Grade Level: K-5

Standards: *Primary:* Supports standards from Field Journal Lesson, socio-emotional learning

Secondary:

Time: 15 - 30 minutes

Essential Question: What can we observe in our environment?

Objective: Students will use prompts and techniques to closely observe the environment for an extended period of time.

Purpose: Students will identify points of connection to the natural world through sensory exploration.

Required Materials/Resources:

- Place markers (optional)
- Field journals (optional)
- Native plant community or natural area within walking distance

Suggested Teacher Preparation:

If students will do better with assigned locations, put down markers in the native planting or natural area ahead of time.

Teacher Guidance:

Engage:

Ask students to think of the longest time that they have been quiet and still. What did they notice during that time? Have kids share answers with a partner or in table groups.

Explore:

Let students know that they will be doing an activity called sit spots. Sometimes it can be really helpful for our thoughts and our feelings to be still and quiet. Sit spots are a way that we can observe and appreciate the environment around us. Tell the kids that they will be sitting silently by themselves and observing for whatever time period you select. For younger students, 10 minutes may be best moving up to about 20 minutes for older students. Tell students that the rules are that they cannot talk during the sit spot and they must be at least 10 feet away from another student. Have students brainstorm strategies for what they might do if they are feeling bored or squirmy or want to talk. Come up with a signal to end the sit spot as a class.

Move to the location of the sit spots (natural area or native planting). You may choose to give kids some prompts to help them focus such as:

- Find 5 things that you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, and 2 things you can smell, and 1 emotion you feel
- Choose one thing and think about as many ways to describe it as you can
- Close your eyes and listen to the world around you and then open them and see if you can match the sounds with what you see
- See how many different kinds of plants or bugs you can see from where you are sitting

Disperse kids to the sit spots. Have students begin by closing their eyes and taking three, full deep belly breaths to let go of anything that might be on their minds. Give them the cue to land fully in the moment.Call kids back using the chosen signal at the end of the sit spot time.

Analysis:
Gather students and have them share their observations. What did they notice observing for a longer time that they wouldn't have noticed if they were just walking by?

If using field journals, have students make notes and pictures in their field journals to document their observations.

Closing:
Have students think about their time observing and give one thing they would like to remember or one thing they would say to describe their spot to a person who hasn't seen it as an exit ticket.

Evaluation:
Informal evaluation of participation and engagement is appropriate for this activity.

Differentiation:
By Product: Students can share their observations orally, by drawing, or in writing.
By Process: Students can draw and write as they observe as an aid to focus if necessary.
By Content: Students may be assigned spots or may choose to pick a spot or perspective (eg looking up through a tree, standing or laying on the ground) that is interesting to them.

Expanded Learning:
Have students use their observations to make a sound map of their surroundings, making symbols for louder sounds larger and quiet sounds smaller and trying to show the distance that they think a sound is coming from.

Use the observations to spark questions or wonderings about the environment that can be the beginning of an inquiry based investigation.

Use the observations as the basis for a shape poem or haiku about their sit spots.