

## ACTIVITIES AND MAIN IDEAS

### Sensory/Observation Activities

- Focus on sounds: counting sounds, quality of each sound, sounds as music, deer ears. *(inspired/derived from Joseph Cornell, Jon Young, Tom Brown)*
- Focus on touch: body, air, ground and then compare two objects. *(inspired/derived from Tom Brown)*
- Focus on smell: air and nearby objects. *(inspired/derived from Tom Brown)*
- Focus on vision: colors, shadows, and light, using “Owl Eyes.” *(common practice among Indigenous peoples from all over the world and our animal relatives)*
- Observing a tree from as many different perspectives as possible. *(inspired/derived from Steve Van Zandt)*
- Other sensory/observation activities: sit spots, nature drawing, journaling, card hikes, etc.
- “Slow down, get down, look around.” —Todd Newberry
- Using hand lenses.
- Body Radar—wandering wherever your body feels like going and checking things out *(inspired/derived from Jon Young and Coyote Mentoring)*
- Beauty Breaks/Appreciation Breaks *(inspired/derived from Emilie Lygren)*
- *I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of* *(inspired/derived from John Muir Laws)*

### Main Ideas

- The answer to almost every question about teaching is: “It depends!”
- Don’t be automatic with instructional decisions; make thoughtful choices about how to guide learners, depending on the situation.
- Observation skills encourage wonder, curiosity, and emotional connections with nature.
- Names are useful, but answering learner questions or telling names right away can sometimes discourage exploration, observation, thinking, and curiosity. It’s often effective not to lead with a name, but to “trail” with it.
- We should be sensitive to the moment and to the spirit of inquiry when deciding what information to provide and when to provide it.
- Instructors who share information judiciously, and after learners have had opportunity to wonder and think about it, find that learners can get more out of their observations.
- Anthropomorphism can be a way for learners to connect with the natural world, but it can cloud accurate perceptions of nature.
- By subtle word-coaching and encouraging accurate empathy, we can invite learners to make deep, thoughtful observations while affirming their culture and values.
- We all have observation skills, and we can all grow and develop these skills.
- Making scientific observations is meant to be our best attempt at describing the world as accurately as possible.
- The brain has a tendency to filter out much of what we experience. We can choose to direct our focus of attention.
- Scientific observers should strive to be humble and attempt to make accurate, detailed observations.