I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me of

About:

There is a LOT of cool things out there when we slow down and take a look. With this fun exercise we’ll improve our observation skills while learning more about the nature around us. This is a fun addition to a walk around the block, through a nature trail, or around the perimeter of your outdoor play area.

Objective:

To use Social Emotional Development and NGSS informed practices to help youth explore their self-awareness while understanding more about their environment and how to grow their observation skills

Age: grades 6-12

Expected time: 10 min – 1 hour

Activity to be done anywhere you can find a blade of grass, leaf or rock:

This lesson plan was adapted from the BEETLES Project.

1. Talk to your youth about observations skills. Who has exceptional observation skills? (Detectives, trackers, deer, hawks, someone they know, etc.) What makes some observers better than others? Encourage discussion about the idea of observing your surroundings.

2. Share Sherlock Holmes quote, and talk about what it means.

“I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see.” — Sherlock Holmes (fictional detective, as written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)

3. Let your youth know you’re going to work on their observation skills by exploring together.

4. Pick a natural object such as a leaf or a rock. Stand together while holding the item and observe it together. Explain that you’ll be making observations out loud to each other. Define observation and clarify what kinds of statements are not observations.
   • An observation is something we notice with our senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste—but please don’t taste anything unless you are told you can.
   • I know I’m making an observation when I begin a sentence with “I notice,” and then describe what I can observe using my senses.
   • Observations are what you notice in the moment, not what you already know. Saying “I notice it’s a leaf” is identification, not observation.
   • Saying “It looks awesome,” or “I notice it’s gross,” is your opinion, not an observation.
• Saying “the leaf has been eaten by bugs” isn’t an observation if you can’t see any bugs. It’s a possible explanation for the observation that it has holes.
• Here are some examples of observations: “I notice this is yellowish-green in color, oval-shaped and about the size of my thumb, it’s rough in some places and smooth in others…”

5. Share for a few minutes. Once you’re ready to move on introduce curiosity exploration. The next statements should all start with the statement “I wonder” (I wonder if these holes were from a bug, I wonder why grass grows straight, etc).
• Note: the idea is to inspire curiosity, not necessarily gain knowledge. Take the pressure off yourself of knowing everything by not answering any questions you both come up with. If you want, your youth can write down questions they have and look up answers later.

6. Share your questions, realistic and crazy, for a few minutes. Once you’re ready to move on introduce a question to inspire connection.

7. The next statement should start with “it reminds me of” (This green reminds me of a shamrock shake, this circle reminds me of the letter O, etc.)

8. Once you’ve shared all of your observations, celebrate about how much you discovered about your item!

9. Now it’s time to take a walk! As you walk keep an eye out for interesting things to look at. Every few minutes you should stop and pick up something to explore with your new observation skills. Remember the 3 prompts: I notice, I wonder, it reminds me of.

More ways to explore:

• Take pictures of everything you explored today!
• When you go home, google the questions you came up with and find answers!
• Want a more in-depth lesson plan? Check out the lesson plan on the BEETLES Project page: www.beetlesproject.org/resources/for-field-instructors/notice-wonder-reminds/
• Share your observations on social media and tag Camp Whitcomb/Mason!

Wrap Up:
• What did you learn?
• Did you notice any patterns? What were they? Did you notice them right away or did they slowly develop? How did these patterns impact your investigation?
• Did you notice anything that surprised you?
• What was the most interesting thing you observed?