

Nature Journaling

Journaling can be integrated into almost every aspect of teaching. It can help to develop observation skills, promote creative writing, and open new avenues of expression. Poetry, prose, lists, drawings, sketches, pressings, photographs – anything goes!

Journals can be store bought, homemade, simple or elaborate. All that is necessary is paper and a writing utensil. While art supplies, envelopes, plant presses, hand lenses, field guides, and cameras are nice, they are certainly not necessary to create a beautiful and functional journal! When working with children it is convenient to create a journal that can expand, allowing the addition of pages and other sources of information.

Here is a list of ideas to get going:

Senses: Divide a piece of paper into 4 sections. One section each for observing what you see, what you hear, what you feel, what you smell. Choose a spot to be alone, sit and observe. Make a list or draw pictures of things in each section.

Sound Map: Choose a spot to be alone. Close your eyes and listen to things around you while marking, on your paper, where sounds are coming from.

Texture Rubbings: Hold your paper against an interesting texture. Using the side of a crayon, gently rub along the paper, picking up the texture below. Tree bark, leaves, and wood grain are good beginning places.

Personal Space: Choose a spot you can easily and frequently revisit. Document changes over time, catalog what you see.

- Council Tree: Choose a tree, or other living object in the schoolyard. Document, in detail, the colors, markings, wildlife, and activity on, or around, the tree. Visit the tree daily/weekly/monthly to document the changes that occur. Focus can be on colors, animal life, human impact, etc.
- Circle of Observation: Create a loop of yarn 3-5 feet long. Place the loop on the ground, creating and defining the location of the observation. Catalog everything you see and record all activity happening within your *circle of observation*.

Weather Log: Keep a running record of the weather each day. Include time, date, temperature, drawings. Use data to create graphs, make predictions, etc.

Moon Journal: Record the shape of the moon each night, observing it from the same location. Draw the horizon and moon's location in reference to a stable object. Include date, time, weather.

Grammar Catalog: Write a part of speech across the top of the page (noun, pronoun, article, verb, adjective, conjunction, adverb, preposition). Sit and observe a scene, outdoors, for the chosen part of speech. Sketch the scene and list as many as you observe, labeling the picture.

Scientific Drawings: Using hand lenses and careful observation skills, coach students in scientific drawing by getting up and personal with their subjects. Use observation questions as prompts: How many legs *does* that bug have? *Where do* the legs connect to the body? Nomenclature studies can follow, labeling the “parts of” their drawings.

Event Mapping: Draw maps of the schoolyard, route to a fieldtrip, or the route from home to school. Label landmarks and places where significant events occur.

Time Lapse: Keep daily scientific data through written observation and/or sketches. Document the progress of a science experiment or the daily growth of a newly sprouted plant.

Books:

- A Kid's Fall EcoJournal, With Nature Activities for Exploring the Season by Toni Albert
- A Kid's Spring EcoJournal With Nature Activities for Exploring the Season by Toni Albert
- A Kid's Summer EcoJournal, With Nature Activities for Exploring the Season by Toni Albert
- A Kid's Winter EcoJournal, With Nature Activities for Exploring the Season by Toni Albert
- A Trail Through Leaves: The Journal as a Path to Place by Hannah Hinchman
- Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth
- Moon Journals: Writing, Art, and Inquiry Through Focused Nature Study by Gina Rester-Zodrow and Joni Chancer
- My Nature Journal by Adrienne Olmstead
- Nature Journal: A Guided Journal for Illustrating and Recording Your Observations of the Natural World by Clare Walker Leslie
- Nature Journaling: Learning to Observe and Connect with the World Around You by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth
- The Alphabet Of The Trees: A Guide To Nature Writing edited by Christian McEwen and Mark Statman
- Wild Days, Creating Discovery Journals by Karen Skidmore Rackliffe