

**Comments from participants in the “Geobotany”
SEIS 2006 summer course**

Pre-Service Teacher

“I thought that the reflective writing that we were required to do at the end of each day was very important and helpful for me. I was able to sit down and review my notes for the day and reflect on what happened and take more time to understand the new information and concepts that I was learning. I enjoyed doing this as an individual assignment as it allowed me to work on my own level, ask questions, and get some feedback on more of a one-on-one relationship with Tim and Amy.”

“I feel that the use of field journals for observations, questions, and reflective writing are an excellent classroom application. Next semester I am going to have my 5th graders use and maintain field journals to be used for all the science done in our classroom. I think this is a great medium for evaluating long-term progress and to be used as a communication device to show parents what their children are learning in class.”

Middle and High School Teacher

“I would have to say the field journal writing is an excellent way to keep information in one place and to go back and check on the information recorded later that day or in the future. The daily journal reflection allows you to look back at what you have learned with specific examples documented, descriptions of misconceptions on the content, questions you might have at the end of the day, activities that were the most and the least effective, your feelings of preparedness and competence, and how you could use or modify the activities covered. For me, this was probably the most beneficial. I tend to be a slow processor and this type of activity gives me the time I need to think about things so that I can then incorporate it into my base of knowledge. It allowed me to clarify what I learned but to ask specific questions that I thought of later in the day. I don’t always think fast enough and the delay is good for me. When I write later, questions often pop into my head.”

“...the last section, on reflecting how I can incorporate and/or modify the activities into my classroom are so helpful. This gives me an almost instantaneous time to think about how I can use it and then I have the summer to plan ahead exactly what I want to do during the next school year. I also appreciated that we got fairly instantaneous feedback.”

Third Grade Teacher

“using a field book to describe what I saw in the field in a specific way has added to the basis for scientific inquiry.”

“I believe that one of the most important things that I can do as a teacher is to facilitate excellent observation skills in my students. To write reflectively as an observer is a lifelong skill for anyone in any career. Experiencing an instructors’ immediate feedback as I did during this class, reminded me how valuable that feedback is.”

High School Teacher

“As a culminating activity, this site analysis provided me with a way to tie all of the things I had learned in the previous four days and use my own perceptions and values to look at the entire landscape and the plants living there. In the past I have taken my students out and asked them to reflect and write about their surroundings but have not given them the framework the way that this course provided me with a framework. So I learned that I must set the stage, give them background information, show them how to record this information and then provide them with a new system to bring together and record all that they have learned... this activity was essential for me as a learner and I plan on using it for my class.”

“I already use the journal extensively in both the courses I teach. I will however incorporate the end of the day reflection with the structure provided. This for me was essential for thorough synthesis... Another very important idea to incorporate is to allow students to share their journals to see how others write, draw, and reflect. I have not done this before and would very much like to have done this during our class – I did briefly look at others’ work and was amazed at the variety in content, detail, and style.”

“Having kept a journal for four days and having tried different approaches (lists vs concept maps) will help me teach my students how to approach this assignment [journals and reflective writing]. I have always valued student input to guide the activities that I do but I rarely make the time to do this... by including reflection into their journal writing, I will obtain consistent and timely feedback. If nothing else were gained from this course, this idea alone has been of incredible value.”

High school teacher

“The end of the day reflections forced me to do what I ask my students to do each night – review and reflect! I found myself reinforcing concepts and researching questions [online] while reviewing the day’s notes. This is an important part of the learning cycle and it needs to be reinforced. The format posed was realistic and open-ended enough to fit individual needs. I have not used this type of assignment specifically and will seriously consider incorporating it into the classroom next year.”

Third grade teacher

“I will implement the journal/field notebook in my classroom activities. I learned so much about recording my ideas and observations. This would be a great tool to teach writing for my students as well as creating discussions from their ideas and the data they collect.”

“This class has given me an opportunity to reflect on what I have learned and how I can use this new knowledge and techniques in my teaching. It will have a definite impact on my teaching.”

“I appreciated the daily comments from the instructors.”

High School Biology Teacher

“The portfolio assignment was a useful learning tool in that we were not only able to practice taking field notes, have a common place to record correlated lecture notes, but were given daily feedback on our progress. I found the “cheat sheets” that we taped in our notebooks to be especially helpful in that I had easily assessable [*sic*] reminders of what was expected. Because all of my notes from this course are in one place, I will use the portfolio to access information and will add notes as I assimilate relevant content. It will be a very useful tool as I develop activities for the classroom.

“I have used this type of portfolio assessment in my biology II topics course... and found it to be invaluable as an instructor because I was easily able to assess learning on a regular basis.”

High School Chemistry Teacher

“The most effective activity is the class format itself: being outside, observing, discussing, drawing, going to the lab, keeping a field journal and reflecting at the end of the day.”

“Keeping a field journal was most beneficial in reinforcing terminology and plant structure by summarizing activities at the end of the day in my reflections. I also thought the guided questions were very relative to what we learned each day.”

“Having completed a portfolio of my own... I have been enlightened into my students’ chemistry portfolios. One change that I may implement is the collection of notebooks more often (rather than just the day of an exam) in order to get feedback on unclear chemistry concepts.”