

Project Learning Tree Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood Lesson

Participant Name: Karen Reynolds

Current Teaching Situation: First Grade

Activity: Signs of Fall, Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood, pgs. 49-55 and Growing Up WILD, Looking at Leaves, pgs. 16 and 17.

Identify opportunities within current program or curriculum to integrate lesson plan: This activity will work well with our Fall theme in October.

Outline use of activity components: I would start this unit the beginning of October. I would use about 2 weeks to talk about fall and leaves and then go into the life cycle of a pumpkin for our 2nd theme in October. We have very limited time for Science/Social Studies so I will put these activities in during snack time, recess (leaf walk), and any other opportunities I can find.

1. KWL chart – See what children know and want to know about fall and leaves.

2. Vocabulary – autumn, fall, rustling, season, swirl, conifer, deciduous

Do a word web on a few words, especially fall so students can see the different definitions.

Modification – Some of these words can be acted out for my visually challenged students. Words such as rustling and swirl.

3. Read fiction/non-fiction books listed below and any others I might find that would go along with this unit.

Our Tree Named Steve by Alan Zweibel, Why Do Leaves Change Color? And What Are Seasons? both are A Just Ask book by Chris Arventis and Carole Palmer, The Fox and the Falling Leaves by Julia Rawlinson and Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert.

4. Go back to our classroom tree and take a picture of students by it. Have students observe to see if there have been any changes since visiting the tree in the summer.

Modification – Allow all students to touch and feel tree.

5. Have a Exploration Center with various leaves, sticks, bark, and nuts that I have gathered for this activity. Allow students to add to this collection also. Set out magnifying glasses and paper and crayons for students to investigate and do leaf rubbings.

6. Go on a leaf walk to the local Truro City Park. It connects to our school grounds so this is a safe easy walk for students. Give students leaf gathering bags and instruct them to be looking for leaves to make a “leaf man.” Have a prepared sample for students to see what you are looking for but also encourage creativity in their gathering and creating. Guide students as suggested in Autumn Adventure in Environmental Experiences book on page 50. While outside under tree sing Hanging on a Tree song.

Modification – Before our walk I will get miniature replicas of conifer and deciduous trees for visually challenged student to investigate. Also make sure all students have had a chance to visit exploration center.

7. After returning from walk treat students to a trail mix snack.

8. We would press leaves and let them dry a little and then make leaf men.

9. Some time after our Autumn Adventure students will dance to music using scarves and pretending to be dancing leaves. Use page 51 in Environmental Experiences to guide this activity.

10. Make squirrel puppets. Let students use them when exploring Exploration table.

11. Writing activity. On the day after our walk students will use the Observation Sheet found in the Growing Up WILD book on page 71 as their writing/journal activity for the day. Students will draw and write what they saw on our leaf walk.

12. Finish unit by sending home Family and Friends sheet found on page 55 of Environmental Experiences and going back to KWL chart and seeing what children have learned.

On this day students will write what they have learned in their journal using this paragraph frame.

Topic – Fall/Leaves

I learned a lot about _____ . One thing I learned is _____ .

Also I learned _____ . The most important thing I learned is _____ .

Description of Outdoor Exploration

We have a local city park right on the west side of our school grounds. We can walk there without even getting out on the street.

Students will have an opportunity to explore and investigate a small local park that has many trees. Students will be gathering leaves that have fallen on ground. They will also get the opportunity to lie down in the leaves and observe leaves falling! We'll take many pictures to be shared in the classroom newsletter.

Identify additional preparation need for exploration: I need to explore park on my own and check for safety issues before taking students. I'd review safety rules and expectations with students. I will take first aid kit and cell phone. I would notify office of time we would be gone. I need to gather paper sacks and write student's names on them so they can gather their leaves for "Leaf Man."

Draft 2 open-ended questions to encourage further student investigation:

What colors do you see in the leaves?

How do they feel?

How do they smell? What do they smell like?

Why do leaves fall to the ground?

What are some ways you can tell different leaves apart?

What changes do you see that tell us it is fall?

How has our tree changed since we visited it in the summer?

List activities that could be used as pre and/or post learning opportunities:

Pre- Learning Activities

KWL chart, vocabulary work, reading of fiction and non-fiction books, set up exploration center, revisit classroom tree and take picture again and make squirrel puppets.

Post-Learning Activities

Pressing of leaves and making "Leaf Man", Observation Sheet, Dancing Leaves activities, finish KWL chart, snack, Revisit classroom tree, send home Family and Friends sheet and finish journal writing.

Indicate any modifications you will make to the activity or components within: I have listed modifications above but also we would Braille journal entries for visually impaired student.

Identify local natural areas, parks, or guests speakers that could be included in activity:

Truro City Park, Truro, Iowa

List Standards/benchmarks/concepts that were met using components taught:

Science Essential Questions and Concepts

Science as Inquiry – 7

Life Science – 1, 2, 3

Earth and Space – 1, 2

Literary Essential Questions and Concepts

Reading – 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8

Writing – 1, 4, 6, 7

Speaking – 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8

Listening – 1, 2, 3