

Activity 3.1

Concept/focus:
INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

Introducing Observation

This activity guide was developed using actual transcripts from a number of teachers' lessons. Our idea is to describe the essence of this introductory activity, rather than provide a true script. As always, we hope that our materials will provide a framework that you can adapt to your own needs.

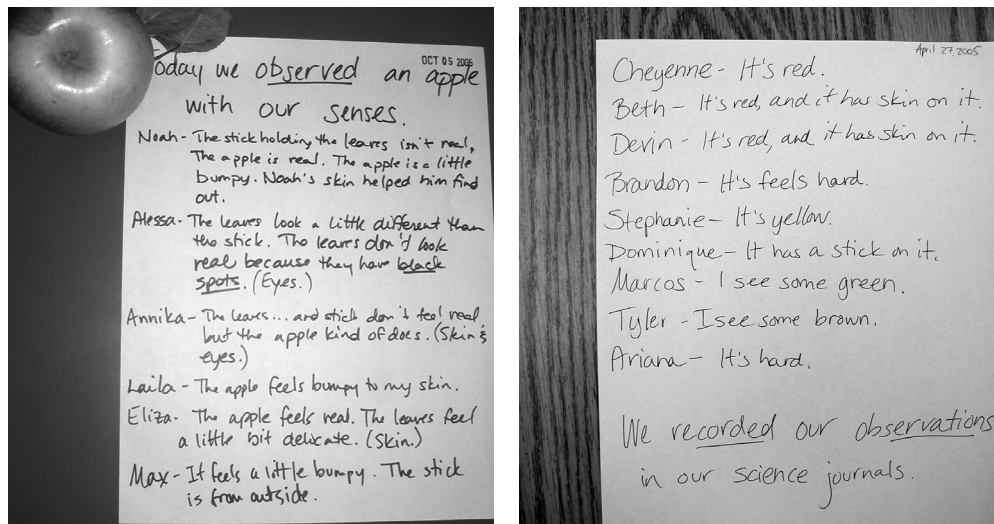


Figure 3.1A. Apple observation chart.

PROCEDURE

Begin the activity by showing an apple and telling the class that everyone is going to observe it. After introducing the word *observe*, ask the children if they know what it means. Likely, they will not, but take suggestions and then tell the children what it actually means (i.e., notice, use senses to find out about an object). You might need to spend some time talking about senses. Allow the children to tell you about the senses as much as possible and go over the function of each sense.

- Let the children know that you are going to write down or record their observations on a chart. At the top of chart write something such as, “We *observed* an apple.” Date the chart and tell children that you are writing the date so that later they will know on which day they observed the apple and the different observations that they made.
- Pass the apple around the group (or give each child an apple) and ask each child, “What do you notice about the apple?” or “What is your observation about the apple?” If answers begin to get repetitive, ask children to try to think of something else but do not push this too much. Record each child’s name and his or her observation. Use prompts if necessary: What

MATERIALS

- An apple or enough apples for each child to have one
- Paper or poster board for an observation chart
- Notebooks for each child, if introducing journals
- A date stamp, if introducing journals





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color is the apple? How does it feel? Is it smooth or rough? Hot or cold? Does it feel heavy to you? If a child does not want to make an observation, that is fine. As they watch and listen to peers, children become much more comfortable speaking up. You could also try asking these children to discuss the apple individually with you at a later time.

- When the children have all made observations, reintroduce the idea of recording (i.e., “writing down”) and review the observations the children made (see Figure 3.1A).
- Finally, set the stage for the next activity: “Tomorrow we are going to think about what is inside the apple.”

You can also use this activity to introduce children to science journals.



SCIENCE PRACTICES PLANNING GRID: Activity 3.1

<p>SCIENCE PRACTICE</p> 	<p><i>Concept/focus:</i> Introductory activities set the stage for later PrePS experiences</p> <p><i>Experience:</i> Observing an apple</p>
<p>OBSERVE, PREDICT, CHECK</p> 	<p>This simple activity is used to introduce children to the words <i>observe</i> and <i>observation</i> and to observation as a science practice.</p> <p>The teacher encourages children to use different senses by thinking about all aspects the apple’s features: What color is the apple? How does it feel? Is it smooth or rough? Hot or cold? Does it feel heavy to you? and so forth.</p>
<p>COMPARE, CONTRAST, EXPERIMENT</p> 	<p>This science practice is not the main focus of this activity.</p>
<p>VOCABULARY, DISCOURSE, LANGUAGE</p> 	<p>After introducing the word <i>observe</i>, ask the children if they know what it means. Likely, they don’t, but take suggestions and then tell what it actually means (e.g., notice, use our senses to find out about an object).</p> <p>Vary your way of asking—“What do you observe about the apple?” “What do you notice about the apple?” “What can you tell me about the apple?” “What is your observation?”—so that children develop a broader understanding of what it means to make observations.</p> <p>Introduce and encourage varied vocabulary to describe the apple.</p>
<p>COUNTING, MEASUREMENT, AND MATH</p> 	<p>This science practice is not the main focus of this activity.</p>
<p>RECORDING AND DOCUMENTING</p> 	<p>The teacher records the children’s observations on a chart, which can serve as the beginning of an “observe, predict, check” chart when children cut the apple open in a later activity.</p> <p>Children are introduced to the idea that scientists date their work when the teacher dates the observation chart. We tell children that we are writing the date so that later we will know which day we observed the apple and the different observations that we made. Children also use a date stamp to date their science journal entries.</p> <p>The teacher can transcribe what children say about their drawings. If you are with them while they draw, you can gently guide their efforts by asking them to think about what color crayon they will need to record this apple, to describe the shape of the apple, and to describe its parts. Use the observation chart, too, if children aren’t sure what to record: “Let’s see what we observed about the apple. We can read our chart. Maybe that will help you decide what to draw.”</p>

