

Spring

24 Preschool Learning Ideas



Literacy - Math - Science - Fine Motor
Sensory - Gross Motor - Art - Music

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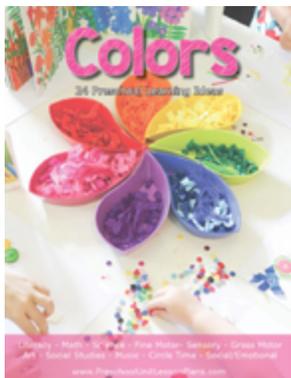
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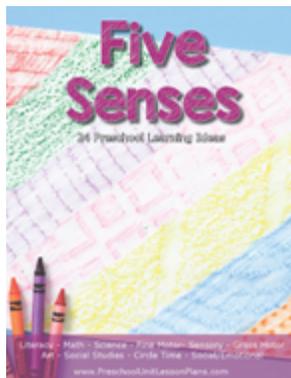
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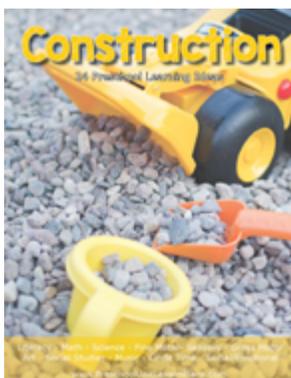
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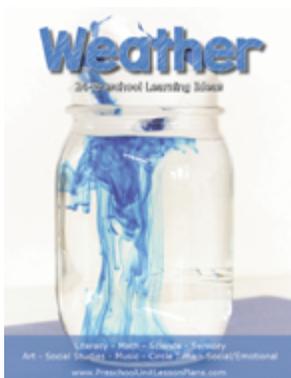
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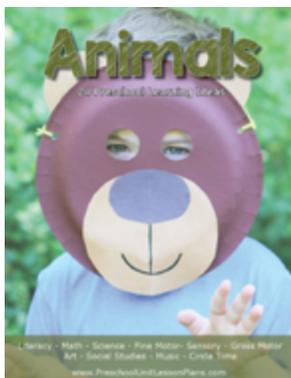
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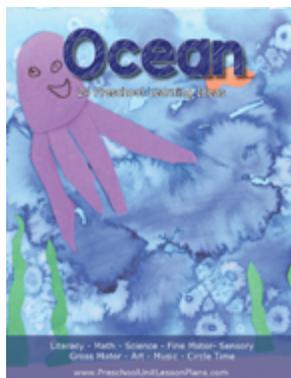
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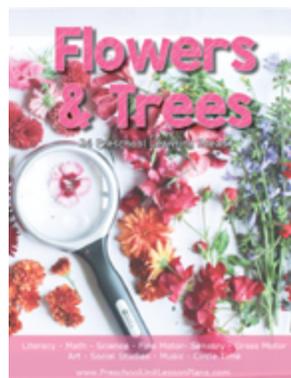
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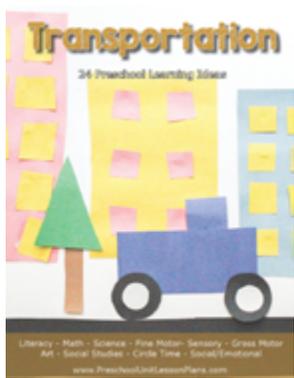
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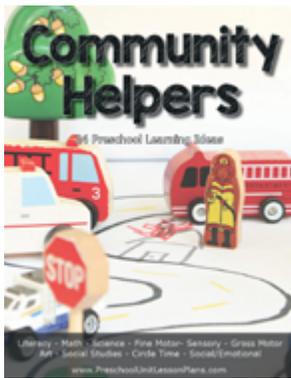
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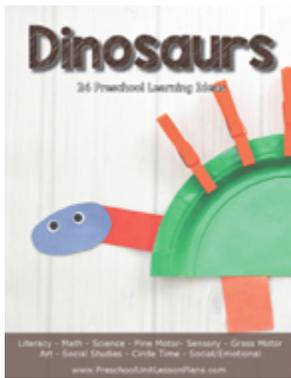
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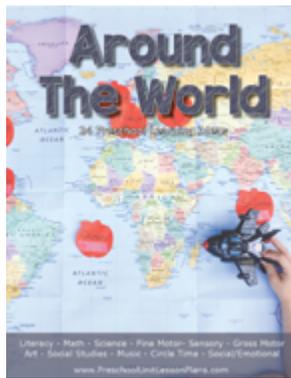
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Dinosaurs



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Summer

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Introduction

From mastering the letters of the alphabet to fine motor play, preschoolers are constantly learning about their world through hands-on activities. This book will provide lesson plans and hands-on activities centered around a specific theme. These are called thematic lesson plans.

Whether you are a parent, care-giver, or teacher, this book is easy to use. It is a guide to learning with a focus on interactive experiences. Each activity contains a learning objective, material list, and step by step directions.

How to Use This Book

First, page through the lesson plans to get a quick overview of the activities. Decide which activities would best fit the age and needs of the children in your care. Sort the activities into different days. It is recommended to read each book in the unit every day, but you may plan to focus and go more in depth on one book each day. When making your learning plan, consider alternating active activities with quiet activities to provide preschoolers with the opportunity to balance out the learning day. Add in open ended indoor and outdoor playtime activities. Use the list on the following pages for ideas. Thoughtful planning and interactive activities can make a learning day more enjoyable.

Gather the materials needed for each activity selected. Organizing materials ahead of time will allow you to focus on the play and learning without interruptions. Collect the books needed from the library, your own bookshelves, or purchase from a book store. Place the books and materials in large bags, containers, or a designated area. If you have toys or dress up items related to the theme set them in a basket and place them in the pretend play area for children to explore.

Finally, do the selected activities with the children. If the learning activity is too difficult or too easy, look for activity extensions and ideas for how to modify the activity to provide more support or to extend the learning. Feel free to make your own modifications to the activities as you know the children best. Most activities will take anywhere between 15 and 30 minutes to complete. Take the behavior cues from the children to assess if they are ready to move on or would like more time.

Indoor Playtime Activity Ideas

- Beach ball and laundry basket basketball
- Cars in cardboard box tunnels
- Painting and coloring
- Making music with instruments
- Pretending with dolls
- Playing dress up
- Puzzles and board games

Outdoor Playtime Activities

- Sidewalk chalk
- Tossing and catching balls
- Three-wheel riding toys
- Scooping and pouring in the sandbox
- Water exploration with cups
- Swinging and sliding

Spring

Concepts:

Rain, flowers, garden

Recommended Reading:

The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle
Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt by Kate Messner
The Reason for a Flower by Ruth Heller
When Spring Comes by Kevin Henkes
Who Likes Rain? by Wong Herbert Lee

Recommended Songs:

Stop & Smell the Roses by Greg and Steve
Five Little Ducks
Way up in the Sky
If All the Raindrops

Activities at a glance:

Literacy:

Letter Flowers
Flower Petal Name Building
G is for Garden, D is for Dirt
Spring Words

Math:

Flower Counting Activity
One to One Flowers
Growing Plants
Flower Patterns
Counting Raindrops

Science:

Celery Experiment
Parts of a Plant Craftivity
Why Do Ducks Stay Dry? Experiment

Art:

Process Art with "Rain"
Rainbow Collages

Fine motor:

Spring Blossoms
Two-Dimensional Shape Bird Feeders
Nature Cutting Tray

Sensory:

Rainy Spring Sensory Bin
Down in the Dirt Discovery Bottle
Flower Playdough

Gross motor:

Rain Drop Catching
Alphabet Flower Jump

Music:

Five Little Ducks
Rainstick Instrument Craft

Letter Flowers

Book based on:

The Tiny Seed

Skills targeted:

Literacy, phonics

Materials:

- Printable
- Scissors
- Cardstock



How to:

Incorporate spring flowers into a fun letter matching activity! This printable activity offers children a chance to match upper and lowercase letters and use fine motor skills by placing the petals in the correct location.

Print and cut out the petals that are in color. These can be laminated to increase durability.

Gather the flower petals in a basket and offer them to the child to match on the given printable. For extra fun, make up a story to go along with the activity ("Oh no! A big, strong wind blew all these petals off of this flower! Can you help match the petals to the right place on the flowers?")

Have children match one set of letters at a time. The uppercase letters are all on the seeds, while the lowercase are on the petals. Say the capital letter that is in the middle of the flower on the seeds. The child can then find the corresponding petal with the letter in lowercase. Have the child make sure to say the name and sounds of the letters as they are placed.

Modifications / extra ideas:

It may be beneficial to add Velcro to the flower bases and the petals. This way the petals will not move or get lost as easily. This could also become an activity that is taken on the go as a busy bag activity.

To promote upper arm strength, consider taping the papers vertically on a wall or refrigerator. As children place the petals on the paper, they will also be strengthening their upper arms and exploring the activity on a new level.

Adapt:

To make the activity more challenging, the child could begin to draw or write words that begin with the letter on the flower.

Petal Name Building



Book based on:

The Tiny Seed

Skills targeted:

Literacy, fine motor

Materials:

- Piece of paper with child's name
- Flower petals

How to:

Children naturally love working with their own names. This pre-writing activity encourages children to work on letter recognition. While spelling their names, children will gain fine motor practice.

To prepare the activity, write each child's name on a sheet of paper using very large letters so that there is plenty of space to place the flower petals.

After reading *The Tiny Seed*, tell the children that they will get to pick flowers of their own. Go outside and allow children to gather their favorite flowers. Picking flowers is another great fine motor activity. It will build excitement for the craft at the same time.

Remove the petals from the flowers and gather them in a container. Put the petals next to the name papers. Encourage the children to use the flower petals to cover up their names working on one letter at a time. Practice letter recognition and count how many letters in their name the child already knows. Talk about the letters with lines and curves. Which letters look similar and which are different?

Once the child is finished, he or she should put the flower petals back in the container for the next child to use. An alternative is to have the child glue the flower petals to their name.

Modifications / extra ideas:

Write the child's name on contact paper and have the child add flower petals just as above. Put another layer of contact paper on top of the flower petals. The flower petals need to be "sandwiched" between the laminating sheets or contact paper. Place the names with flower petals up in the window for the light to shine through.

Adapt:

Children who are ready to write can work on letter formation. Point out to them that the letters should start at the top. Feel free to add arrows to help direct them for correct letter formation.

G is for Garden, D is for Dirt

Book based on:

Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt

Skills targeted:

Literacy, fine motor skills

Materials:

- Green construction paper
- Brown paste board (from cereal boxes) or construction paper
- Scissors
- Garden themed stickers or stamps
- Glue
- Dirt



How to:

What is up in the garden and down in the dirt? Children will explore garden vocabulary while learning the letter names and sounds for G and D in this interactive storybook activity.

To prepare the activity, cut a large capital letter G for each child out of the green construction paper. Cut a large capital letter D for each child out of the brown paste board.

Prior to reading, invite children to share if they have ever visited a garden. Read *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner.

Explain to the children, "The G says /G/ like we hear in the beginning of the word garden. /G/ Garden." Up in the garden, seeds are planted which grow into plants. Some of these plants are flowers, some are vegetables, and some are weeds. Say, "Today we are going to make a letter G and decorate it with things you find up in the garden."

Give each child a letter G. Ask, "What is the letter name? What sound does it make?" Provide the child with the garden themed stickers and stamps. Allow them time to create their letter G.

Re-read the story *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*. Invite children to discuss what living and non-living things are found in the dirt. Explain to the child, "The D says /D/ like we hear in the beginning of the word dirt. /D/ Dirt."

Down in the dirt are roots and roly-polly bugs. Then, grab the glue and letter D's and head outside to an area with dirt.

Give each child a letter D. Ask, "What is the letter name? What sound does it make?" Show them how to squeeze glue on their letter D and sprinkle dirt on top. Provide the child with time to complete their letter D. Set flat to dry. Shake the excess dirt off outside. Let dry completely before hanging.

Modifications / extra ideas:

Need a spring bulletin board idea? Cover the top half of the board in blue for the sky. Cover the bottom half brown for the ground. Place the decorated G's on top of the blue like plants and the decorated letter D's in brown area like roots. Add in a title, "Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt."

Spring Words



Book based on:

When Spring Comes

Skills targeted:

Vocabulary, making a list, identifying beginning sounds

Materials:

- Cut Sentence strips
- Markers
- Sentence strip chart

How to:

"When spring is finally here to stay, you will know it!" Making a list of spring themed words from the storybook helps children develop a strong vocabulary base and introduces the concept of beginning sounds.

Take children on a spring walk through the pages of Kevin Henkes delightful book *When Spring Comes*. While reading the book, encourage children to listen for words that tell about spring. Stop at the winter page in the beginning and ask children to describe what they see. Stop reading again on a bright colored spring page. Ask children to again to tell you what they see. Compare the two seasons.

Go back to the page at the beginning of the book with pink blossoms on the tree. Read the sentence, "But if you wait, spring will bring leaves and blossoms." Ask the children, "What will spring bring?" The child will answer leaves and blossoms.

On the top of the chart write the title Spring Words. While writing the word leaves on the sentence strips say, "I am going to write the word leaves. What sound do you hear at the beginning of the word." Then say the word leaves slowly. If the child says, /l/, say, "That's correct. The sound /l/ is at the beginning of the word leaves. If the child does not identify the sound, repeat the word. Say, "Listen to the sound at the start of the word /l/ leaves." Show the child, "The /l/ is written like this." Then write an l. Say, "I'll add more letters to make the word leaves." Write the word leaves and sketch a quick picture beside the word to give

children a picture clue. Point to the word, "This is the word leaves." Have the child point to the word and read it.

Suggested words for the Spring Word List

leaves
blossoms
green
flowers
eggs
babies
growing
sun
rain
mud
puddles
umbrellas
worms
wind

Modifications / extra ideas:

No sentence strips? Make a spring word list on any paper big or small.

To connect writing into this vocabulary development activity, have them select a few spring words and illustrate a picture to represent the words. Encourage advanced learners to label the beginning sounds for each illustration. For a week long writing activity, select one spring themed word every day to write and illustrate on one sheet of computer paper. Collect the papers daily and assemble into a homemade book for children to read.

Flower Counting

Book based on:

The Tiny Seed

Skills targeted:

Math, fine motor, art

Materials:

- Colored craft sticks
- Silk flowers (not the stems, just the flowers)
- Craft foam blocks
- Glue
- Numbers 1-10 (or you can write your own on pieces of paper)



How to:

This flower activity will inspire creativity as the children help make the flower sticks. They will work on building fine motor and counting skills.

Read the book *The Tiny Seed*. Talk about how the seeds travel. Discuss what seeds need to grow once they land.

Explain to the children that today they are going to make their own flowers and use them in a counting activity. Let the children choose the flowers and sticks. Instruct them to glue the flowers at the top of the sticks. Let dry.

Start with placing one foam block on a tray along with all of the flower sticks that the children made. Place the numbers in a bowl next to the tray. Have one child at a time work on this activity. Instruct the child to pull a number out of the bowl and place that many flower sticks into the foam block, so that the flowers can stand on their own. This takes some fine motor work to press the flower stick into the foam block, as there may be a bit of resistance.

Remove the flower sticks from the foam blocks and pull another number out of the bowl. Count that many sticks and push them into the foam block. Now add a second block to the tray. Invite the child to count that many flower sticks and place them on the second foam block. Count how many are on each foam block. Now count how many total flower sticks are on both foam blocks. Let each child have a turn.

Modifications / extra ideas:

This activity can be done with playdough using the same concept. Create a mound of playdough. Pull a number out of the bowl and add that many flower sticks to the mound.

Follow the flower counting activity by taking a walk outdoors with the children and count the flowers that are seen along the way.

Adapt:

Younger children will simply enjoy pushing the flower sticks into the foam block and removing them over and over again.

Ask children to remove a certain amount of flowers. This introduces subtraction.

One to One Flowers



Book based on:

The Reason for a Flower

Skills targeted:

Math, fine motor

Materials:

- Provided printable
- Dot markers or circle label stickers
- Insect counters of any type

How to:

One early math concept that children work to master is one-to-one correspondence. This means that they count one number per one object (versus saying two or three numbers while touching a single toy, which is a common practice of young children). One-to-one correspondence can be practiced in preschool with activities that require a child to match items one to one.

Make a copy of the flower printable for each child. After reading the book *The Reason for a Flower*, show one of the papers and ask the group of children to count the flowers together. Model pointing to each flower slowly while counting accurately.

Give each child his or her own paper. Using dot stamp markers, children will stamp each flower only once in the middle. Demonstrate how to gently and evenly use the stamp markers. Round label stickers could also be used for this activity. After the flowers all have a center, ask each child to count them independently by touching the colored center. Help any child that needs assistance.

Next, provide insect counters, erasers, stamps, or stickers. Remind children that the insects in the book helped to pollinate the flowers by landing on them. Again, challenge the children to select and put only one insect on each flower.

Children can count the insects as they place them on the flowers and again when they remove them. Remind them that the number of insects should equal the number of flowers!

Growing Plants

Book based on:

The Tiny Seed

Skills targeted:

Science

Materials:

- Seeds
- Soil
- Container
- Water containers with pipettes



How to:

One of the most beautiful aspects of life is watching something grow. When children are a part of helping plants grow they experience this first hand. Children not only learn about science but they also learn to care for something and to nurture it.

After reading *The Tiny Seed*, retell the story without the book. Ask the children to chime in and to help explain what happened to the seed. Then tell them that they will grow a plant of their own.

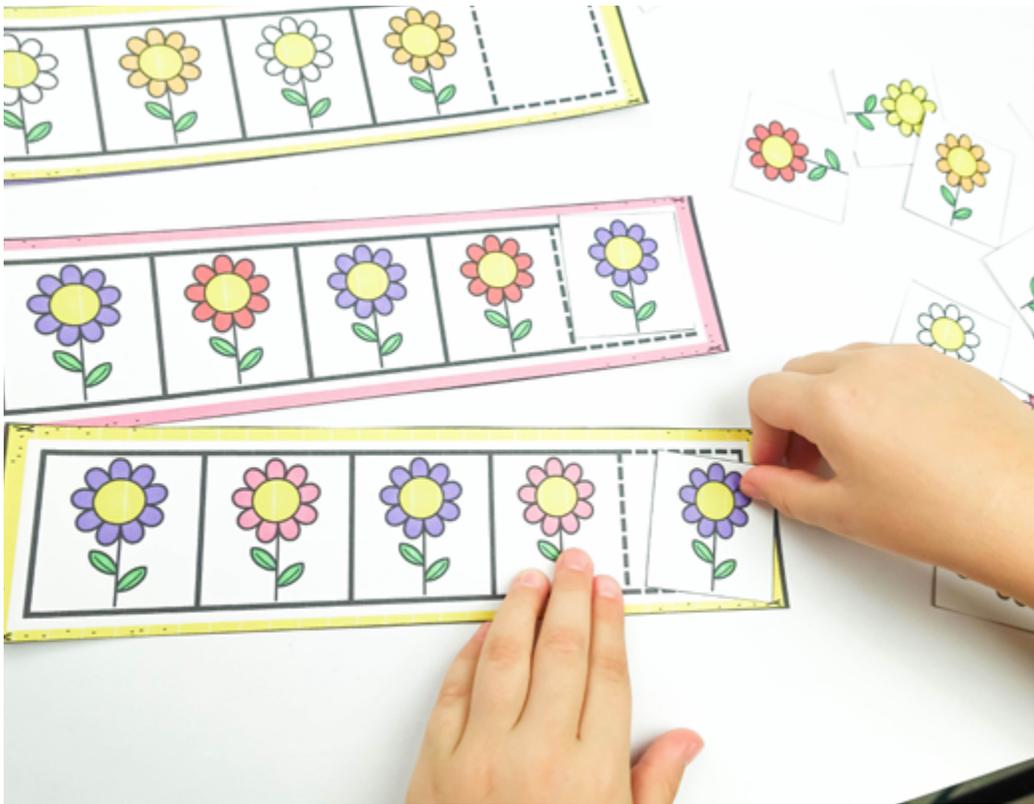
Growing a plant can be a simple process or it can be large scale as well. There are many ways to grow plants. To do this simply and easily, take some seeds, such as lima beans and place them in a plastic bag with cotton balls. Then tape it to the window and water them. After a few days, sprouts will appear.

Another simple way to grow plants is to grow grass seed. Find a small pot or even a plastic cup. Put soil in it then put grass seed in. Have the children use pipettes to water the soil each day. By using pipettes, there is little worry of it being overwatered. In about a week, grass will have grown.

If there is space for a planter or a garden, this is also another wonderful way to grow plants. Have the children take part in planting the seeds and watering them. Plant growth can take place over a few days in a place such as a greenhouse or in a bag taped to the window. The process can take longer in a cup or a garden.

Children can measure plant growth. This can be done with a ruler or with a craft stick. The children can draw a line to where the plant is every day on the craft stick. Another way to document is through photographs. Pictures can be taken every few days and printed out to compare how much the plant has grown.

Flower Patterns



Book based on:

The Reason for a Flower

Skills targeted:

Math, sequencing, color

Materials:

- Printable
- Scissors
- Cardstock

How to:

Completing patterns or sequences is fantastic for visual perception, visual motor skills, cognitive skills as well as fine motor skills. This can also help children learn colors or numbers (depending on how the game is played).

Print and cut out the cards provided from the printable. You can also optionally laminate each piece to help the set to last longer and last for multiple uses.

Layout the sequence cards with a pile of the extra cards on the side. Choose one sequence card at a time. Point to the flowers on the cards one by one and read the color or have the child name what is in the square. "Purple flower, pink flower, purple flower, pink flower, what do you think comes next?" The child will then answer and select the card from the selection.

Modifications / extra ideas:

This can be done without the direct assistance of an adult as well.

A piece of Velcro could be added to the blank square of the sequence strip as well as the back of the flower cards. This will help keep the pieces from falling or getting lost.

With the Velcro, this is a fantastic activity for the car, in a waiting room or at a restaurant.

Adapt:

The challenge can be increased on this activity by adding numbers to the patterns. If the cards and strips are laminated this can be done with dry erase markers or crayons.

Counting Raindrops

Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Math

Materials:

- Printable
- Scissors
- Cardstock
- Gems or any other manipulatives



How to:

This printable activity is easy to set up and work on during rainy (or non-rainy) spring days! It benefits children by encouraging number recognition and math equations. This activity also encourages fine motor skills and hand eye coordination.

Print the provided printables and cut them into separate cards. To extend the life of the cards, lamination is suggested. This will also allow dry erase markers to be used on the cards as well.

Each card features a different number, place to write out the number, and rain drops to help children count out the number. Allow children to become familiar with each card before starting the activity. Examine the pictures at the bottom of the cards, count the total cards available, trace the numbers with their fingers, etc.

After children become familiar with the cards, supply them with gems or other small manipulatives for counting. Have the child count the gems as they place them into the rain drops on each card.

Modifications / extra ideas:

If you have laminated the cards, the child may use a dry erase pen or marker or crayon to trace the numbers on the card. If manipulatives are not available, dry erase markers can be used to mark each raindrop.

Adapt:

These cards can be used as for simple math equations as well. Set the cards up and ask the child to add them together or subtract one from other. The equation and answers can be written on separate piece of paper or just spoken.

If children are ready to practice writing the letters that spell out each number, this can be done on a piece of paper using the cards as a guide. It can first be done with a dry erase marker and then on the paper.

Celery Experiment



Book based on:

Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt

Skills targeted:

Science, observational skills, language development

Materials:

- Celery
- Clear jar
- Food coloring
- Water

How to:

Celery experiments are a perfect preschool science activity. Children enjoy observing the changes that occur. Seeing the visual changes in the celery as the bold colors appear helps preschoolers understand what is happening to water within plants. This simple experiment is a terrific way to introduce children to the scientific method.

To start the experiment fill three clear jars 1/3 full of water. Add several drops of one color of food coloring to each jar and mix. Pull apart celery and cut the bottom diagonally. Try using the leafy center stalks of the celery to demonstrate the most colorful transformations. Place stalks of celery into the colored water and set out where children can observe the changes.

Discuss with the children what they think will happen. What happens when they water the soil of a plant? Do leaves need water too or just the roots of the plant? How does the water travel from the soil into the plant? Where does it go? Record the children's predictions on a sheet of paper or offer each child a piece of paper to draw what they think will happen.

The color will begin to move through the celery and become visible within a few hours, but for the boldest colors it takes about 24 hours. Leave paper and crayons near the celery so children can record what's happening through their own drawings.

Once the colors are prominently visible revisit this activity with the children. Ask them the same questions again, using the colors in the celery to help them answer how plants take in and use water. Cut the celery stalks in half and let the children observe the areas of color change inside. This is where water travels through the plant.

Explain to the children that the areas of color are called xylem. These act as tiny tubes that draw the water up from the roots like a straw. The water is sucked up inside these tiny tubes and moves up to the leaves, the same way liquid moves through a straw when they drink from it. The water then evaporates very slowly through the leaves. Allow the children to draw observations of the celery stalks and compare to their other drawings or observations from the beginning of the experiment.

Parts of a Plant Craft

Book based on:

The Tiny Seed

Skills targeted:

Science, art

Materials:

- Small paper plate
- Green popsicle stick
- Green construction paper
- Brown shredded paper
- Glue
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Sequins
- Scissors
- Tape



How to:

Making crafts offers a great opportunity for children to practice fine motor skills and show their creativity. After reading the book *The Tiny Seed*, children will get a chance to learn more about flowers while creating a flower craft of their own! This flower craft will offer all the benefits of crafting while also learning about the basic parts of a plant.

Using either pictures or a real example, show the children the parts of a plant. These include the flower, seeds, stem, leaves, and roots. Discuss how each is needed to make the plant grow (Bright petals attract pollinators, stems transports water and nutrients from the soil, roots absorb water and nutrients from the soil, etc.).

To create the flower crafts, provide a small paper plate for each child. The children can paint it any color they wish. The paper plate will be the flower petals.

Next, have the children glue and sprinkle sequins onto center of the flower. These are the seeds. Pause here to remind the children that the bright petals are what attract pollinators, like butterflies and bees, to the flowers. The pollinators go from flower to flower which helps those flowers make seeds (just like the sequins they have on their flower crafts).

Tape the green popsicle stick to the back of the paper plate. This is the stem.

Provide leaves cut from construction paper or have the children cut leaves themselves. Glue onto the stem.

Add some glue to the bottom of the popsicle stick and press some brown shredded paper onto the glue. These are the roots. Review that the purpose of the roots are to absorb nutrients and water from the soil. The stem then brings it up to the rest of the plant!

Their flower crafts are now complete. Ask children if they can tell you what each part of the flower is for. Can they remember the information you shared through crafting?

Modifications / extra ideas:

Write the parts of a plant on paper and glue to the areas to label the flower.

Once dried, work on fine motor skills by snipping "petals" around the paper plate flower.

Why Do Ducks Stay Dry?



Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Science, sensory

Materials:

- Paper
- Vegetable oil in small bottle
- Water in a squirt bottle
- Surface that can handle water
- Clothes to wipe oil from hands

How to:

Why do ducks love the water so much? It is partially because the water never makes it to their skin. Let your preschoolers observe how oil blocks the water from the ducks' skin with this fun simulation that also serves as sensory play. This project tends to get a little messy and extremely wet so if possible take it outside.

Begin by giving each child just one piece of paper and access to a small bottle of oil. Let them pour a small amount of oil onto the paper and spread it around with their fingers. Explain as they are working that like the paper they are covering, duck feathers are covered in oil.

When they are finished spreading the oil, clean their hands. Pass out an additional sheet of paper to each child. Let them use the spray bottle on both sheets of paper. Encourage your preschoolers to spray lightly on each paper.

Take some time to notice how the water behaves on each paper. First, notice how the oil soaks into the paper that does not have any oil. That's what would happen to the duck feathers if they were not covered in oil. Now, look at the paper covered in oil. Notice how the water bubbles on top of the oil instead of soaking through. That is what actually happens to water when it comes in contact the ducks' feathers.

Have you ever seen a duck preening its feathers? This is when it stands in one place and runs its bill through its feathers. The purpose of this is to make sure the oil is spread out through all of its feathers.

Process Art with “Rain”

Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Fine motor

Materials:

- Blue Watercolor Paint
- Water dropper or pipette
- Watercolor paper
- Small bowl



How to:

Have fun creating a “rainy day” work of art using a few simple materials. No real rain is involved so children can stay dry!

Dilute blue watercolor paint in a bowl for the children.

Provide water droppers and show the children how to put the water dropper into the bowl of water and squeeze the top of the dropper to gather the blue paint. Squeezing the droppers is fantastic fine motor work for their little fingers!

Encourage the children to make “rain” on their paper by squirting blue paint all over the paper with the water dropper. Discuss what kind of rainstorm they are making. Are they squeezing hard on the dropper to make a downpour? Or are they squeezing softly and just making light showers? Observe what each looks like on their papers!

Once the children are finished, carefully carry the paper to a sink, outside, or to a trash can and tilt the paper up so that the water runs off the paper.

When it dries, the finished results will look like a rain storm!

Modifications / extra ideas:

Use other colors to create a colorful rainstorm.

Another option is to set this activity up on an easel and have the children squirt the water onto the paper from the top. Just don't forget to put something underneath the easel to reduce the mess.

If time allows, provide glue and cotton balls so the children can create rain clouds.

Rainbow Collages



Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Art, science, fine motor, color mixing

Materials:

- Contact paper
- Black construction paper
- Scissors
- Tissue paper (rainbow colors)

How to:

Children love making rainbows! The bright colors make them a favorite craft for springtime. These tissue paper rainbows are a bold craft that help children develop fine motor skills, learn about colors, and talk about what makes a rainbow appear. Hang them up in a window when the children are done for a bright and beautiful spring collage that looks like stained glass. They are sure to brighten any home or classroom!

Begin this craft by gathering supplies. Younger children may need help with the first part of getting the edging cut out and stuck to the contact paper, but all children can create these colorful rainbow collages.

To make the outer edge, or border, of the collage fold a piece of black construction paper in half and cut the center out, leaving about an inch wide strip which will be the edging of the collage. Unfold the construction paper and stick the border onto a large piece of contact paper. If these will be displayed in windows or on walls cut the contact paper a bit larger than the construction paper so that the excess can be used to adhere the collages to the window.

It is time to make the rainbows! After the outer edge is in place, let the children create their rainbow collages by cutting or ripping pieces of tissue paper and placing them onto the contact paper in a rainbow pattern.

While they are making their project ask the children when they see rainbows. When it's hot or after a rainstorm? Ask them what is needed for a rainbow to appear? Rain and what? It's the perfect time to talk with them about some simple rainbow science.

Some children will want to create a traditional rainbow and others may just want to place their colors anywhere. The great thing about this rainbow craft is that no matter how they place their rainbow colored tissue paper the end result still turns out looking beautiful with bold colors. Especially if the project will be displayed in a sunny window. It's sure to be a hit!

Spring Blossoms

Book based on:

When Spring Comes

Skills targeted:

Fine motor, art

Materials:

- Contact paper
- Brown paper
- Green, pink, and white foam
- Optional pre-cut foam flowers
- Scissors
- Tape



How to:

Children love working with things that are life sized! In this activity, children will have a chance to learn more about trees as they work with a child sized version right on their wall! This activity is excellent for developing upper arm strength, working on fine motor skills, and learning more about the parts of a tree.

Draw leaf and flower shapes on the foam. Cut leaf shapes from the green foam and flowers from the white and pink.

Cut a length of contact paper to fit your desired area. Peel a small section of backing off to expose the contact paper. Tape the top of the contact paper to the wall (or other surface) then peel the rest of the backing off and tape the bottom down.

Tear bits of brown paper and twist to form a trunk like structure and stick to the contact paper. Do the same for the branches.

Place the leaves and flowers in a basket or similar container and ask the child to decorate their spring tree. As they decorate talk about the parts of the tree they are interacting with: the trunk, branches, flowers, leaves. Talk about what each part of the tree is for (the trunk carries nutrients and water from the roots to the rest of the tree, the leaves capture sunlight for growth, etc.)

Incorporate math skills by counting how many flowers they are using. How many leaves?

Modifications / extra ideas:

Use this tree over and over again with different seasons!

The foam can be put on and taken off of the contact paper as well.

Adapt:

Children can help tear the brown paper as well.

For more of a challenge, cut the parts of a flowers and tree separate and have the child put them on the contact paper separately.

Shape Bird Feeders



Book based on:

When Spring Comes

Skills targeted:

Sensory, math

Materials:

- Large Craft Sticks
- Scissors
- Glue
- Peanut butter
- Paper plates
- Bird seed
- Scissors
- Yarn or chenille stems (pipe cleaners)

How to:

After reading the book *When Spring Comes* by Kevin Henkes, celebrate the beginning of spring by creating two-dimensional shape bird feeders.

To begin this activity, children will glue large craft sticks into different two-dimensional shapes such as a square, triangle, rectangle, pentagon, and hexagon. For the rectangle, they may need to cut the craft sticks with adult supervision.

After the glue dries, children will use another craft stick to spread peanut butter or almond butter on the craft stick shapes.

Spread the bird seed onto a paper plate. Press the craft stick shapes with the peanut butter side down onto the plates. Carefully lift the bird seed covered shape up and place it onto another paper plate.

Children will then cut a piece of yarn or chenille stem (pipe cleaner) and tie it around the bird feeder. After they have finished creating their two-dimensional shape bird feeders, they can hang them around the playground or yard.

This hands-on activity is a fun way to practice creating different two-dimensional shapes out of craft sticks and turning them in bird feeders. Children can also use their bird feeders to bird watch and record the different types that they see where they live.

Modifications / extra ideas:

To extend this activity, challenge children to create three-dimensional shapes such as a cube or rectangular prism out of the craft sticks. They can then turn their three-dimensional craft stick shapes into bird feeders.

Adapt:

For children who haven't developed their fine motor skills or hand muscle strength yet, they may need help cutting and gluing the craft sticks together. They may also find it easier to spread the peanut butter on with their fingers or dip the sticks into a large container of peanut butter.

Nature Cutting Tray

Book based on:

The Reason for a Flower

Skills targeted:

Fine motor

Materials:

- Child safe scissors
- Various parts of a flowers (stems, leaves petals)



How to:

As adults, we cut more materials than just paper (we cut herbs for cooking, fabric for sewing, yarn for crafting, etc.) Likewise, children should practice cutting materials besides paper as well. This activity will give children a chance to learn about the parts of a flower as they practice using fine motor movements and scissor skills.

Gather pieces of plants and flowers in a tray along with child safe scissors. Allow children to approach this tray in an open-ended manner. They could snip delicate flower petals, cut the veins from leaves, trim stems, etc. As they work, they will be practicing different ways to hold each material to effectively cut it. Stems are rigid and can be held firmly at the base while they trim pieces from the top. Petals are flimsy and need to be pinched close to the spot where they will be snipping.

Discuss the parts of the flowers they are cutting and what the purpose of each part is ("I see you're cutting the stem of the flower. What do you think stems help flowers do?") Use compare and contrast words to draw attention to similarities and differences of the items in the tray (these leaves are smaller than the ones on the white flower. Can you find the largest leaf on this tray?")

As they cut, children will also get the benefit of a sensory experience! The sweet scent of flower petals, the earthy smell of stems, and the grassy smell of leaves are all pleasant bonuses to this fine motor activity!

Modifications / extra ideas:

After children finish cutting the items in the tray, the leftover pieces can be placed in a bin of water for a sensory activity (students can make perfumes and potions while practicing pouring water).

Rainy Spring Sensory Bin



Book based on:

When Spring Comes

Skills targeted:

Sensory, circle time, fine motor

Materials:

- A water bin
- Cotton balls
- Plastic cups

How to:

This rainy spring sensory bin is a fun way to strengthen fine motor skills while learning about rain and how it benefits plants during the spring. Poke holes in the bottoms of the plastic cups. Fill the bin with water and add cups and cotton balls.

Gather children at circle time and read the book *When Spring Comes*. Have wet cotton balls and a tray handy. Talk about the importance of rain as seeds are growing into new plants during springtime.

Ask the children if they've ever wondered what makes rain. Explain that clouds form when the air holds lots of water droplets. If a lot of water droplets gather in the clouds, the water droplets fall as rain. Demonstrate this by squeezing the wet cotton balls over the tray so that water falls.

Ask the children to create the sound of rain with their hands tapping the floor. Make them tap slowly and make them tap quickly. Now have them stand up and act like flowers moving back and forth as the rain is falling. How do the plants feel as the rain is dropping on them? Now tell them the sun is out and they are spring flowers looking up at the sky, drying out. Remind them that plants need rain and sun.

Explain to the children that they are going to make their own rain in the sensory table. Invite them to pick up the cotton balls from the water and squeeze them. Then show the children how they can put the wet cotton balls in the cup and press down, forcing the water out and through the

holes. What does it sound like when the drops hit the water in the sensory bin? Keep the bin available for several days, allowing the children to return and explore some more.

Modifications / extra ideas:

Take a rainy weather walk with the children. How does it feel having the rain falling on them? What do they hear as the rain hits the ground? Can they smell the rain? What if they open their mouths and taste the rain?

Discovery Bottle

Book based on:

Up in the Garden, Down in the Dirt

Skills targeted:

Sensory, fine motor

Materials:

- Empty plastic bottle
- Soil
- Insect toys
- Glue
- Funnel



How to:

The book *Up in the Garden, Down in the Dirt* does a fantastic job depicting to children all the activity that is happening in our gardens and backyards even when we may not notice. After reading the story, gather children to recall the critters in the story that were down in the dirt. What were they doing there?

Explain that you're going to create a Down in the Dirt Discovery Bottle together. You can make one for the group or one for each child.

Using a funnel slowly add a small scoop or spoonful of potting soil to a clear and clean plastic bottle. If children are eager to help, they may take turns. A long and narrow tool such as a chopstick is helpful in pushing the soil down in well. Avoid packing the dirt in too tight or adding too much. Stop when the bottle is about $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

Next add insects! You can find craft foam bugs, insect erasers, buttons, counters, or other small items that will work well for this project. Again, kids will love to take turns dropping insects into the bottle if making one collaboratively.

Leave about an inch of air at the top of the bottle. Glue the lid on. Show children how they can gently roll the bottle to look down in the dirt. What insects do you see? You can write and draw the ones you find or create a checklist for a fun searching game. This bottle is a great circle time or science center activity!

Flower Play Dough



Book based on:

Reason for a Flower

Skills targeted:

Sensory

Materials:

- Divided tray
- Play dough
- Parts of a flower (leave, stems, petals)

How to:

Manipulating play dough is a great way to develop fine motor strength. While children knead, roll, pinch, and mix dough they are developing finger dexterity which will in turn promote skills such as writing and cutting. Play dough is also a great open-ended material that can be mixed with many different items to spark creativity and imagination.

Offer children an open-ended opportunity to feel, smell, and manipulate the parts of a flower up close. Mixing petals and leaves with play dough is a great way to talk about the parts of a plant while inspiring creative play at the same time!

To set up this invitation to play, place a large ball of playdough in the center of a divided tray. In the surrounding wells, place parts of a flower including (but not limited to), leaves, stems, and petals.

Children should have the freedom to play with the materials in the tray in fun and creative ways. They may choose to mix the petals up in the dough, use the petals combined with dough to create flowers, manipulate the dough alone to form bouquets, etc. Children will have lots of different ways they want to play with this set-up. Appreciate each of their creative spins on it! Take some time to play with them making sure to reinforce new vocabulary words found in this learning unit.

Recipe for Homemade Playdough:

1 cup of flour
1 cup of water
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
½ cup salt
1 tablespoon of oil
Food coloring, powdered tempera paint, or liquid watercolors (for color)

Stir all ingredients together and cook over medium-high heat for 5 minutes. Use food coloring, powdered tempera paint, or liquid watercolors to dye the playdough. Add as much as desired to get the right color. Allow time for the dough to cool before kneading. This recipe makes enough for 4 students. Store in an airtight container.

Rain Drop Catching

Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Gross motor, sensory

Materials:

- Plastic cups or clean metal cans without sharp edges
- Small beads



How to:

Reenact the fun of catching real rain drops like the little girl in *Who likes Rain?* This activity develops gross motor coordination and provides fun sensory input as the bead rain drops clink at the bottom of the can.

Give each child an empty metal can. Stand in the middle of the room and toss the beads into each child's can. Let the children try to catch the "rain drops." Stop every few minutes and count the number of drops in the cans. Let the children take turns being the one who tosses the rain drops into the cans.

Once they have managed to catch some beads encourage your preschoolers to shake the can to hear the sound rain drops make as they fall. Shake the cans slowly to hear a slow drizzle and increase speed to mimic a faster rainstorm.

Change up the activity by using different sized cans. Do the "raindrop" beads sound different depending on the size of the container?

Modifications / extra ideas:

Place older children on two member teams and challenge them to see how many beads their team can get into the can with in one minute. This gives some great team work practice and encourages their counting skills.

Adapt:

For younger children, try using larger beads that will be easier to catch in the cans.

Alphabet Flower Jump



Book based on:

The Reason for a Flower

Skills targeted:

Gross motor, literacy

Materials:

- Construction paper
- Crayons

How to:

Embrace the joy of spring with this fun and easy alphabet gross motor game. Jumping and hopping works on gross motor skills while helping children get energy out.

Cut simple flower shapes out of various colors of construction paper and write a letter on each flower. The letters should be dark enough and large enough that they can easily be seen from a few feet away by young children.

Explain to the children that one of the ways to tell that spring has arrived is by the flowers that start blooming. Just as they saw in the book *The Reason for a Flower*, flowers come in various shapes, sizes, and colors. Flowers can start popping up as soon as the snow starts to melt or the temperature increases.

Spread the flowers out throughout the room and tape each one to the floor to keep them from sliding. Begin the activity by having each child pick a flower to stand on. Call on one child at a time and give them a letter to jump to making sure that the letter is within reach for the child.

Multiple rounds should be played so that each child has a chance to practice multiple letters.

Modifications / extra ideas:

Start with less letter flowers and add more in as the children increase their letter recognition.

Five Little Ducks

Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Music, math

Materials:

- Printable duck puppets
- Craft sticks
- Hot glue or tape



How to:

Put counting practice to music with this fun spring themed song. Adding puppets to a familiar number rhyme or song gives children a visual cue to use when practicing their counting skills.

To create the puppets, print and cut out each of the five individual ducks. Laminating is optional but will add durability. Using a hot glue gun, attach each of the duck puppets onto a colored craft stick to make them easier for small hands to hold without bending or crumpling.

Read the story *Who Likes Rain?* to the children. Ask if they remember what types of animals liked the rain. When the children recall the duck, sing the song *Five Little Ducks* while using the puppets to show the children how they can act out the song.

*Five little ducks went out one day, over the hill and far away.
Mama Duck said "Quack quack quack quack."
But only four little ducks came back.*

Each verse of the song continues with one less duck until finally none of the little ducks come back.

The final verse of the song after all of the ducks have gone missing is:

*Sad Mama Duck went out one day, over the hill and far away.
The sad Mama Duck said "Quack quack quack quack."
And all of the five little ducks came back.*

To act out the song with a group of children, give each child a turn at holding a puppet. Invite the children to pretend that their duck puppets are going over hills and walking long distances before having one child hide their duck behind their back at the end of each verse.

When the children reach the final verse of the song, have each of the five holding puppets bring their ducks back out of hiding.

Rainstick Instrument



Book based on:

Who Likes Rain?

Skills targeted:

Music, art

Materials:

- Cardboard tube
- Aluminum foil
- Rice
- Brown paint
- Craft stick
- Paper bag
- Tape or rubber bands
- Twine or yarn
- Scissors
- Feathers

How to:

Traditionally, a rainstick is a long, hollow tube that is partly filled with small pebbles or beans. It has small pins or thorns in a spiral on the inside surface. When it is turned upside down, the pebbles fall to the other end of the tube. The rainstick makes a sound like falling rain. No one knows the exact origin of the rainstick but many believe that it was invented by Chilean tribes in South America out of dried cactus.

To create a modern version of a rainstick, children will first paint a long cardboard tube such as a paper towel roll or shipping tube with the brown paint. To make it look like a piece of hollow wood, spread the paint with a craft stick instead of a paint brush.

After the paint dries, the children will roll out a piece of aluminum foil that is twice the length of the tube. They will scrunch it together and then twist it into a spiral like a spring.

Place the aluminum foil spring into the cardboard tube. They will then cut two pieces of the paper bag to cover each end of the cardboard tube and scrunch it up to look like cloth. They will attach one of the paper bag pieces to the end of the cardboard tube with tape or rubber bands. The children will then fill the cardboard tube with about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of rice. They will then attach the other paper bag piece to the other end of the cardboard tube.

As an option, children can decorate their rainsticks with twine, yarn, feathers or any other craft supplies. Children will finally turn their homemade musical instruments at different angles and explore the sound that their rainsticks make.

Modifications / extra ideas:

To extend this activity, children can experiment with different materials inside of their rainsticks such as pipe cleaners, wire, beans, and pebbles. They can predict the sound that the different materials will make and describe how the sounds vary.

Adapt:

For children who don't have the hand muscle strength yet, they may help attaching the piece of the paper bag to the cardboard tube with the tape or rubber bands. Additionally, they might need help tying the twine or yarn to the rainstick.