Notice & Wonder Walks

Learn about the World Around You

Purpose:
A notice-and-wonder walk can be a great addition to your weekly learning routine. Everyone tunes into the details in the world around them and revives curiosity by asking "How…?" and "Why…?" questions. Students practice writing and researching answers to their questions. It can be with K-12 students as a group or family.

Suggested frequency: Repeat this routine once or twice per week. The task takes about 30 minutes for steps 1-3. Add time for optional steps 4 and 5.

Materials: paper or notebook; pencil; colored pencils, crayons, markers; camera or phone with camera; (for steps 4 and 5: access to books, ebook, and/or online device)

Directions

1. **Walk & Talk**: Go on a 10-minute walk together. Stop every so often to talk about: *What do you notice? What do you wonder about what you notice?* (If walking outside is not possible, go on a "window walk" observing from one or more windows. Or take a virtual walk using a zoo-cam, San Diego Zoo)

2. **Photos**: If you have a camera (or device with a camera), have your child(ren) take photos of things they notice. Ask them about each item: *What do you wonder about __?*

3. **Write**: Return home. Have each child choose a photo that they are interested in. Have the child(ren) draw what they noticed (in a notebook or on paper) and use the photo for reference. Students independently continue drawing/writing about what they noticed and wondered in their own grade/age-appropriate way. Adults could join in this, too!

Stop here or continue on to the research steps if students are interested and if they have access to resources for research, such as books or an online device.

4. **Research**: Help your child find information about one question. Work as a family. Help each other learn. Use an online library or, if using Google, adults need to help select age-appropriate sites for students. After getting information from a source (book, video), ask: *Is there information here that helps answer your question? If so, what is it? If not, how can we improve our search?* Discuss what they learned from reading or watching.

5. **Add**: Students go back and add to their writing what they learned from reading e-books or watching videos about the question they had from their walk.

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Example: Notice & Wonder Walk

Steps 1 & 2: On my walk, I noticed several things, including:

Photo 1: Plants on the side of the road

I noticed…

Some leaves are the same shape but in different sizes but other leaves are different shapes.
These plants are growing on the side of a road.
I saw people walking dogs. I saw dogs pee/poop on plants.

I wondered…

How many different types of plants are growing here?
Are the plants native or were they planted by people?
Does dog pee and poop kill plants or help plants?

Photo 2: Stained parking spaces

I noticed..

Every parking space has dark marks/spots in the same place near the front or parking barrier.
The concrete with these marks looks bumpier and rougher than the smoother concrete around it.

I wondered…

What caused these marks?
If it's from cars, then is that dangerous?
Did stuff from cars "eat" away the concrete?
Why is the stained concrete bumpier than unstained?

Photo 3: Black tarp around a pipe

I noticed…

There is black plastic covering the ground on the sloped or hilly part around a large pipe that goes under the driveway.

I wondered..

Why did people put the tarp there? Does it or will the tarp solve a problem? What was the problem?

Photo 4: Storm drain on the side of the road

I noticed…

There is sand around the drain. The other drains we passed didn't have as much or any sand.

I wondered…

Why are there so many storm drains?
Does the sand go down into the storm drain?
How big are storm drains under there?
Do storm drains get clogged like sink drains at home?

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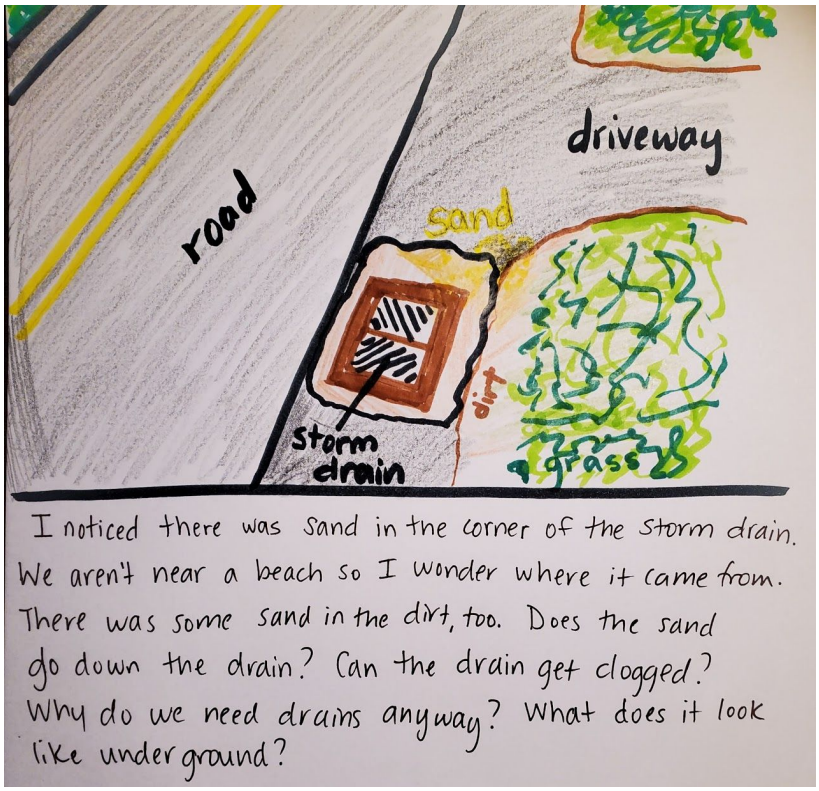
Step 3: Write

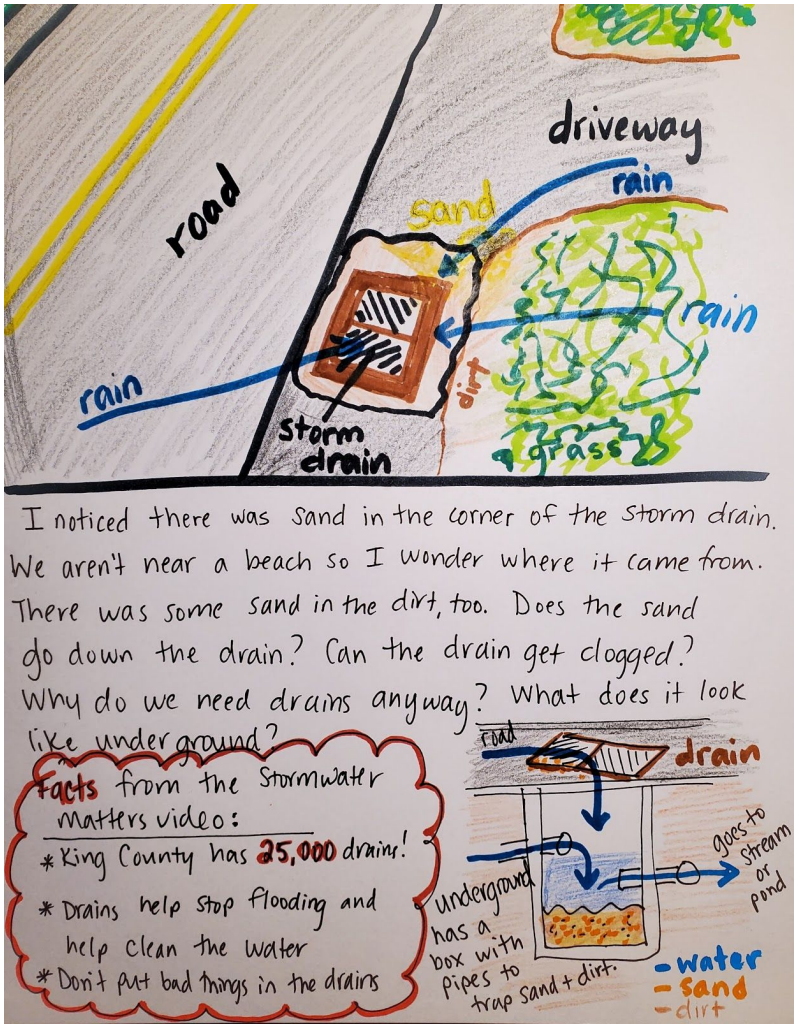
I picked the storm drain (photo 4) to write and sketch today. All students participate in this writing task at their own level using a mixture of drawing, labels, words, sentences. Adults can join in, too! Older students and adults write more about what they know and what they think.



Step 4: Research

At first, my questions were about the sand near the drain, but as I was writing, I became more interested in storm drains, generally: *Why do we have storm drains? What do they look like underground? How many are there?* Your child might realize more interesting questions, too. Be flexible. Students need support locating appropriate websites. I started my research and one of my first search results was the local county site with several videos on storm drains.

Step 5: Add Here is what I added to my science writing from my research.



Extending research: The website I used to answer my storm drain questions had information on related topics. I learned more about stormwater drains and dog poop! Your child(ren) may be interested in pursuing more information, too. Learn more. Then, talk, draw, and write about it.