

FIELD JOURNALING: SESSION SUMMARY AND MAIN IDEAS

Benefits of Field Journaling

Building an emotional connection to nature and the outdoors. As learners engage in a focused study of an aspect of nature and record observations in their journals, they build a connection to that aspect of the natural world. This process can lead to a memory of that place and of learners' experiences—one that learners can carry in their minds and on the pages of their journals.

Engaging in science practices and developing visual literacy and communication skills. Field journaling is an opportunity for learners to engage authentically in science practices and to build on their existing visual literacy and communication skills.

Supporting learner-centered and nature-centered teaching practices. Integrating field journaling activities into longer learning experiences is one way to implement learner-centered and nature-centered teaching and to support inclusion by centering the learning experience on a shared experience to which every learner has access.

Connections to standards—by field journaling, learners are practicing disciplinary literacy in science. By creating accurate, detailed field journal entries, learners are creating science text, using both illustrations and academic language.

Naturalists and scientists:

- **have different goals when they approach making a journal entry.** They might choose to focus on recording information about where an organism is found, recording thoughts/ideas, recording data, capturing a moment, doing biodiversity inventories, etc.
- **use different strategies to record information.** These might include labeled drawings, text, measurements, questions, tentative answers based on further observation, arrows, a magnified view circle, charts, etc.

Field journaling:

- **focuses on observations before art.** The goal is not to make pretty pictures but to make accurate observations and engage in the process of thinking that happens through journaling.
- **uses words, pictures, and numbers together to record information.** Field journals might also include labeled drawings, text, measurements, questions, tentative answers based on further observation, arrows, a magnified view circle, charts, etc.

FIELD JOURNALING: SESSION SUMMARY AND MAIN IDEAS (continued)

Instructors who use journals successfully to support science instruction suggest:

- **paying attention to group and individual needs.** There are great times for journaling, and there are . . . less great times for journaling. If learners are super energetic, have just gotten off the bus, or are very hungry, they may not be able to focus on journaling as much. Weather conditions—such as very cold, windy, or extremely hot conditions—can also be challenging. Set up learners for success in journaling by choosing a time and location in which you think they will have the best possible chance of being engaged. Consider and address learners' physical and emotional needs so they can be present in the learning process.
- **offering structure and scaffolding.** Field journaling activities can be more engaging and accessible for learners when there is structure and scaffolding. You might offer a focus for learners' journaling and observations (e.g., do a comparison of two types of acorns, make a map of where spiderwebs occur) and offer some suggestions for how learners could record information in their journals. The activities in *How to Teach Nature Journaling* include this kind of structure and scaffolding.
- **matching scaffolding with learning goals.** The kind of scaffolding you offer will affect the types of observations and thinking learners do while journaling. Think ahead of time about what part of nature or the outdoors you will offer for learners to focus on, and which nature journaling activity might help guide learners to make observations and engage in thinking relevant to your learning goals.
- **giving appropriate and supportive feedback.** Avoid the tendency to comment on the artistic quality of drawings. Instead, give feedback on what you are asking learners to do—make accurate observations and record them in drawing and writing. Be nonjudgmental as you highlight observations that learners made or methods they used to show thinking on the page.
- **giving learners adequate materials for journaling.** Make sure learners have at least some blank pages on which to record their observations and experiences.

See more journaling activities and tips at howtoteachnaturejournaling.com and www.johnmuirlaws.com.

