

# Nature Journaling as a Youth Education Program

Rowe Zwahlen  
Utah State University  
rowe.zwahlen@usu.edu



## Situation

Our goal was to create a youth education program to excite students and increase STEAM skills

## Journaling Procedure

- observe natural environment
- record observations
  - use sketches to record forms
  - use writing to record thoughts, questions, and measurements



## Inputs



- a few hours Extension staff time each month
- teacher cooperation
- funds from a small grant used to purchase sketch journals

## Results

- 7% increase in math and science scores
- improvement in art skills
- positive response from teachers and students
- participation from students who struggle in a traditional classroom setting



## a Few Best Practices

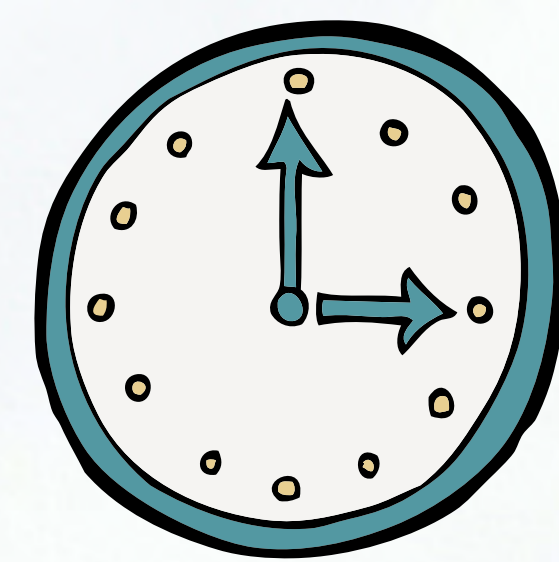
### Location

- Nature is everywhere
  - you don't have to go far
- pick somewhere that is convenient for return trips
- remember safety
  - think about proximity to roads
  - keep children in sight
  - if necessary, discuss possible hazards with children



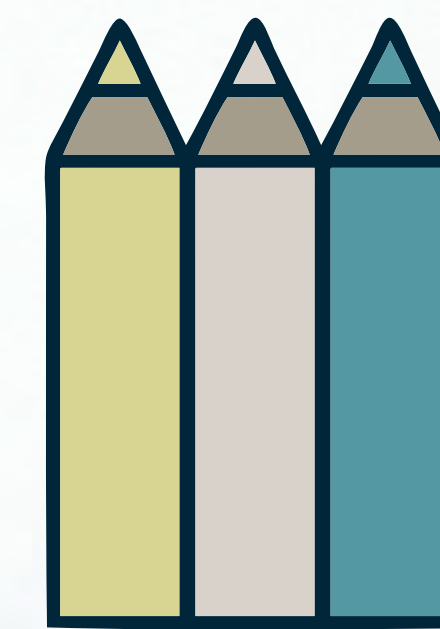
### Timing

- Leave them wanting more
- 45 minutes to 1 hour seems to work best
- 2-3 times a month has worked well
- sample schedule
  - 10-15 minutes instruction
  - 30-40 minutes journaling
  - 10-15 minutes sharing



## Supplies

- bound notebooks work better
  - create better surface for writing and drawing
  - loose papers are easy to misplace
- writing implements
  - take a back-up
- encourage children to experiment with different media



## Sharing

- discuss questions
- allow student to work through what they have seen
- be supportive - cheer successes



## a Few Simple Rules for Participants

### Respect Others

- no arguing
- offer encouragement not criticism

### Respect Nature

- leave things as you find them
- no picking flowers, breaking branches, or removing anything
- no feeding, touching, or bothering animal life

### Respect Yourself

- Relax
- Enjoy the process