

Teaching Tips and Best Practices



This guide is designed to equip you with best practices for teaching and fostering a supportive learning environment during your Salmon Watch sessions. You'll find valuable tips on how to engage students, ensure safety, and celebrate the diverse identities of all participants.

General Teaching Tips:

1. At the start of your lesson take time to frame what you will be doing so that students know what to expect from the activity at your station.
2. Encourage questions and curiosity, emphasizing that all ideas are valuable.
 - a. When teaching students, we want to foster their observation and curiosity which the brain tends to stop the moment we have named and categorized things. Once our brains have categorized what we see, we often stop taking in more information about that thing.

When students share, encourage them to use the phrases
"I notice..." "I wonder..." "It reminds me off..."
 - b. Regularly check for understanding and invite students to express any confusion or ask questions.
 - i. Ask students to repeat back the instructions or next steps.
 - ii. Ask them to share their thoughts.
 - iii. Always make sure to end your station with the wrap up questions in the station lesson plan.
 - iv. You can ask students to share if/how their understanding might be different towards the end than at the beginning.
3. Positively engage with students:
 - a. Celebrate learners when they exhibit curious and compassionate behavior, thank students for sharing their thoughts and answers, notice when they listen or add on to the thoughts of their peers.
 - b. If you have a student that may be acting in unsafe or unhelpful ways for learning, you can draw attention to and celebrate the student(s) in the group who are modeling skillful and calm behaviors.
 - c. You can ask students who may have more energy if they would like to help you with carrying, passing out, or collecting supplies.
 - d. Use class teachers as a resource, ask them to check-in with students that might be having trouble or showing signs of distress.
 - e. Instead of calling out students who are not ready you can say "7 of you are showing me with your bodies that you are ready, I am looking for all 10 of you to show me"
 - f. When safety or technology concerns arise, address them immediately. Don't list off all the rules at the beginning of the trip, remind students of expectations as you go through your station activities.
 - i. Knowing and keeping the group within safety guidelines laid out is the responsibility of the volunteers and teachers. Please implement safety guidelines as necessary.
 - ii. Teachers may have different rules for phone use. Salmon Watch prefers students to be off their phones except for photography and educational research. Service may be poor at field sites and it is general best practice to have no phones.

Safety Tips:

1. Physical Safety:
 - a. Review safety guidelines with students before starting any activity.
 - b. Ensure that all participants are wearing appropriate gear (e.g., rain jackets, sturdy shoes).
2. Emotional Safety:
 - a. Encourage a culture of respect where students feel safe to express themselves.
 - b. Address bullying or exclusion immediately and sensitively.
 - i. "We don't tolerate anyone being unkind when we are learning"
 - c. Make sure students know how to ask for help if they feel unsafe.

Tips for Celebrating Diverse Identities:

1. Lead by example: Start your lesson by welcoming everyone and acknowledging the diversity within the group & introduce yourself with your pronouns.
 - a. Use the correct pronouns a person has shared with you.
 - b. Use they/them when you do not know regardless of a person's gender presentation.
 - c. Avoid using gendered language when talking to a group of people.
 - i. E.g. Hey all vs. hey guys. Lead by example, introduce yourself with pronouns
2. Including All Abilities:
 - a. Describe the activity that you will be doing with students.
 - b. Use person first language: "A person with a disability" instead of "a disabled person." or "A student with autism" instead of "an autistic student."
 - c. Use accessible ramps if available for everyone, stay on flat gradual trails, go at the pace of the slowest hiker/walker.
3. Including Non-visible Abilities:
 - a. Use visual tools and give students time together to thrasher on thoughts from these resources. Give students time to think and discuss with one another, ask them to raise their hands and not shout out answers.
 - b. In group discussions you don't need to correct wrong answers, you can keep the discussion going by asking for other ideas.
 - c. Have students pair share with each other to support students who are ever language learners.
 - d. Notice who in your group is speaking or sharing
 - a. Find ways to ask students who are more reserved one on one questions during the activities.
 - b. Adapt to meet the needs of the student group.

Trauma Informed Education Tips:

1. Set expectations for the day: Advanced schedule, orient to space- where bathrooms are what to do if you need to go
 - a. Don't assume someone is comfortable outside/has spent time outside. Consider that this might be an unfamiliar environment which might cause distractions for students learning.
 - b. Give students opportunities to regulate their nervous system through movement, breathing, basic needs (bathroom, water snacks, quiet time), give options/invite students in vs. directing (I encourage you to sort macros, sample in the river, or keep data)
 - c. Voice - Validation and normalization i.e. "it's understandable you feel that way..." or "I don't have experience, but I see that you're upset. How can I support you?"
 - i. Active listening i.e. at the conclusion saying "thank you for sharing" -
 - ii. Consider the words, metaphors, and props you are using with students. Know that we are trying to remove any possible triggers to increase concentration.

Icebreakers: If you need a quick icebreaker to kick off your station

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| - Beach, mountains, or forest? | - Climbing trees or jumping in puddles? |
| - Favorite type of weather to be outside in? | - Favorite animal that lives in water? |
| - Favorite thing to see or do by a river? | - Favorite bug? |
| - Favorite outdoor animal to spot in nature? | - Coolest thing you have found outside? |
| - What candy should be banned? | |