

# MAKING OBSERVATIONS



*How can we help learners make careful observations while encouraging wonder and curiosity?*



# *I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of*

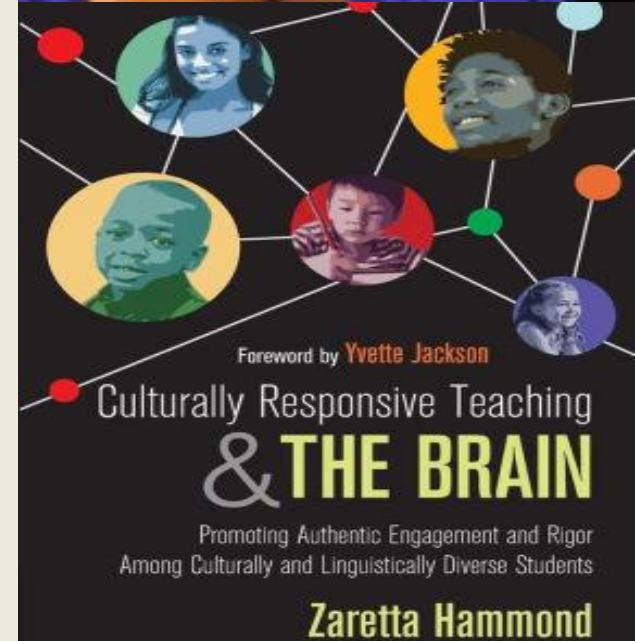
- is learner-centered and nature-centered;
- promotes inclusion and agency;
- promotes cultural relevance;
- supports engagement and equitable participation;
- supports language acquisition;
- scaffolds learning skills.



“Classroom studies document the fact that underserved English learners, poor students, and students of color routinely receive less instruction in higher-order skills development than other students.”

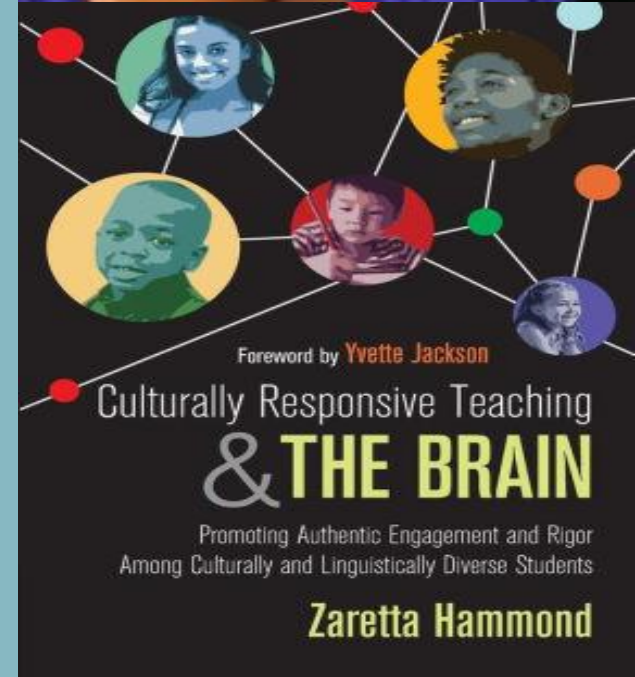
(Arlington & McGill-Franzen, 1989, Darling-Hammond, 2001, Oakes, 2005)

—Zaretta Hammond, author, educator and literacy advocate



“The ultimate goal...is  
for students to take  
over the reins of their  
learning.”

—Zaretta Hammond, author, educator and  
literacy advocate





I notice...





# I wonder...

“Every observation is the answer to a question. Our job is to find the right questions.” —Todd Newberry





**IT REMINDS ME  
OF...**

**...SOMETHING ELSE I  
HAVE SEEN.**

**...A FEELING.**

**...SOMETHING I READ.**

**...THE LAST TIME I SAW  
THIS BIRD.**

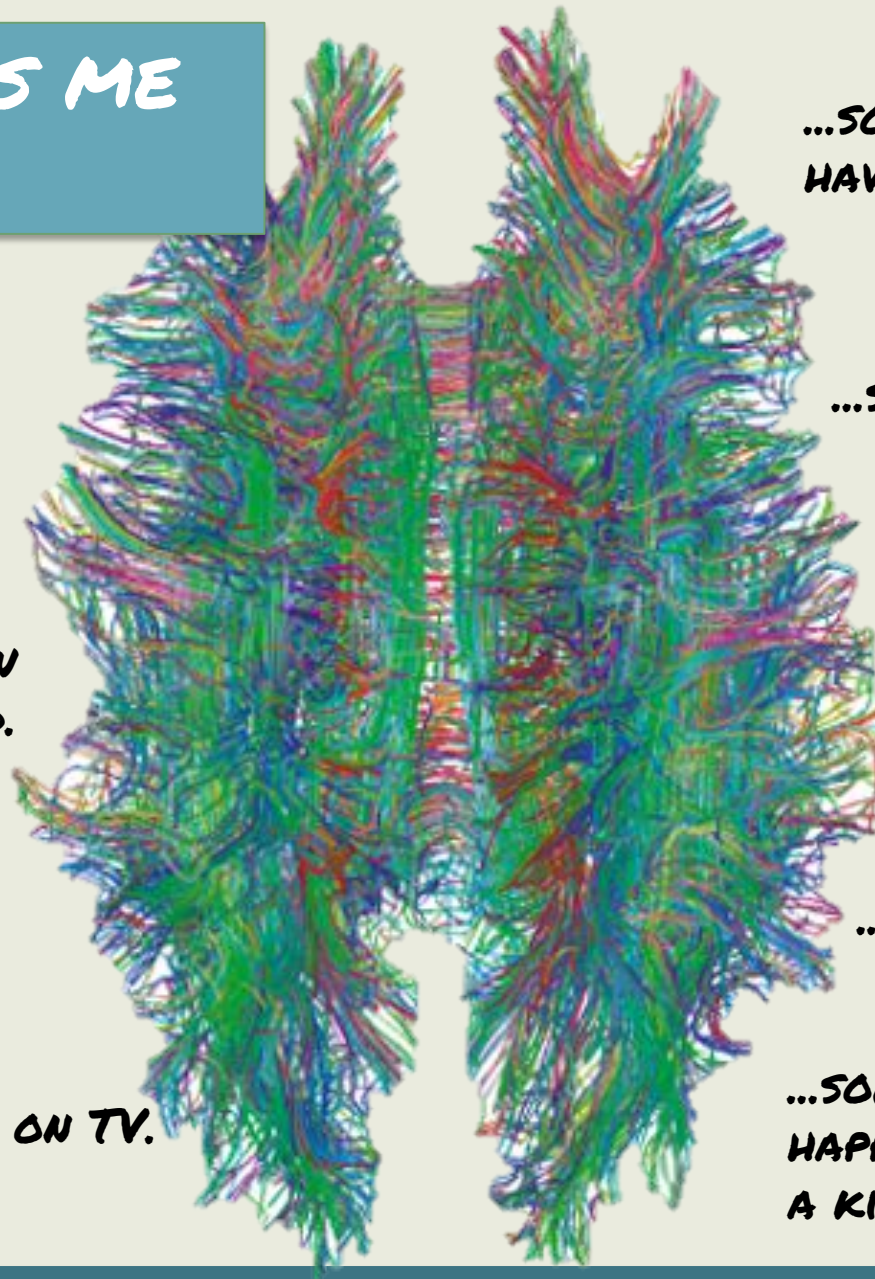
**...A METAPHOR.**

**...AN ANALOGY.**

**...SOMETHING I LEARNED.**

**...SOMETHING I SAW ON TV.**

**...SOMETHING THAT  
HAPPENED WHEN I WAS  
A KID.**



# The panoramic view...







- Slow down.
- Get down.
- Look around.

“I had been fooling myself that I was the only teacher. The land is the real teacher. All we need as students is mindfulness. Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world, receiving the gifts with open eyes and open hearts. My job was just to lead them into the presence and ready them to hear.”

—Robin Wall Kimmerer,  
botanist, professor, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* (page 208)







“A useful  
definition of  
love is sustained  
compassionate  
attention.”

—John Muir Laws,  
naturalist, artist,  
and author



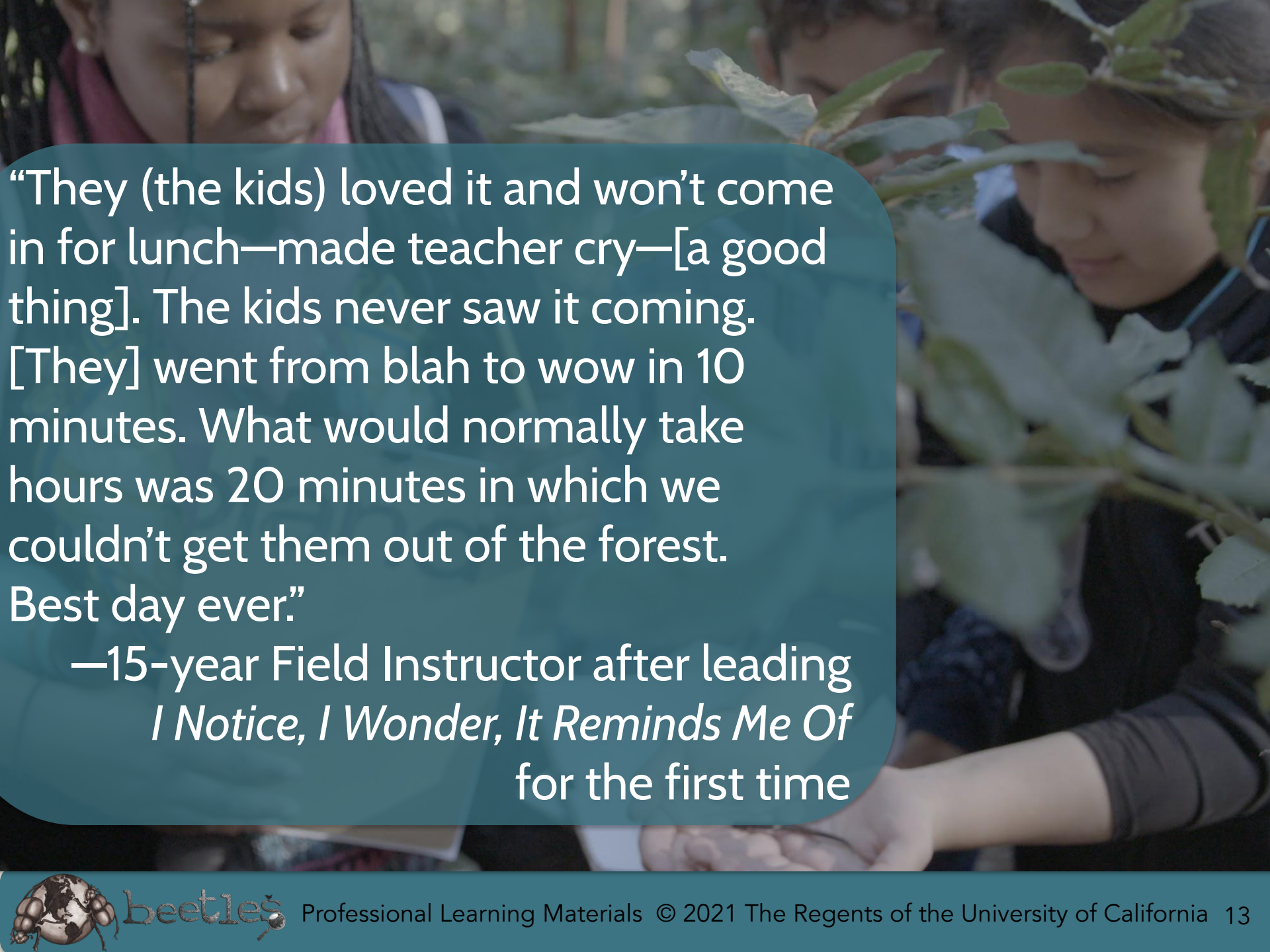


“Anything will  
give up its  
secrets if you  
love it enough.”

—George  
Washington  
Carver, botanist,  
inventor, professor





A background image showing several children in a forest setting, looking down at plants. The image is slightly blurred and has a teal overlay where the text is placed.

“They (the kids) loved it and won’t come in for lunch—made teacher cry—[a good thing]. The kids never saw it coming. [They] went from blah to wow in 10 minutes. What would normally take hours was 20 minutes in which we couldn’t get them out of the forest. Best day ever.”

—15-year Field Instructor after leading  
*I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of*  
for the first time





What kinds of instructional choices do we make  
when encouraging learner observations?





# What kinds of instructional choices do we have to make when encouraging learner observations?

Anthropomorphism

Naming and Identifying



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Anthropomorphism

Naming and Identifying

- Read over both topics and the choices on each end of the continuum.
- Choose one topic to begin discussing.
- If time permits, choose another topic to discuss.
- Approximately 15 minutes total.





# Group Agreements for Discussions

- Listen actively and share ideas.
- Share and ask for evidence.
- Build on ideas of others.
- Keep an open, curious mind.
- Disagree respectfully to increase understanding.
- Pay attention to participation.



What kinds of instructional choices do we have to make when encouraging learner observations?

# Anthropomorphism





# When deciding how to approach a learner–organism interaction, it can be useful to ask ourselves:

- What is the learner's relationship with this organism?
- How can I invite this learner to build a deeper relationship with this organism?
- How can I invite this learner to continue to observe and understand this organism?
- How can I support this learner to enter the world of this organism?



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## Naming and Identifying





“It’s a sign of respect and connection to learn the name of someone else, a sign of disrespect to ignore it. And yet the average American can name over a hundred corporate logos and ten plants....Learning the names of plants and animals is a powerful act of support for them.”



Robin Wall Kimmerer



“I’ve noticed that once some folks attach a scientific label to a being, they stop exploring who it is.”



—Robin Wall  
Kimmerer, from  
*Braiding Sweetgrass*  
(page 208)








“Names are useful and important, but there’s some kind of switch that can go off in our head once we have figured out the name for a species we are observing. That’s why when teaching, instead of ‘leading’ with the name, I ‘trail’ with it.”  
—John Muir Laws



Don't be automatic.  
MAKE THOUGHTFUL,  
INSTRUCTIONAL  
DECISIONS.







What do you notice?





# *Think-Pair*

- Newish ideas I gleaned from the session are...
- Something I'm struggling with is...
- I'm now wondering about...
- Ways I can apply these things to my own instruction are...





# Journal Reflection

*How can we help learners make careful observations while encouraging wonder and curiosity?*

## Record your thoughts about:

- Newish ideas gleaned from this session
- What helped me to learn today was...
- I'm still wondering about...
- Some ways I could apply these ideas to my instruction are...



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