



NX Projects

Nature Journal



Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce nature journaling to elementary students. “Nature journaling is the process of keeping a place-based, personal record of events, observations, and experiences in the outdoors.” (Hofmann and Passineau) That process is typically an ongoing one and may start at the PWLC or continue and expand here for those who have already learned how to journal. Or, perhaps the school teachers simply wishes to allow students to dip into in a different method of keeping records and recording thoughts. Students learn journaling best, however, by journaling on a repeat basis as part of an ongoing process.

Compared to journals in general, a nature journal is unique in that place takes on a central role as the main subject along with the journalist as observer. “There is a deeper awareness of the setting, seasons, and other species.” (Hofmann) A journal may be a phenology log; a field guide to animals, plants, geology; and an explorer’s log of journeys and findings. It may also be a collection of reflections about a place and connections with it. Its content is not just intellectual or just emotional – it is both.

It is adaptable to all learning styles and abilities and a source of endless individualization possibilities. Nature journaling provides opportunities for authentic learning which incorporates writing and drawing as major elements and therefore uses verbal, nonverbal, analytic, logical, spatial, and synthetic abilities. Using a journal allows students to lead their learning with their own questions making it student and inquiry driven. Journals can include both personal expressions and objective observations. Objective information might include scientific experiments, weather, wildlife behavior, and seasonal changes. Keeping a nature journal can be a powerful experience because it helps the observers slow down, carefully take note of their surroundings, make first-hand, concrete observations of nature, and become better observers. Good science depends upon keen observations, and nature journaling is an effective way to develop that skill.

Materials

Science Notebook or Journal
Pencils
Crayons
Colored pencils
Rulers

Collecting Equipment
Weather Instruments
Binoculars
Hand Lenses

Links

This web site from the American Museum of Natural History will tell you more about creating your own nature journal:

<http://www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/youngnaturalistawards/resources/fieldjournal.html>

On this web site from the National Wildlife Federation you can see examples of nature journals:

<http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There/Activities/Observe-and-Explore/Keep-a-Nature-Journal.aspx>