal about how it went. Then, lead them in a discussion on the activity at the end of the program during a meeting. Here are some suggested questions to focus a reflection or discussion on:
  - » Did the activity inspire your students to make better observations, and to engage with nature?
  - » What was successful about the activity?
  - » What might you do differently the next time you lead it and why?
  - » How have you incorporated journaling into students' other field experiences, and what ideas do you have about incorporating it in the future?
- **Re-designing your program's student journals.** After this session, while your staff is revved up on the topic, you might want to have a follow-up session in which they attempt to improve the student journal for your program. It can take time to develop really good journal pages, so you may want to develop a plan for testing things out with students and bringing results back to the group.
- **Staff brainstorm of what they and you can do to encourage incorporation of journaling into your program.** After the session reflection, your staff will have already written ideas they have about implementation into their instruction. You can tap into these, and other ideas through a brainstorm of what they plan to do, and how you can support them in doing it.
- **Encourage your instructors to take up the practice of field journaling.** In the introduction to the book *Field Notes on Science and Nature*, Michael Canfield writes, "The value of taking field notes lies both in the actual information that is recorded as well as in what is gained in the process of recording itself." Field instructors who journal regularly will have a richer rapport with the place in which they teach, and a more complex knowledge of the local natural history of your site. As a result, they will be more versatile instructors, better prepared to engage



students deeply in the study of flora, fauna, and phenomena. When introducing students to journaling, they will be doing so from a place of authenticity, and could even share examples from their own journals. Offer *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling* as a resource for instructors to guide their practice.

- **Instructor Observations.** If you do observations of instructors, discuss how you might incorporate elements from this session into the observations.
- **Continuing a discussion.** If there was a topic that came up during discussion that you had to cut off, and if it seems like your staff is interested in, and would benefit from continuing the discussion, set aside some time to do so.
- **Before or after the session, assign your staff to read the Foreword by EO Wilson to the book, *Field Notes on Science & Nature*, edited by Michael R Canfield, pages ix-xii.** Tell them to use Active Reading strategies: underline what they think are important points, and write questions and connections they have in the margins (or use sticky notes to write on and attach to the text). Then assign the prompts below to discuss, first in pairs, then in the whole group.

#### Possible Questions/Prompts for Discussion

1. What are some points/quotes you found interesting? (You might ask each instructor to choose one quote from the passage, to be ready to explain what they think the author meant by it, questions/connections they have about it, and why they found it interesting.)
  2. What information from this passage do you think might be worth communicating to students, and how might you do that?
  3. If someone were to ask you, “what is the value to humanity in studying natural history, and in scientific journaling,” how might you answer?
- **Assign your staff to read the chapters, *Building Knowledge Through Nature Journaling* and *Focused Awareness*, from *The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling* by John Muir Laws (to be published in 2016).**

#### Possible Questions/Prompts for Discussion

1. What ideas or phrases struck you?
2. Describe one thing you know through direct experience and one thing you know by being told by someone else. Does your “knowing” of those two things feel different?
3. Do you trust things you know through personal experience more or less than things you know from books and other second hand sources?
4. In your education, were you taught mostly by having direct experiences that led to learning, or through being told information? How do you think that affected you as a learner?
5. The Focused Awareness passage is about journaling as a practice and choosing a small part of nature to focus on so as not to be overwhelmed. How do you think this could relate to a students’ experience at an outdoor school?