

‘E kilo ‘oe

Thoughtfully observing nature with all our senses!

Description

Close observations of nature, using all our senses, is an important cultural practice in Hawai‘i, and in cultures around the world. *‘E kilo ‘oe* means to be observant or to make keen observations, and as a practice helps students understand that they have the tools they need within themselves to grow their knowledge of the garden, their yard or anywhere in nature. Students select a spot in the garden that is special to them. They will return to the same spot over time. As they explore their senses they become aware of natural cycles, seasons, and the beautiful complexity of nature. Curiosity and wonder are enhanced as they fine-tune their observation skills. Students also practice sharing their experience with their peers after the 2 minute activity, using complete sentences and descriptive phrases to express their personal observations to others. Their relationship and knowledge of place is the foundation of their relationship to their environment, community and themselves. This activity is a positive and proactive way for students to engage with nature. This lesson can be duplicated wherever you live! We find our students at Māla‘ai love this time to themselves to engage with the garden and share what they have learned.

Objective

To develop observation skills through using their senses and create a strong sense of place.

Preparing the students for the activity

Tell the students that they will be spending 2 silent minutes in the garden (or other outside location, if they are not currently in school). They should select a spot in nature that feels special to them. They need to find a spot where they can focus and not be distracted by someone near them. It helps if they are not facing another person. Tell them that they will have the opportunity to share their observations with the class after 2 minutes. Ask them if their senses are good information gathering tools. Have them name a sense they use to gather information in their daily life. Have different students give examples until all 5 senses have been identified. Ask them if they think ancient civilizations or indigenous people used their senses to gather information about where they lived. Ask them if scientists use their senses to gather information. Why is it important?

Activity

- 1.) Let students know they have an awesome opportunity to have some quiet time to themselves to make thoughtful observations. Send students out into the garden to select their special spot. Make sure they are at least 6 feet apart from each other.
- 2.) The teacher may have a theme for the 2 minutes, such as, observing pollinators, observing their spot to look for evidence of a recent weather event, or noticing the clouds, shadows and position of the sun in the sky.
- 3.) Once students are settled in their spot we count down from 3 and they make their last positive noise. It could be an animal call or any joyful sound they want to make.
- 4.) The leader then calmly says “Okay, 2 minutes of silence to make observations now”.
- 5.) In our garden we start with 3 meditative breaths, inhaling to the count of 6 through their nose and exhaling to the count of 6. With the last breath we say “Check inside yourself, let all your worries from today float away with the clouds”.
- 6.) The students are asked to look far away outside of the garden to a significant feature such as mountains, streams, large trees or fields. Instruct them to use their senses to make observations. Allow them time to be silent so they can relax and make observations.
- 7.) Then ask students to turn their attention into the garden. Use a few question prompts to help maintain students’ focus. For example:
 - a.) “What is the first thing you noticed?”
 - b.) “Can you feel the sun (or wind) on your body?”
 - c.) “When you close your eyes what do you hear in nature? ”
 - d.) “Do you notice any changes in the garden?”
 - e.) “What is your intention for today?”
- 8.) Give them time to use their senses so they will be ready to share 2 things with the class that they discovered by observing and using their senses. Ask them to give a thumbs up when they have 2 things to share.
- 9.) Lastly we ask the students to take 2 more breaths in and out and feel the good energy that the garden brings to them. Nature is our teacher.

Sharing out

Ask students to turn and talk to a partner before sharing out to the class.

- What did you notice during your 2 minutes of observations?
- What senses did you use? Can you describe where you were in the garden?
- What was different this time compared to the last time you were out?
- How do you feel now after having 2 minutes to yourself in the garden?