









Play & Learn Guide

Together We Grow!



Heartberry
Playschool

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Play & Learn Philosophy

Our Play & Learn Philosophy

Heartberry Playschool nurtures learning through play and a [Reggio Emilia](#)-inspired approach because of its **community** and **child-directed focus** that:

- **All children** are filled with **natural curiosity, bursting creativity**, and a **will to grow in their agency** and **relations with others**;
- The **environment** is a “**third**” **teacher**; and
- The **curriculum** is **emergent, inquiry-based**, and fosters **many ways of seeing** and **multiple ways of being**.

We do this through **PLAY!**

Play is a powerful and universal way to spark learning. Through play, children learn how to:

- Critically think (by observing, reflecting, asking questions)
- Problem-solve
- Build relationships with others
- Work collaboratively with others
- Express themselves
- Think creatively
- Develop communication skills
- Plus, many more life skills



In play, **children take the lead**.

As adults, we become **co-researchers** and **co-learners** in their discovery while creating a safe space and the freedom for children to explore their interests, take healthy risks, and grow in their confidence.

Play sparks joy and happiness. As kids play more, adults do too. As families play and learn together, we grow and thrive in a happier, more innovative, and inclusive community.

Together, we create life-long learners.



Anti Bias Goals

Heartberry Playschool is committed to providing an anti-bias environment for children, families, and adults. We believe that the diversity and uniqueness of each family structure, cultural identity, religious/spiritual beliefs, financial situation, and life experiences brings a richness to the Playschool. We practice the following goals in anti-bias education:

- 1. Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.**
- 2. Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; acute language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.**
- 3. Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.**
- 4. Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination.**

These four anti-bias goals were originally developed by [Louise Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Curriculum Taskforce, Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children](#).

Resource: [Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children by Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C Task Force](#)



WHY PLAY?



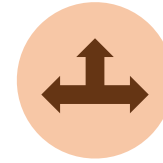
Play Fosters Brain Development

Our brains are making connections at an incredible pace between birth and five years old. As we get older, the connections that are not used are pruned away. A diverse play experience gives many opportunities to strengthen and maintain connections.



Play Sparks Curiosity

Play allows us to explore, experiment with concepts and materials, make mistakes, find solutions, and more. Through play we engage with children in a range of life experiences that they are working to make sense of. Curiosities lead us to wander; children can feel open to and safe to take risks with their learning because of the inherent joy and low-stakes nature of play. The connection between curiosity and joy builds a foundation for life-long learning.



Play Builds Divergent Thinking & Creativity

Play has spontaneity, leading to chances to build divergent thinking and creativity. We don't know what the future holds, but we do know innovation has always mattered. Play is a place to grow our innovator and problem solver identity.



Play Inspires Learning From Others

Every child comes with insights, experiences, skills, and other [funds of knowledge](#) to share that enrich each others' learning. Authentic opportunities for social-emotional learning are created as children interact, resolve conflict, cooperate, and comfort each other. This is when true collaboration happens—collaboration that challenges and changes.

And... Play is just FUN!



[How Children Develop Executive Function Skills Through Play](#)

[A Guide to Executive Function](#)

[Executive Function: What's Play Got to do with It?](#)



What Does a Reggio-Inspired Approach Mean?

Shortly after World War II, educator Loris Malaguzzi challenged the status quo in education for birth to six year-olds in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

The idea behind the philosophy was to create an environment of **peace, communication, collaboration** and **respect** for **young children** so that they may build a community of respect for the future generations.

Key principles of the Reggio approach that **we embrace**:



Image of the Child



100 Languages



Parent & Teacher as Co-Researcher, Co-Learner



Environment as Teacher



Children as Researchers



Community, Culture, & Collaboration



Re-Representing & Re-Visiting



Documentation

Image of the Child:



We believe in the rights, innate value, and contributions of each child. A child is a competent, capable, and natural researcher who has the desire for knowledge and is always seeking the next challenge. This image we hold informs how we engage and plan for our children. If we see children as citizens of our community, then we ask for their input. If we see children as capable, then we open up the world we're offering to include deeper challenges and bigger risks than what is often seen in childhood.



Tip: Write down 3-5 words that you believe about children and display them somewhere obvious. Use the words, the image of the child, to guide the day, activities, environment.



[Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins](#)

100 Languages



Children learn and express themselves in many different ways and it's important to offer multiple opportunities for them to explore, share, and express what they know. This can be through talking, singing, reading, writing, sculpting, painting, dancing, and other movement. We believe various ways to create and construct offers children multiple ways to learn. By offering multiple ways to engage, we understand our children better: what they like; what they know about a topic; or how they feel. Exploring an idea through different mediums and experiences such as clay, watercolor, and scavenger hunts for loose parts help children understand it from new perspectives and through new challenges.

Remember: We operate with bias and are culturally trained to value some forms of expression and behavior over others. The [100 Languages](#) can help keep us remain honest and accountable to all our children and families.



Tip: Children will not always have the words to tell us what they are thinking or feeling. Look to their behavior, body language, what holds their attention, who their preferred playmates are, what they come back to, and what they ignore/avoid. These indicators will show us what they like to do or that they are excited, stressed, tired, worried, comfortable, confident, etc.

Parent & Teacher as Co-Researcher, Co-Learner



Our biggest role is to be a partner and guide to children's discovery. We observe, we reflect, we hypothesize to help develop children's own questions and questioning skills – the 'what if' factor that can help propel learning forward. We are ready to be surprised. We look to sit in the unknown. We seek to be changed by what we learn.

As co-researchers, we must remember to de-center ourselves by checking our assumptions, biases, and preferences. We do research because we understand that we can't know how each child is going to engage with a material or what questions they're going to ask; we need to stay open-minded and embrace the discomfort of the unknown.

As co-learners, we share decision making, wonder, mistakes, and celebrations with children.



Tip: Document what children say. Observe, reflect, and be inspired by what you are learning from the children.

Sit on the floor; crouch to watch a beetle. Find ways to join a child's perspective. In this position, we are better equipped to offer new challenges and learning opportunities, and see the learning the child is directing on their own.

Environment as Teacher



What can we learn from the environment? How does it invoke wonder, beauty, and engagement for all children? How does the environment reflect all learners?

“Environment as a third teacher” is an idea that allows us to think critically about the environment we create and experience through hands-on activities so all children can learn.



Tip: Take a tour of your play space. It’s sharing a wealth of information that you may or may not intend. Think about the questions:

- Who belongs? Who matters? Who gets to make which choices? What kind of play is important?
- What is within reach for children? Can they get to what they need for their play?
- How do they see themselves in the space? How do they know they are a valued member of the community?
- Where can they go for comfort? If they want a grownup’s help? Or if they don’t?
- What is the environment inviting them to engage? Is it set up for open exploration? Or is set up for one particular outcome? Can they change it?
- How are roles and expectations known? What guides their understanding?



[Making Your Environment “The Third Teacher”](#)

Children as Researchers



Children are constantly exploring the world around them. This belief offers children endless possibilities and opportunities to be in charge and be a protagonist in their own learning. Adults and children invest in researching and collaborating together in order to be a part of each other's learning process. We care more about process of learning—thinking deeply, asking questions— than product.



Tip: Help deepen children's thinking by asking open-ended questions. If you already know the answer to the question you are about to ask a child, then double check that you really need to ask it. Assessment is important work for educators and caregivers but quizzing our children throughout the day is not respectful to the work they do and the relationships we want to have. "What do you see?" "What do you hear?" "What do you think?" can be a good starting place. Let go of assumptions so that you can get yourself onto the same page as the child.

Community, Culture, & Collaboration



It is essential that we make visible the fact that each child knows and understands that we are all different and can co-exist peacefully, and can grow in relationship with others (peers, adults, environment) For example, we embrace that we have different ways of thinking. By respecting other's processes and opinions we can better work across difference and get along as a community.



Tip: Use the following questions to support children's learning about difference when designing group activities:

- What aspect(s) of diversity can be part of this topic/activity?
- How can I use topic/activity to help children explore and enjoy the idea "We are all the same; we are all different"?
- What ideas, misconceptions, and stereotypes might children have about topic/activity?
- How can I design activities for topic/activity that includes all children given their differences in culture, family structure, language, racial identity, gender, abilities, and economic class?
- How can I use topic/activity to support and strengthen children's innate sense of justice and their capacity to change unfair situations to fair ones?

source: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2019/understanding-anti-bias>

Re-Representing & Re-Visiting



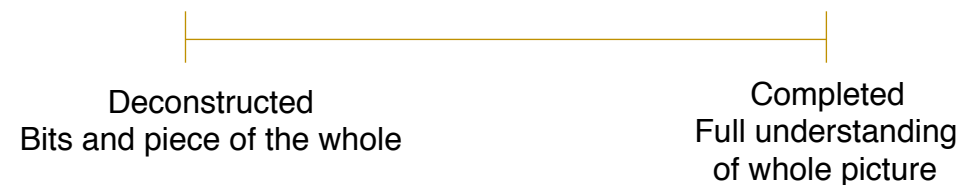
We deepen our understanding and mastery of skills by re-visiting and re-representing. Drawing a plan for a building is different from building a model. Taking photos of flowers is different from arranging them. Learning a dance is different from teaching it.

Using other tools and methods, besides language, to explore ideas allows for new ways of communicating, changes in perspective, and a more holistic approach to learning. As children build up their knowledge of and theories about the world, re-visiting a concept or material gives them chances to correct misunderstandings and better define what they are learning.

As educators and caregivers, we also get multiple chances to engage in meaningful conversations and experiences – it's not just one shot to get it right.



Tip: Imagine a spectrum where you have deconstructed on one end and completed on the other. Any exploration of a concept or skill will move along, back and forth, that spectrum. In the deconstructed direction, we're taking things apart to see the parts of a whole. In the other direction, we are adding layers and complications to create a deeper, more holistic, and complete understanding.



Documentation



Children share so many ideas and questions. Documenting the learning process with ‘artifacts’ of what children do, say, and are thinking in ways they see:

- Tells them that they are doing meaningful work
- Shows we respect them as valuable, interesting people
- Allows us to share in the discovery of their learning, and fosters conversations



Tip: Take lots of photos of play and learning in action. Display children’s work. Create “[learning stories](#)” by writing a story of their thinking and learning process unfolding and offer next steps. Make videos or audio recordings of ‘aha’ moments or ‘big’ findings.

Share with various audiences (children, teachers, families) to hear others’ perspectives and gain more context. When you share your documentation with the children – individually, in small groups, or whole group. Ask:

- *What do they remember about that moment or project?*
- *Do they want to do it again?*
- *What should be different next time? What should stay the same?*
- *What predictions do they have?*



[The Contribution of Documentation to the Quality of Early Childhood Education](#)



REFLECT

- What do you believe about children?
- What do social norms tell you about children? About adults?
- What feels vulnerable?
- How do we cultivate a culture that reduces inequalities and celebrates diversity (of identity, culture, skills, knowledge, etc.)?

“

Education is a right of all, of all children, and as such is a **responsibility of the community**. Education is an **opportunity for the growth** and emancipation of the individual and the collective; it is a resource for **gaining knowledge** and for **learning to live together**; it is a meeting place where freedom, democracy, and solidarity are practiced and where the **value of peace is promoted**. Within the plurality of cultural, ideological, political, and religious conceptions, education lives by **listening, dialogue** and **participation**; it is based on **mutual respect**, valuing the **diversity of identities, competencies**, and **knowledge** held by each individual and is therefore qualified as secular and open to **exchange** and **cooperation**.”

Source: “Indications, Preschools and Infant-Toddler Centres of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia”, 1.1 Education is a right, 2009.

Play is Emergent

What is Emergent Curriculum Design?

In many ways, Heartberry Playschool challenges us, adults, to bring our **inner child** closer to the surface and give ourselves **permission to be playful, interact with the unknown, get messy, and tune into all of our senses.**

Emergent curriculum is a **process** where the teacher (or parent-teacher) **responds to the skills, needs, and interests of their students** by **planning activities and projects**, and **then reflecting on the learning that is happening** in order to refine the next activities/projects.

At Heartberry, “lesson plans” are designed around a theme – an idea or topic that teachers and children can explore in many different ways. A **theme** opens up multiple “learning journeys,” allowing children to explore ideas in depth (re-representing and re-visiting) over a period of days, weeks or a month – really however long it remains engaging and meaningful to the children and teacher(s).

Successful emergent curriculum design means that teachers thoughtfully plan the environment, offering many visible choices for activities, based on the children’s needs, skills, and ideas that are meaningful to them.

The goal isn’t to make it through all of the offered themes. **The goal is to develop learning dispositions** like resilience, creativity and persistence, social-emotional abilities, and critical thinking. The skills that foster life-long learning. Whatever is meaningful to the children will create the engagement needed for opportunities to embed learning dispositions.

A reflective practice: Teachers document their observations and plan the next day(s) based on their observations of children. Here are some questions to reflect on based on your observations:



New Activities Sprout from Children:

As we observe and partner with children in play and take the time to document and reflect on that play, we evolve future activities from the questions children ask, verbally and in their actions, such as:

- Why are things different colors?
- What happens when I do it a different way?
- What kinds of homes do animals live in? What about people's homes?
- Why do plants need water? What else needs water?

We work to understand the perspectives and knowledge children share with us to build off their interests, questions, curiosities, strengths, and things they are self-motivated to work on.

Example: You have been exploring the topic of plants with the children. While outside playing in the dirt, are they:

- Mimicking planting (digging, burying something, watering)
- Pretending to be the bugs that live in the dirt or making homes for them?
- Engaging in the sensory aspect – smearing mud on their skin, watching water trickle, pressing dirt into piles?

If you notice children prioritizing bugs during play, then it is time to start writing down quotes, taking photos/video, recording conversations, and/or calling over a classroom-helper to observe alongside. Documentation will guide your next day's activities. You might:

- Decide to design a bug home in small groups, using loose parts (e.g. sticks, leaves, pinecones)
- Review your book selections to make sure fiction and non-fiction literacy materials on bugs are available (books, magazines, maps)
- Display photos of local insects inside and/or outside with simple information about them
- Check your dramatic play materials to encourage 'bug' play
 - for example: are there small places to crawl into; natural materials, like sticks, to play with; loose parts with colors that reflect nature; and/or shiny materials to mimic exoskeletons
- Introduce songs about insects at Morning Meeting or other group play times
- And a million other ideas!

The Art of Letting the Child Lead

Actions speak louder than words: As the adults, we are constantly modeling how to be through our actions. This will always mean more than what we tell children to do.

We walk a tightrope between keeping our children at the center, and being the gatekeepers with the resources and power to create the environment. Are we creating meaningful learning opportunities or setting up for an expected outcome? Do we want discovery or compliance?

We have a lot of questions, life experience, and ideas we want to share, but to cultivate an emergent, play-based experience there is **a subtle art of not interjecting**, in order to let the child lead and learn from their doings. An example:

We see a child building a tower; it's beginning to wobble. We can see where the unsteadiness is coming from; we want to say something; we just want to help!

Instead, this is a time to **quietly observe**. There are many possible learning outcomes from a moment like this (e.g. persistence and problem solving, processing frustration and disappointment). **By observing we are able to follow the lead of the child in front of us. We can better see their interests, and their struggles, and what to do next – how to really help.**

When we look to the child's lead, and welcome the ways to be quiet, we lean into curiosity. With curiosity, we let go of preconceived ideas of where to go next.

This may cause feelings of discomfort or uneasiness because we are being challenged on our biases or insecure about our abilities or purpose.

It may come up when exploring a material; it may come up when we hear a child exclude another; it may come up when we're in the middle of an activity and are being asked to pivot.

When we feel this, it is time to take a breath and trust your relationship with your children. **Stay curious.** Know that you have time to explore this idea and will come back to it again. No need to get it perfect the first time - that's why you make time for reflection and documentation!





Parts of the Day

Daily Schedule

Time	Event	Notes
8:30 am	Teacher arrives , sets up space	
8:45 am	Parent/Elderberry helper arrives , reviews activities and responsibilities for the day	
9:00 am	Children arrive	How can children help prep snack or Morning Meeting activity?
9:30 – 9:45 am	Morning Meeting , snack available	
9:45 – 10:45 am	Open Play (outside-inside)	Time for small groups; clean up before 11 am
11 am – 12:30 pm	Outside Play	Time for small groups
12:30 – 1:00 pm	Lunch	Inside or outside
1:00 pm	Children go home	
1 – 1:15 pm	Teacher & Parent/Elderberry helper reflection	
1:15 – 1:30 pm	Teacher wraps up/ planning time	

Morning Meeting | A Chance Each Day To Come Together

A time to build community, foster belonging, and focus on a concept together. A song to invite them to the dedicated spot helps start the transition. A greeting song that includes the children's names is a good next step. There are examples below, make them your own.

What stays the same each day?

- Transition song to invite everyone to join ([Everybody Have a Seat](#))
- Greeting song ([We've Been Waiting for You](#))

What is different each day?

- Book
- Songs/dances
- Conversations to follow up from a book or about an event or activity (previous, current, or future)
- Group decision making: how can you honor the majority and minority ideas in making decisions?
- Games that give a sensory experience or practice with another skill like inhibition or patterns
 1. Burrito game: wrap child in a blanket and use hands to add pretend ingredients
 2. Make a sandwich: each child adds pretend ingredients to their own "bread" (their body)
 3. Patting, clapping, stomping out patterns to copy and build on
 4. Guess what's in the bag - feeling an object in a bag or box and guessing what it is
 5. Group storytelling - each child has a chance to add to a made up story
- Teacher Theater is a tool where the adults act out a recurring conflict, issue, or question using props (e.g. dolls, animal toys) for group work on how to resolve it
- Wrap up options:
 - The children choose their next activity
 - Sing an ending transition song
 - Transition as group to next thing, like heading outside or to different area



Open Play & Small Groups

In open play, children have a long chunk (at least 45+ minutes if possible) of uninterrupted access to **loose parts**, **drama/pretend play**, **construction**, **sensory play**, and other opportunities for expression, such as art.

Sensory play: Any play that incorporates elements to engage the senses. Sensory elements heighten engagement, possibilities, and activate regulation systems.

Construction: Building on large and small scales using blocks of different sizes, cardboard boxes, ramps, and other materials.

Drama/Pretend Play: A place for children to play out daily life, different roles, explore bigger concepts that are playing out around them with different materials.

Loose Parts: Open-ended materials such as boxes, crates, sheets, pipes, log rounds, buckets, blocks, ribbon, sticks, rocks that children can adapt, move, design, and transform in many different ways.

Expression/Arts: An area to experiment with different mediums from clay to paint. Different materials and ways to use the medium are offered. For example, try painting with sticks, feathers or leaves.

These play stations/areas stay the same multiple days or a week. Providing access to materials over time gives children the chance to explore, practice a skill, make mistakes, and adjust. Changing things up once a week or every other week is a good pace, although some materials may be engaging to children for longer.

Small groups are a chance to:

- Focus on specific skill building
- Offer more teacher attention and one on one connection
- Bring together children who challenge each other for supported collaboration



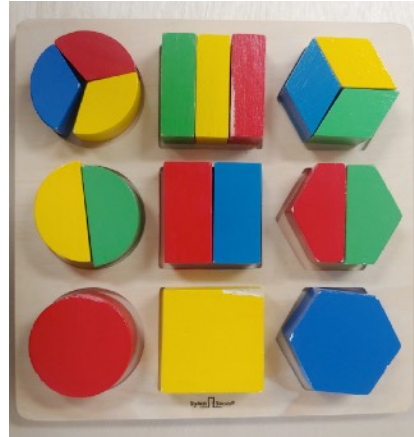
What are Loose Parts?

The purpose of loose parts is open-endedness. Mixing textures, colors, sizes, shapes, weight, and more gives children more chances to experiment and notice the details in the pieces. It also offers more accuracy to express themselves as authentically as possible.

For example, if you present the shape puzzle its tray (pictured right) then there is one way to do it, complete it, which could be useful and interesting. However, if you present the pieces loose in a basket along with the tray the possibilities of how to use them open-up, becoming endless. They could:

- be arranged back in their tray
- be blocks to build with
- a snack to make for a friend
- magical gems in an imaginary game

In all of these scenarios, the children are still engaging with the shapes, lines, and parts. They just get to come at it with their own meaning and intention.



Loose part possibilities:

- Caps/lids (e.g. from bottles, dried out markers)
- Stones
- Napkin rings
- Tile/carpet/paint samples
- Glass gems
- Pieces from games (poker chips, dice, player pieces)
- PVC pipes
- Buttons
- Mirrors
- So many more!

Outside Play & Field Trips

Being outdoors offers many benefits including, but not limited to, more space, connection to the natural world, varied sensory input, access to healthy risky play, inspiration to explore, and a sense of belonging in the community. Because of its diversity and open-endedness, children can often create the levels of risk and comfort that they seek, helping you create a more equitable environment for your students. Below are suggestions for outdoor activities to build on the children's exploration, play, and learning.

- **Scavenger Hunts:** Collect loose parts and build collections of things that are similar and different. Some possible clues: something the size of your thumb, something soft, something with a scent, something heavy, something that is [green].
- **Water:**
 1. 'Paint' scented water onto stone
 2. Mud kitchen with bowls, utensils, pitchers, and more!
 3. Spray bottles with water or paint onto fabric
- **Cause/Effect:**
 1. Catapults
 2. Ramps
 3. Swings
- **Balancing:**
 1. Rock towers
 2. Balance beams
 3. Fort building
- **Caretaking:**
 1. gardening
 2. fairy houses
 3. Observing and protecting insects

Field trips are a wonderful opportunity to connect with your community and meet your students' needs for new challenges or new connections with concepts. Going to local parks, beaches, neighborhoods, exhibits, or performances all can enrich learning and expand what children are exposed to. Exploring the community also honors the right children have to these common and neighborhood spaces. Regular visits allow for watching change over time and getting familiar with what stays the same.



Documentation & Reflection

Adults need the time together for reflection, preparation. We offer multiple perspectives and experiences. We can challenge each other and hold each other accountable so that personal biases are kept in check. We can help probe deeper into the learning we are seeing. We also will bring ideas and insights that surprise each other and widen our understandings.

We document and share observations in order to be responsive to the emerging interest of our children. Because we've taken the time to think and talk about what we've seen and heard, our next offerings are going to be more meaningful and authentic.

What does reflection and documentation look like day to day?

It really will depend on what the children and you are doing and what will make the most sense to meaningfully capture what's happening. Photos and quotes, videos or audio, notetaking in order to write a longer narrative piece, photos/copies/originals of children's work will all be helpful resources to come back to and review.

Reflection is valuable for both adults and for the children. There are many ways to reflect alongside your children, as well. For example:

- Post photos in their work spaces of previous work or even incomplete work
- Share videos to talk about what you see them doing and exploring; complement their efforts; ask questions to learn more
- Share artifacts like pictures or sculptures that children have made with individual children, small groups or the whole group

Build in reflection at the end of each day with the parent/elderberry-helper of the day.





Get Started: Themes & Activities

How To: Putting Together the Parts of the Day by Themes

Working from an overarching theme can be helpful in organizing your thoughts, ideas, observations, and questions.

It also helps us organize the different connections within the theme so we can respond to our children's play with meaningful threads. This structure really is more for us adults than for the children themselves.

An emergent curriculum plays out a bit like a game of catch, we toss ideas, challenges, discoveries to the children through the environment we create and materials we provide. They toss it back to us and we then reflect on what they have returned to us within the context of these larger themes, what we know about the children, and the learning goals we are aiming for. **Emergent means we are mapping the children's learning goals over their play and following the most meaningful path from there.**

Concepts and things we hope to teach like measuring, emotional regulation, phonics, and more exist across themes.

12 Themes

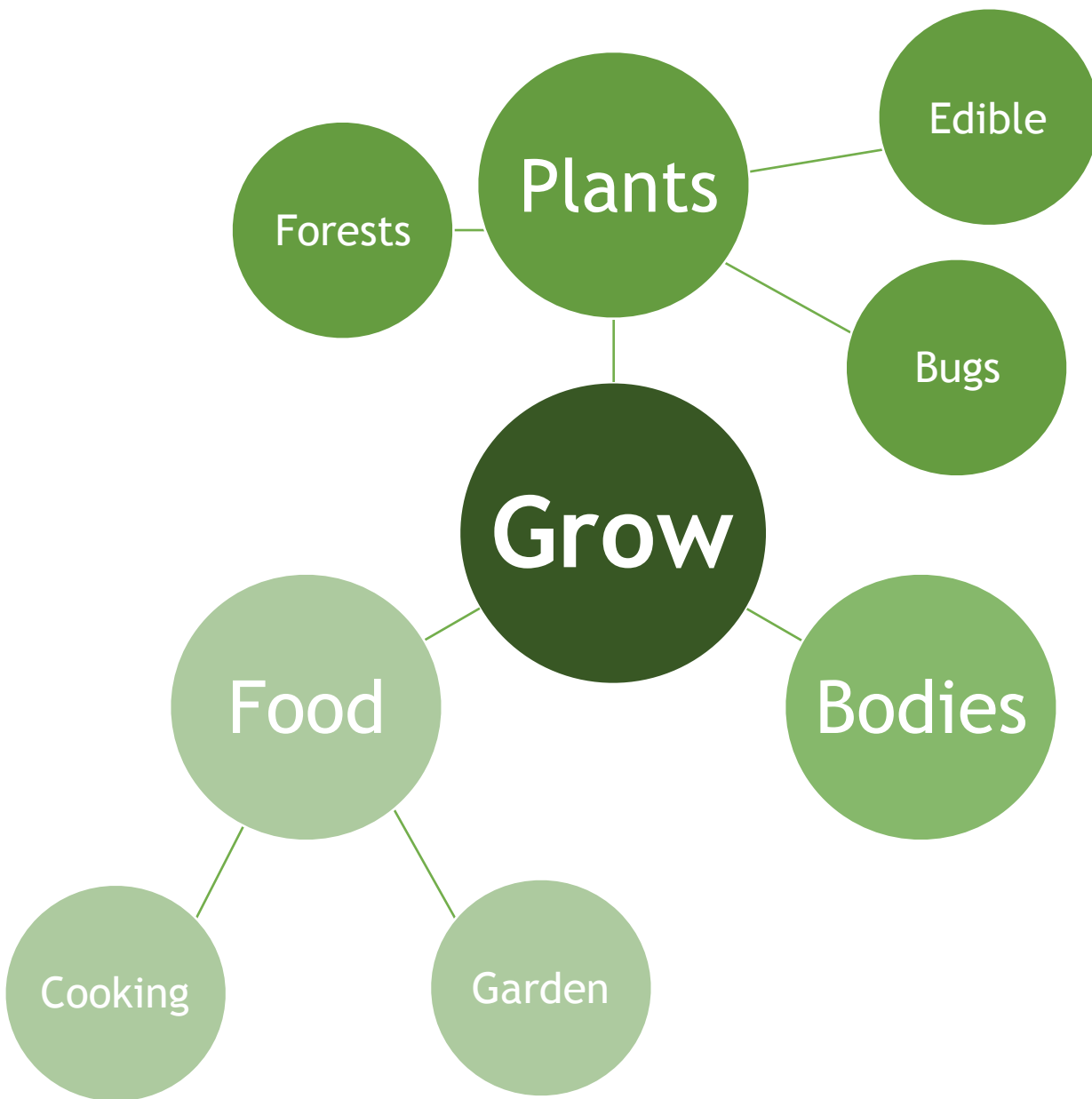
This section presents 12 themes, suggestions to support you in organizing your approach for the day, creating an environment for learning through play, and working to understand the play they are seeing. Suggested books and activities are included with each theme along with possible key learning concepts and/or skills.

Take the time to think about how these themes fit into your community - it is not the same for everyone.

These themes are here to help if you aren't sure where to start or need some inspiration. If you want to take it another way, please do!

If you don't see something written out (e.g. a specific on a sensory table/station) or have different key elements to your learning environment that's okay. These things should still be available, as it is meaningful, to your children.

Remember, not every piece has to exactly fit the theme at any given moment – **follow your students' lead and offer what they are asking for alongside.**



Grow | Growing

Where does your food come from?

What do you need to grow? What do plants need to grow?

How tall is a plant? A tree? How tall are you?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Grow**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Plants**.

As you and the children get into the play and investigation of a topic, you will see them tug on the threads that are most interesting and impactful for them.

Perhaps they can't stop talking about a camping trip in the woods, but you had plans for measuring the flowers growing in the garden. This is okay! There are many things you can keep revisiting as it relates to the theme of Grow.

Key Learnings:

Counting and measuring | garden, farm, and nature vocabulary | fruits and vegetables | colors | celebrations and traditions | time (something changing over time) | caretaking | ecosystems | biodiversity | fine motor | hand-eye coordination

Let's say you want to start with the topic of **Plants**, here are some ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Where do Plants Come From? Read a book about seeds like [A Seed Is Sleepy](#) by Dianna Aston*
- Group decision making: What plant(s) should we plant in our garden? Chart options, vote.

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: sand, pipe cleaners, shovels
- Loose Parts: stones, glass gems, sticks
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: plates, utensils, yarn bits, bottle caps
- Expression/Arts: stamping with food scraps (e.g. celery stump, carrot top); 3D painting: paint a branch
- Small Group: planting in the garden; preparing a vegetable and/or fruit based snack using foods that can be cut or ripped with a butter knife or other child-friendly tool

Outside:

- Prep garden with children; bring magnifying glasses to observe insects, plants, and soil

Parent/Family Participation: Invite families to share what they grow



Guide for the Day - *Example*

THEME: *Grow*

Topic/Question: *Plants/ Where do flowers come from?*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: Sunflower House by Eve Bunting

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Clean out sensory table for new sand, pipe cleaners*
- Change out loose parts with glass gems, sticks*
- Add insects to animal toys*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Fruit salad: cutting fruit one on one to supervise.

- Keep an eye to keep hands clean!!*
- Do during open play in the AM*

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- How many different colors of flowers do we see? Option to chart/compare.*
- Put magnifying glasses by door to take outside*

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

- Set up adult helper to also:*
- Write down quotes from kids during open play (notepad, pen)*
 - Take photos of magnifying glass exploration outside - what do they find, where do they look?*

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

- What kinds of play repeated?*
- Who played where?*
- How did fruit cutting go? Veggie sushi next time?*
- Compare flower color numbers at Morning Meeting tomorrow? Which has the most...?*



REFLECT

In the Guide for the Day example (previous page) **our key observations and learnings included:**

- What kinds of play repeated: They liked the magnifying glasses outside but didn't have too much success focusing – small groups tomorrow.
- Who played where: Everyone got into the sand – good to see. Saw a new friendship happening with bug play – yay! Keep it out for tomorrow.
- How did fruit cutting go: Kids loved it! Let's try veggie sushi next time.

Based on our learnings/observations, let's (see next page for more detail):

- Compare flower color numbers at Morning Meeting tomorrow. What color did we see the most?
- Go on a scavenger hunt for bugs and/or different smells during outside play

Guide for the Day – Example 2

THEME: Grow

Topic/Question: Plants/ Why bugs?
Why do flowers smell?

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Compare flower color numbers – chart and discuss: what color did we see the most of? Least of? Same?

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Arrange invitation to play in sensory table with sand, pipe cleaners, and colorful blocks
- Make sure bug toys are out

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

How to use a magnifying glass:

- figuring out focus, getting close
- practice inside and outside

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- Scavenger hunt to find bugs and/or smells (red bug, big bug, sweet smell, yucky smell, crawling bug, flying bug)
- Put magnifying glasses by door to take outside

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Set up adult helper to also:

- Write down quotes from kids during open play (notepad, pen)
- Photos with quotes of scavenger hunt finds

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- Better luck with magnifying glasses?
- What else caught their imagination during scavenger hunt?

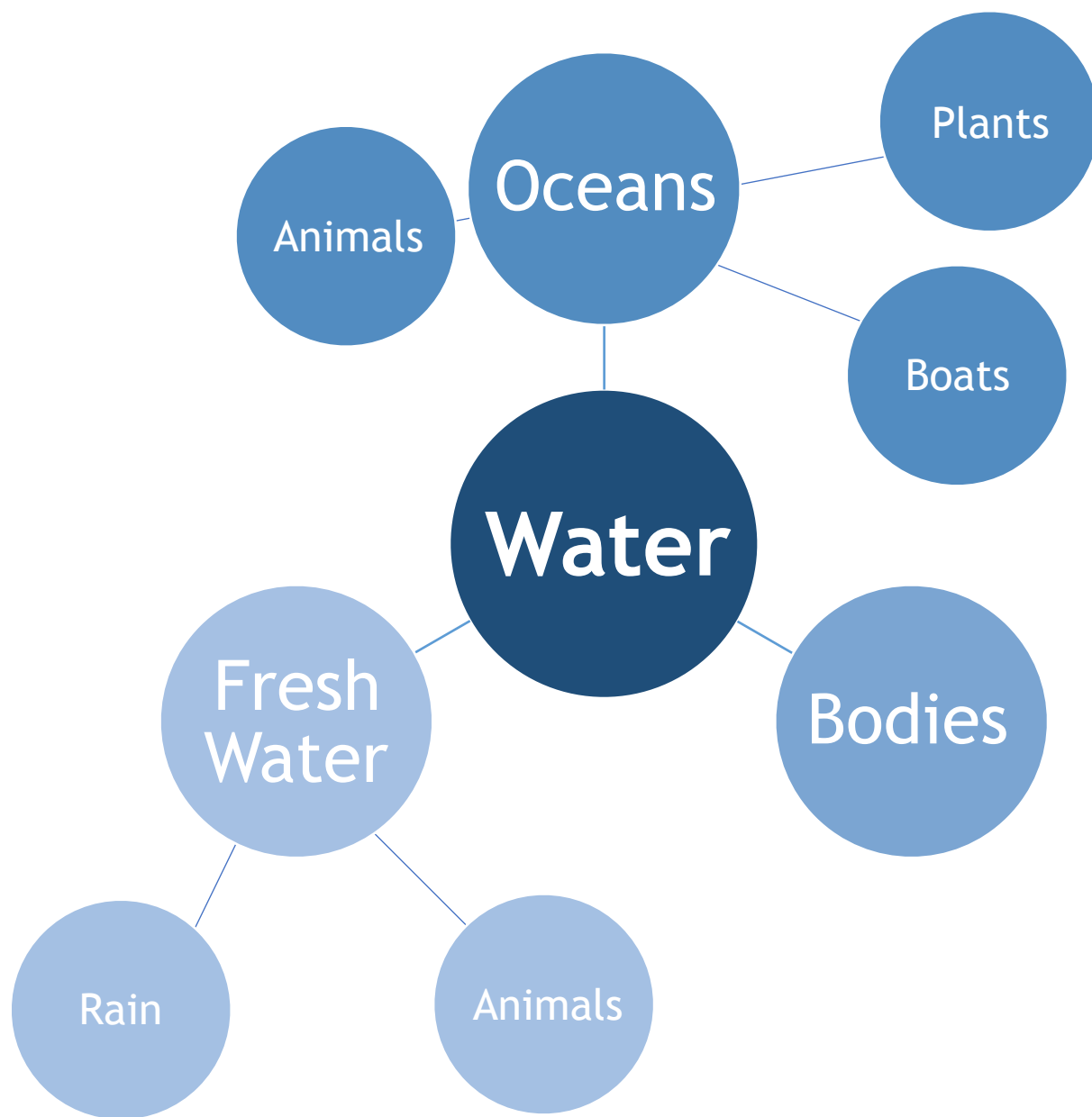


Books:



- Apple Tree - A Modern Day Cherokee Story (English & Cherokee) by Sandy Tharp-Thee
- A Seed Is Sleepy by Dianna Aston*
- An Orange in January by Dianna Hutts Aston
- The Wall and the Wild by Christina Dendy
- Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt by Kate Messner *
- I Am Josephine (and I Am a Living Thing) by Jan Thornhill
- Saturday at the Food Pantry by Diane O'Neill
- Sunflower House by Eve Bunting*
- Feast for Ten by Cathryn Falwell

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Water

What needs water?

What is the Salish Sea?

How much water are we made of?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of [Water](#).

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Oceans**.

Key Learnings:

Counting and measuring | local maritime vocabulary | animals that live in water | colors | celebrations and traditions | experimentation (e.g. what floats, what sinks) | ecosystems | biodiversity

Let's say you want to start with the topic of **Oceans, within the theme of **Water**, here are some ideas to get you started:**

Morning Meeting:

- Salish Sea song

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: water, funnels, pitchers, scoops
- Loose Parts: animals, stones, driftwood
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: include cardboard boxes for possible boats, sea caves
- Expression/Arts: 3D painting with ice blocks
- Small Group: floating/sinking experiments

Outside: Collect items to test if they will float or sink

Parent/Family Participation: Display family photos of time at/on the water

Other: Take a field trip to a local beach

Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: **WATER**

Topic/Question: **Oceans/ What sinks? What Floats?**

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Salish Sea song

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Sensory table: water, sea animal toys, stones, sand
- Cardboard boxes in drama and/or building area
- Water color painting with blues, greens, browns, grays (add salt for texture)

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Sinking and floating experiments:

- Water tubs, variety of materials
- paper and pen to record children's predictions, quotes, and discoveries

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Field trip to beach – need to bring:

- Guide to tidepool and other beach animals
- Shovels, buckets
- Towels, extra clothes, snack

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

- Video record sink/float experiment
- Station parent helper at drama to help children negotiate use of cardboard boxes

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

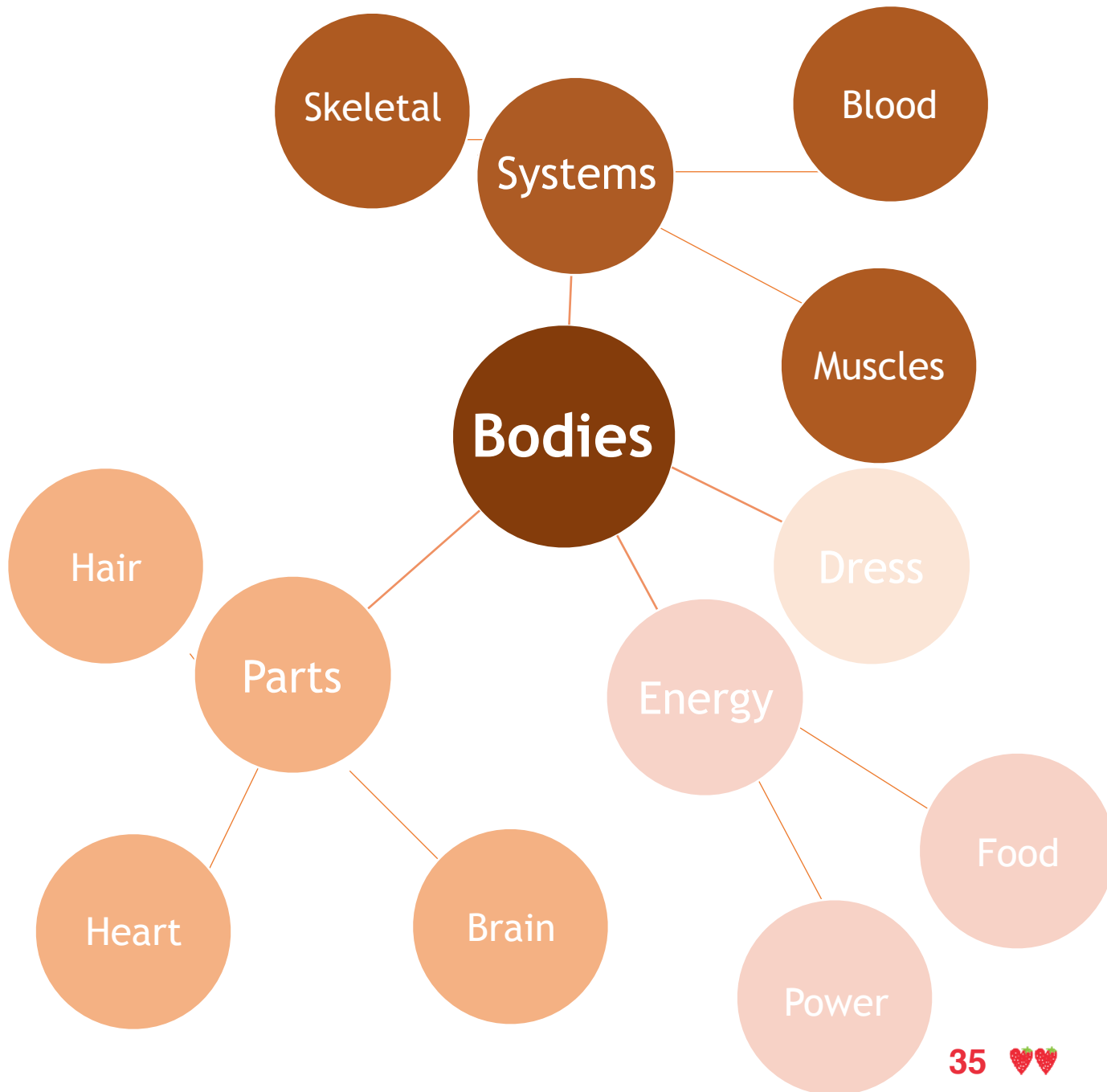
- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- For next sink/float experiments: what materials should I bring back? What discoveries happened? What misconceptions did the children resolve or still hold?

Books:



- Orca Chief by Roy Henry Vickers & Robert Budd*
- Beach Tail by Karen Williams*
- Mister Seahorse by Eric Carle*
- Shark Lady: the daring tale of how Eugenie Clark dove into history by Jess Keating*
- S is for Salmon: A Pacific Northwest Alphabet by Hannah Viano*
- We Are Water Protectors by Carole Lindstrom*
- Noah's Seal by Layn Marlow

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Bodies

What are bodies made of?

How do they work?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Bodies**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Systems of the Body**.

Key Learnings:

Parts of the body | how bodies are the same and different | large motor skills | fine motor skills | cultures | identity | fruits and vegetables | caretaking

Bodies | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Power Up by Seth Fishman
- Graph the diversity of eye color, height, favorite foods, body temperature of kids

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Loose Parts: people toys, wires, PVC pipes
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: doctor's office: fabric scraps and tape for bandages, paper, clipboards, pencils
- Expression/Arts: color mixing with paint to match individual skin colors; dance with scarves
- Small Group: trace each other's bodies or shadows

Outside: focus on where to climb, balance, jump in order to highlight use of muscles, bones, balance



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: Bodies

Topic/Question: Body Systems

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: Power Up by Seth Fishman

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Clay or playdough with glass gems, stones, pipe cleaners and other loose parts for design making, self-portraits
- People toys
- Doctor's office in drama – fabric strips for bandages, magnifying glasses

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Tracing each other's bodies

- 2 children at a time
- Long paper or with pencil on the wall
- Where to display? Follow up with coloring, painting, drawing internal systems, or cutting out clothing to attach

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Comparing leaf veins and root patterns to images of body systems, observable parts of our bodies (e.g. palm of hand)

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

- Record quotes – what do the children already know about bodies? What are they trying to figure out?
- Photos of plant parts next to bodies displayed to emphasize similarities

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- What systems are most known about/popular?
- What angle to take to follow up body tracing?

Books:



- Power Up by Seth Fishman
- You Are Stardust by Elin Kelsey*
- Who Are You? The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity by Brook Pessin-Whedbee
- Mama Zooms by Jane Cowen-Fletcher
- Hello Goodbye Dog by Maria Gianferrari
- Samira and the Skeletons by Camilla Kuhn
- All the Colors of the Earth by Sheila Hamanaka*
- Eyes that Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho*

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library

Caretaking

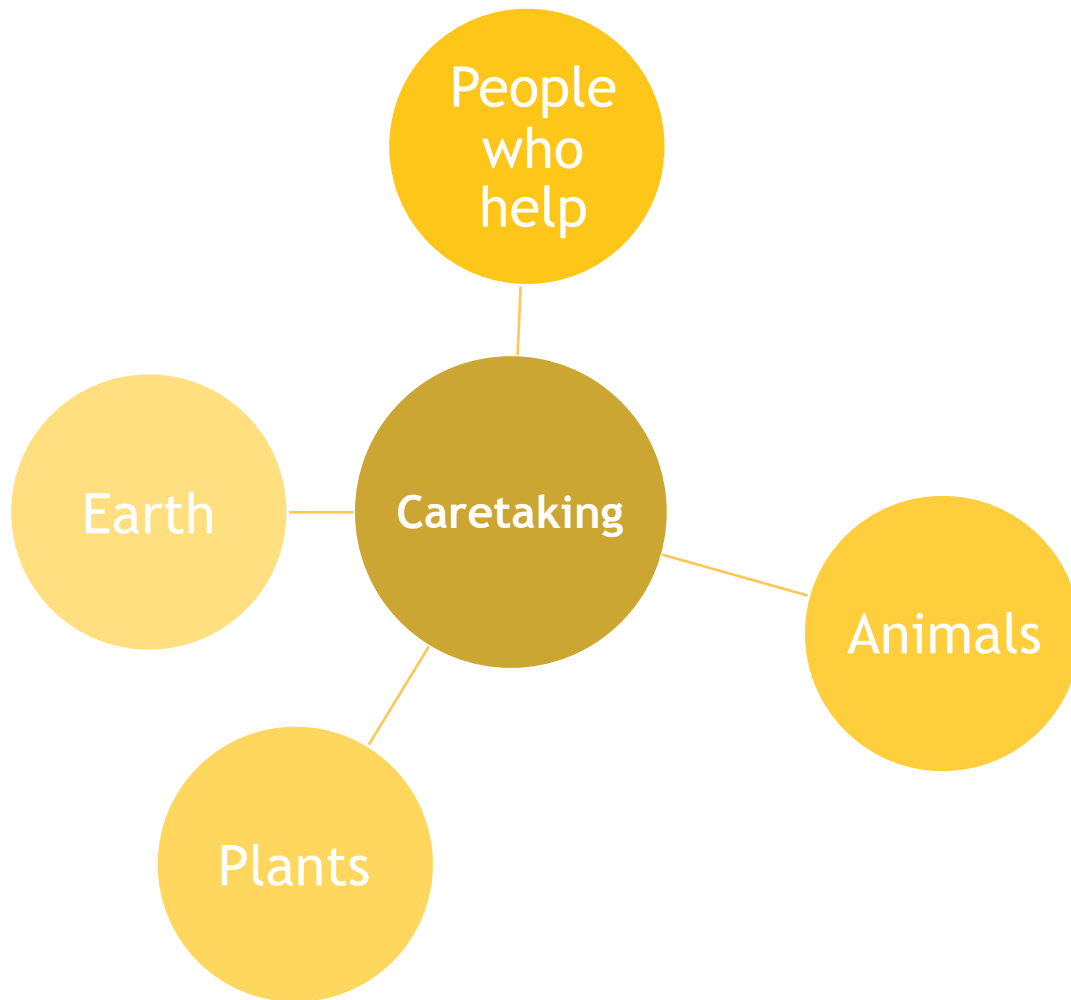
Who takes care of you?
What do you take care of?
How do we get what we need?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Caretaking**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Helping**.

Key Learnings:

What do people/plants/other living things need to be happy and healthy? | Who helps us? | What roles do people play? | Environment | Stewardship





Caretaking | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Read Loretta's Gift
- Conversation: How are you helpful?

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: Planting seeds in soil, washing toys
- Loose Parts: Heavier/bulkier building materials to encourage teamwork
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: Babydolls in drama
- Expression/Arts: Teaching a partner dance
- Small Group: Making snack for a friend

Outside:

- Check on garden with children
- Fort building

Parent/Family Participation: Ask families to share photos/stories of their child being helpful

Other: Language of helping – asking for help, asking if others need help, gratitude

Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: Caretaking

Topic/Question: Helping / How do you help?

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Conversation: how are you helpful? Be ready with examples for each child if they need prompts

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Add dolls to drama along with fabrics, utensils, cups
- Washing station for cleaning toys or dishes
- Large and/or heavier materials in building to encourage teamwork

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Make snack for each other (clean hands!!):

- Veggie roll ups with tortillas and cream cheese
- Take each others' orders (offer pictures of ingredients to choose from; a way to record answers)

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Fort building with large branches, fabrics/tarps, stumps

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

- Recording quotes from Morning Meeting
- Ask helper to take photos of children being helpful in order to display, share at next Morning Meeting

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

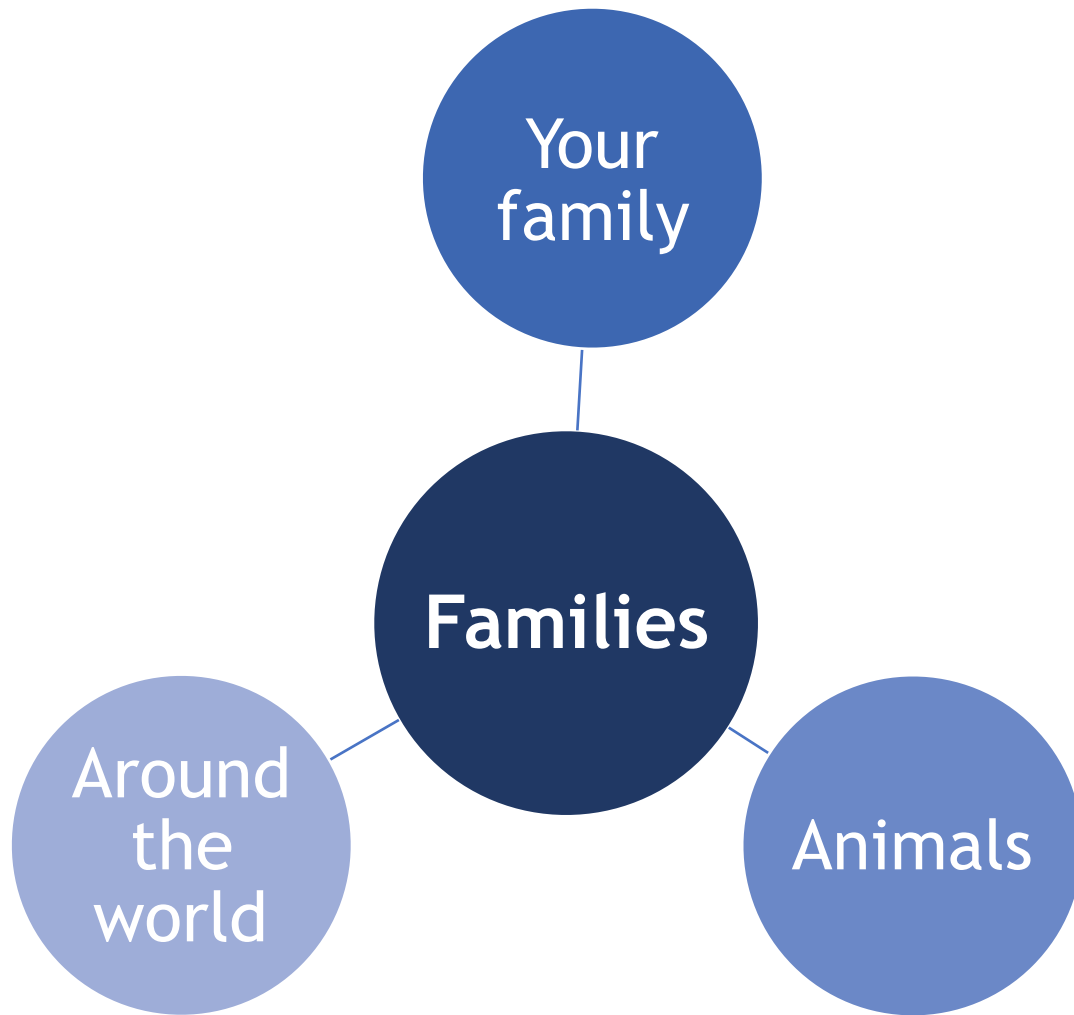
- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- Follow up Morning Meeting with more examples, ask children who helps them and how...

Books:



- You're Safe With Me by Chitra Soundar
- You Hold Me Up by Monique Grey Smith
- Yaffa and Fatima: Shalom, Salaam by Fawzia Gilani-Williams
- A Mother for Choco by Keiko Kasza*
- Maddi's Fridge by Lois Brandt*
- Loretta's Gift by Pat Zietlow Miller

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Families

Who is your family?

How are families different? The same?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Families**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Your Family**.

Key Learnings:

Diversity in family structure | culture and traditions | animals | places where people/animals live

Families | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Conversation: Who is in your family? Who lives with you? Who doesn't?

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: Arrange invitation to play with people toys, blocks, fabrics
- Loose Parts: People and animal toys, tile samples, glass gems
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: Fabrics, hats, shoes
- Expression/Arts: playdough/paint/shadow tracing with animal/people toys
- Small Group: Drawing family portraits

Outside:

- Scavenger hunt for items to represent children's own families (number of people, any pets, favorite activities)



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: FAMILIES

Topic/Question: Your Family / Who's in your family?

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: Pablo's Tree by Pat Mora for conversation about adoption and other ways families come together

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Playdough with animal or people toys
- Update dress up with more 'grownup' options like hats and shoes
- Tempera paint and paper

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Drawing family portraits with marker/Sharpie – save for coloring/painting/collaging later

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- What families do we see outside? Animals? Plants? People?
- Be ready to join in play in order to add new perspectives – be 'another' dad so there are two dads for example

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

Many options/possibilities for anti-bias learning here – important to gather explicit and implicit info from children about their understandings/ misunderstandings. All adults should take notes on conversations and themes of play.

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

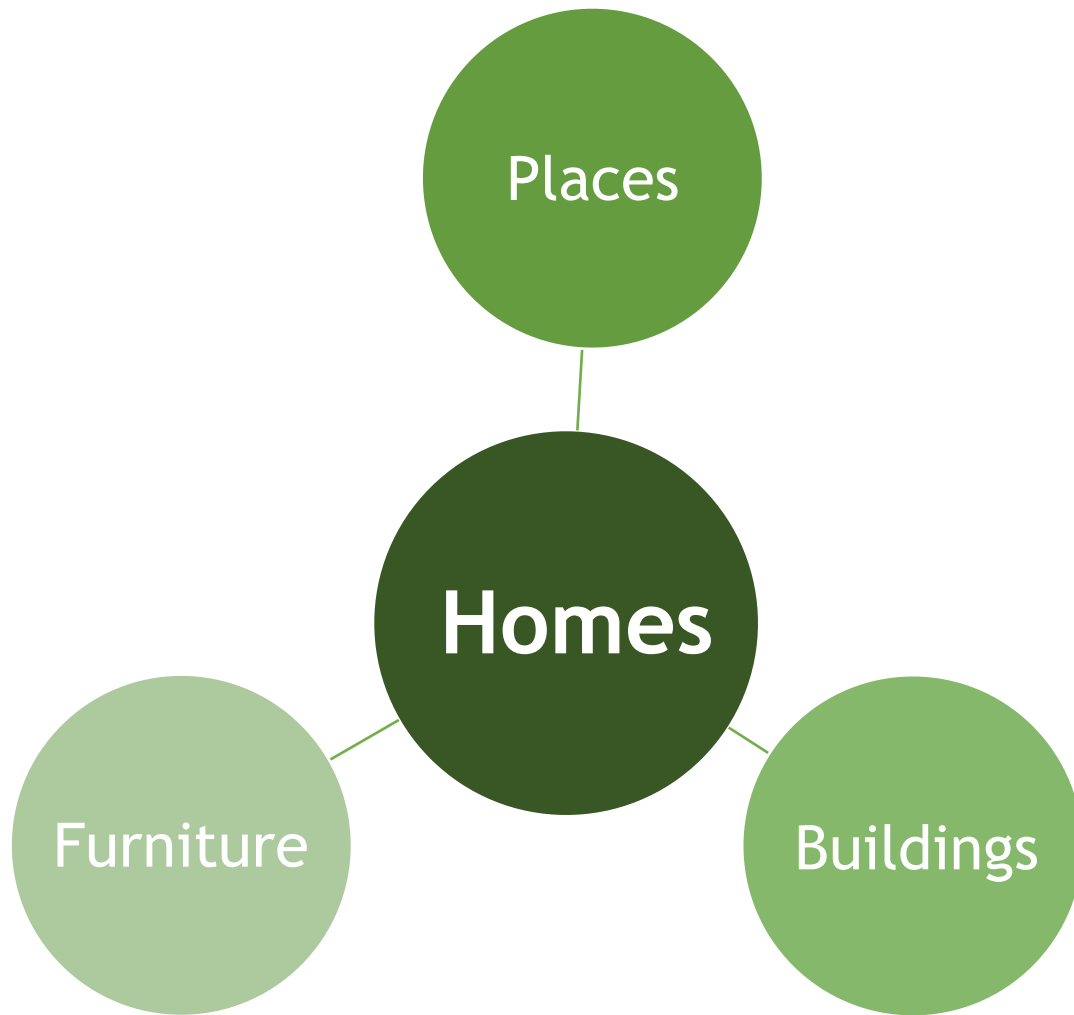
- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- What am I hearing/seeing from my children about families?
- Where can I challenge theirs and my assumptions/norms of families?

Books:



- Families by Shelley Rotner*
- Todd Parr's books: The Family Book*, The Sister Book*, The Brother Book*, The Earth Book*, It's Okay to be Different*, Mommy Book, The Daddy Book, The Grandma Book, The Grandpa Book
- Lovebirds: The True Story of Raven and Eagle by Sondra Simone Segundo
- Lesléa Newman books: Mommy, Mama, and Me*, Daddy, Papa, and Me*, Heather has Two Mommies*
- 21 Cousins by Diana de Anda
- Family is a Family is a Family by Sara O'Leary*
- The Flower Girl Wore Celery by Meryl Gordon
- The New Small Person by Lauren Child*
- Big Red Lollipop by Rukhsana Khan*
- Pablo's Tree by Pat Mora*
- Peter's Chair by Ezra Jack Keats*
- Stella Brings the Family by Miriam Schiffer
- King and King by Linda de Haan* (and King and King and Family)

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Homes

Where do you live?

What do people need in a home?

How do people live around the world?

How do you get home?

Where do animals live?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Homes**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **My Home**.

Key Learnings:

Diversity of homes | habitats | culture | construction | balance

Homes | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Read My House/Mi Casa by Rebecca Emberley

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: playdough/clay, people toys, tile samples, toothpicks
- Loose Parts: blocks, fabrics
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: add windows to cardboard boxes
- Expression/Arts: Paint/sculpt/collage pictures of homes
- Small Group: Drawing maps of our bedrooms, classroom, homes – artist's choice!

Parent/Family Participation: Ask for photos of homes – actual homes, dream homes, former homes, pet homes

Outside:

- Scavenger hunt for pieces to make a fairy house, a bug house, or other type of house
- Build a fort or den



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: HOMES

Topic/Question: My Home / What is your home?

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: On Our Street: Our First Talk about Poverty by Dr. Jillian Roberts and keep an open dialogue about what the children are seeing in the book

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Building on large and small scales: gather empty cardboard boxes and tape them closed to use as large, lightweight blocks, toothpicks and playdough for smaller buildings, legos
- Tempera paint and paper

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Drawing maps of the rooms of our homes/school – Sharpie or pen then watercolor over (be ready to include labels/captions)

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Scavenger hunt for pieces to make a fairy house, a bug house, or other type of house: materials for walls, roof, warmth, sleeping, hiding, etc.

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Set up adult helper to write down quotes from kids during open play (notepad, pen)

Share maps with families for feedback

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

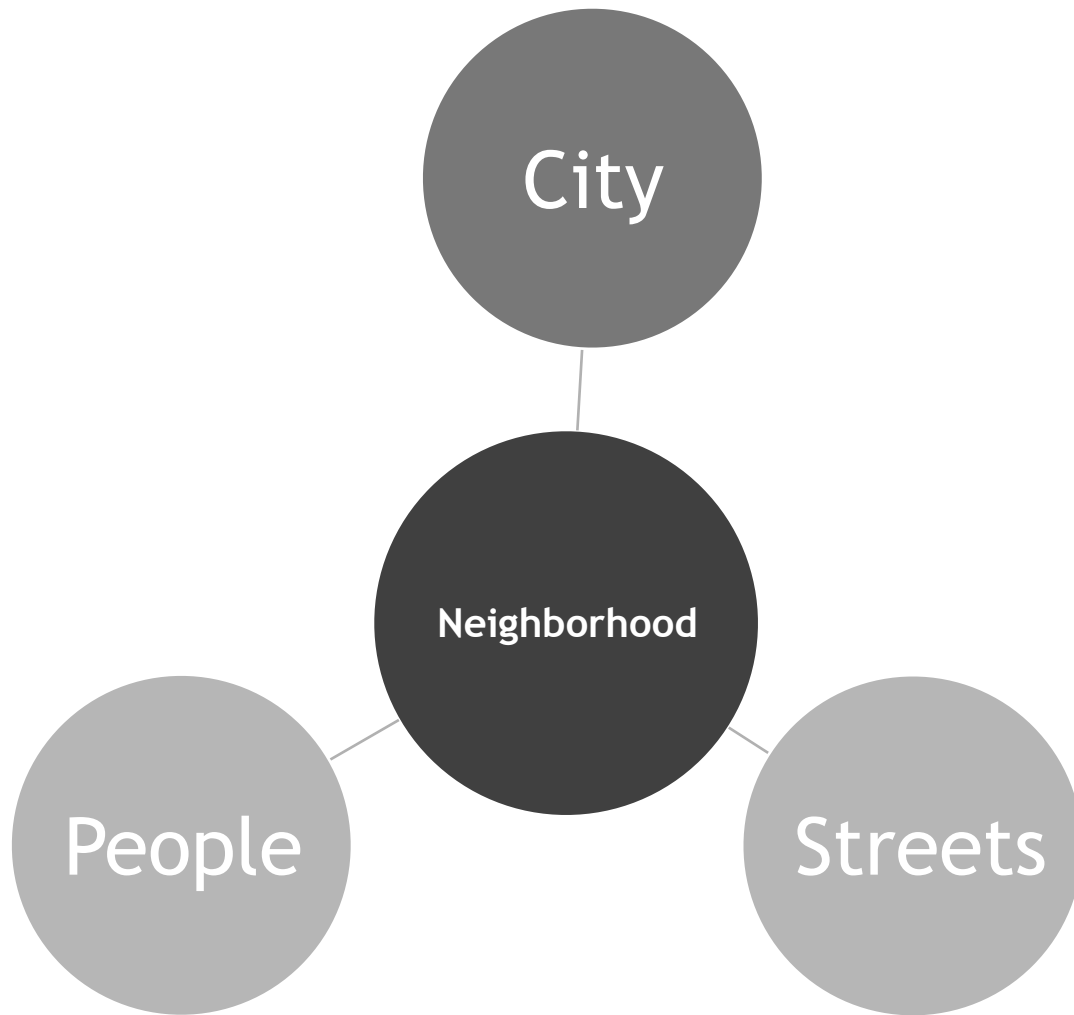
- What kinds of play repeated?
- Who played where?
- Is there a diversity of homes within our classroom community?
- What spaces are important to them?

Books:



- On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty (The World Around Us) by Dr. Jillian Roberts
- My House/Mi Casa by Rebecca Emberley
- Everybody in the Red Brick Building by Anne Wynter*
- Lily and the Paper Man by Rebecca Upjohn
- The One Day House by Julia Durango

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Neighborhood

Where do you live?

Who is in your community?

What's important to your community?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of Neighborhood.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Belonging**.

Key Learnings:

Participation | belonging | maps | celebrations | community

Neighborhood | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Read The Peace Book by Todd Parr
- Invite families to join the classroom or send in materials to share a celebration

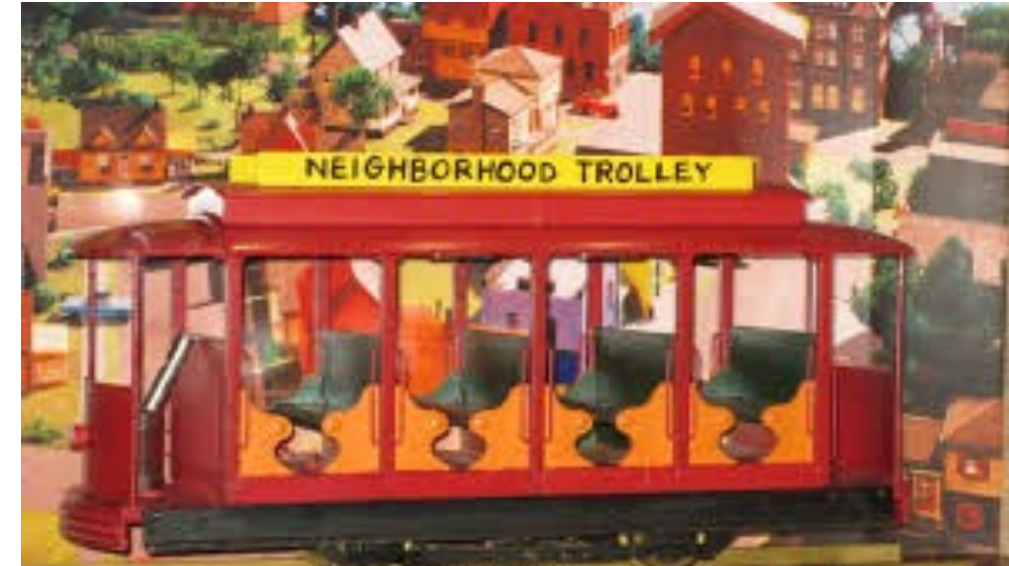
Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: Group collage onto contact paper with paper scraps, natural materials, or other media
- Loose Parts: nuts and bolts, napkin rings
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: make cozy places for children to play together
- Expression/Arts: 3D painting project on large branch
- Small Group: Each small group adds to one neighborhood map – what are the stores, roads, parks, natural landmarks, people, and more that belong in the neighborhood?

Outside: Walk around neighborhood in order to collaborate on map making

Parent/Family Participation: What are landmark buildings for them? Can we visit them?

Other: Seek out Indigenous resources if there is not already representation in your classrooms: books, community/cultural centers, events



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: *Neighborhood*

Topic/Question: *Belonging/ What makes you feel like you belong to your neighborhood?*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Compliment Chain – adult begins with a compliment to a child (not about clothing, looks), then that child compliments another and so on until everyone is complimented

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- *Contact paper and paper scraps (cut/ripped unnamed art!) for group art piece*
- *Put out loose pieces that go together (e.g. nuts and bolts, magnetiles)*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Neighborhood map – start with pre-made map? Or draw our own?

- *After neighborhood walk, go through map with one or two children at a time to draw important features onto map*

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- *Neighborhood walk to prep for map making*

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

Take photos on neighborhood walk to help remember what to include on map

Where to display our map? Share with families for input on what they would include?

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

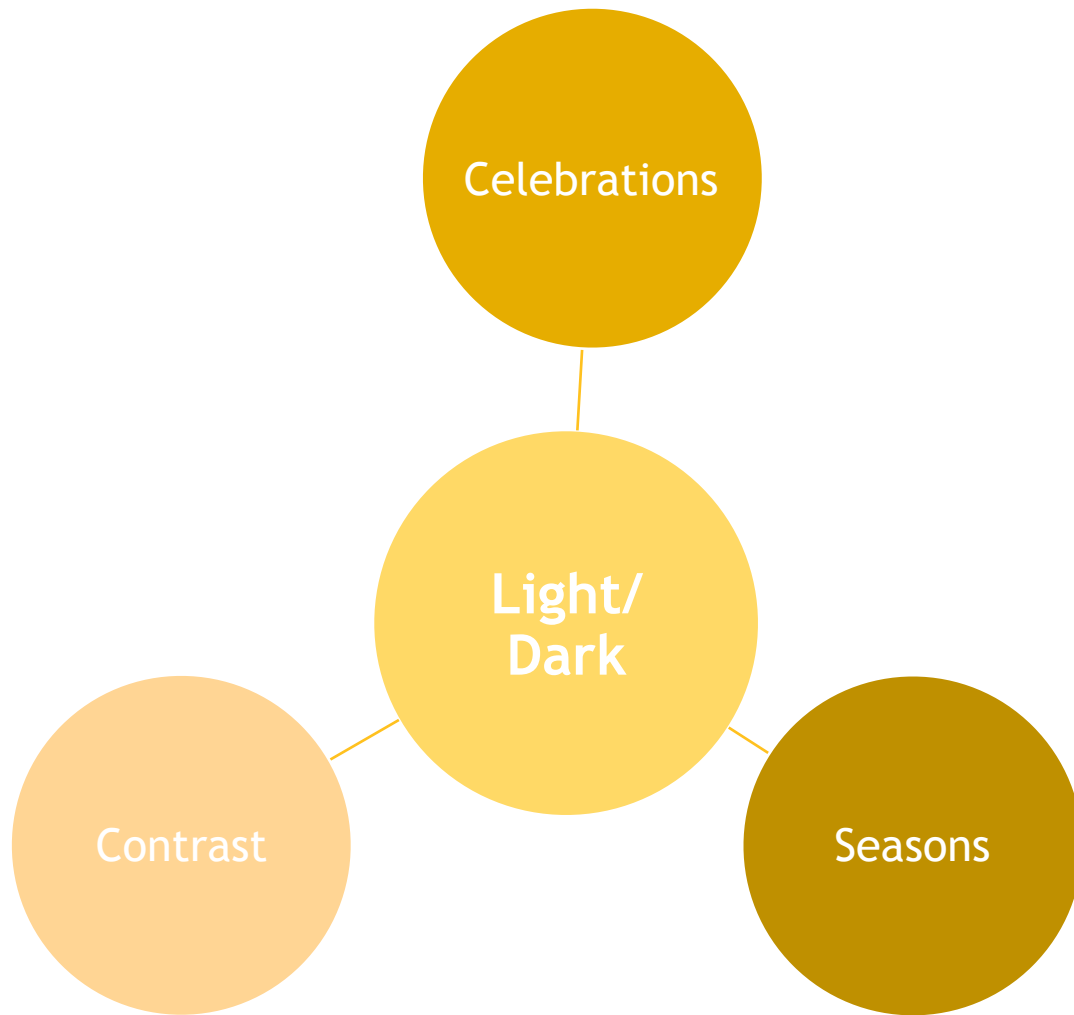
- *What kinds of play repeated?*
- *Who played where?*
- *How did I include identities not represented in my classroom but exist in the community?*

Books:



- To Be A Kid by Maya Ajmera
- My City Speaks by Darren LeBeaf*
- My Three Best Friends and Me, Zulay by Cari Best
- Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress by Christine Baldacchino*
- One by Kathryn Otoshi*
- Lines, Squiggles, Letters, Words by Ruth Rocha
- Small World by Ishta Mercurio*
- Many Ways: How Families Practice Their Beliefs and Religions by Shelley Rotner, Sheila M Kelly Ed.D
- The Peace Book by Todd Parr*
- Sharing Our World: Animals of the Native Northwest Coast from Garfinkel Publications*

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Light & Dark

How does day and night happen?
How do shadows happen?
Why do we celebrate light and dark?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of Light & Dark.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Celebrations**.

Key Learnings:

Solar system | celebrations | shadows | seasons | colors | opposites

Light & Dark | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Read Night Shift by Jessie Hartland
- Ask: What do we already know about night and daytime?

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: flashlight play – in darkness, through materials
- Loose Parts: high contrast colors, focus on textures, battery operated tea lights & magnatiles
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: adding fairy or other string lights to play areas, what celebrations are happening and what pieces can you include?
- Expression/Arts: painting on black paper, songs/dance from celebrations
- Small Group: collaborate with clay/playdough to sculpt planets/sun/moon

Outside: Is the moon out? How do we see the sun move through the sky?

Parent/Family Participation: Invite families to share traditions and celebrations involving light and dark



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: LIGHT &
DARK

Topic/Question: Celebrations/ What do we know
about light and dark?

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting
song

*Family joining us to read about [Diwali]
(choose a celebration of a family in pod)*

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- *White/yellow paint on black paper*
- *Shadow puppet play – use animal/people toys? Or hands? Make puppets?*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Sculpting solar system bodies – one per group, have reference materials on hand for color choice, other important context pieces

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- *Tracking what we see in the sky – moon, sun's movement – is it the same each day or different?*

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Ask adult helper to join shadow puppet play and help manage light, write down any storylines

Hang solar system bodies as pieces are worked on – keep paper nearby to record quotes, ideas, connections from kids

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

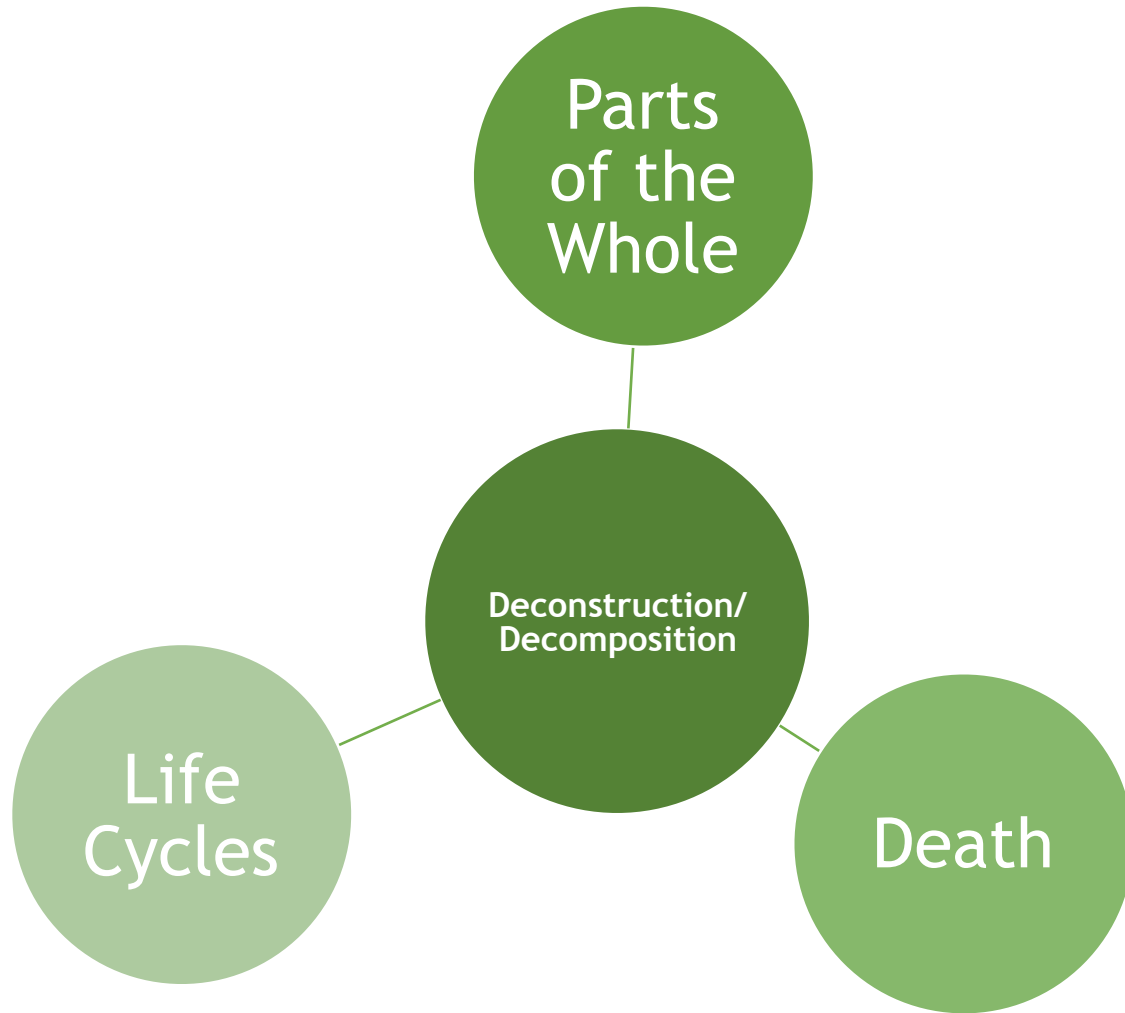
- *What kinds of play repeated?*
- *Who played where?*
- *What opportunities are coming up to address fears/misconceptions of darkness and anti-Blackness?*

Books:



- At the Same Moment Around the World by Clotilde Perrin*
- Night Shift by Jessie Hartland*
- Kenard Pak's books: Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn*, Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter* and Goodbye Winter, Hello Spring*
- Mae Among the Stars by Roda Ahmed*
- Small World by Ishta Mercurio*
- A Moon for Moe and Mo by Jane Breskin Zalben

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Deconstruction/ Decomposition

What are the parts of things?

Why does organic matter decompose?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Deconstruction/ Decomposition**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Life Cycles**.

Key Learnings:

Life cycles | tool use | fine motor skills

Deconstruction/ Decomposition | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Read Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty
- Keep a bouquet of flowers and do regular, whole group, check-ins about decomposing process. Compare with photos from previous check-ins

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: soil or sand and animal toys, scoopers, paint brushes
- Loose Parts: natural materials, pattern blocks
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: Fabrics, bowls/platters, faux plants
- Expression/Arts: old electronics to take apart with tools
- Small Group: make compost in bottle; dissect and count fruit seeds

Outside:

- Scavenger hunt for shapes
- Where in the cycle are the plants and animals we see?

Parent/Family Participation: Electronics to donate?

Other: Opportunities to normalize death, how one generation feeds the next



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: *Deconstruct*

Topic/Question: *Life Cycles*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Clean out sensory table for new box of dirt, add natural loose parts*
- Use eye droppers to drop paint onto paper, shaving cream, coffee filters*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Compost Bottles:

- Place banana peels, natural matter, egg shells into bottle*
- Make/record observations; check back throughout the week*
- Do during outside play*

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Hunt for things alive; things dead; where in the cycle are they?

Documentation:

How will you document the children's learning? What can the parent/adult-helper do?

Set up adult helper to also:

- Write down quotes from kids during outside play(notepad, pen)*

Take photos compost bottles; record children's predictions/observations

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

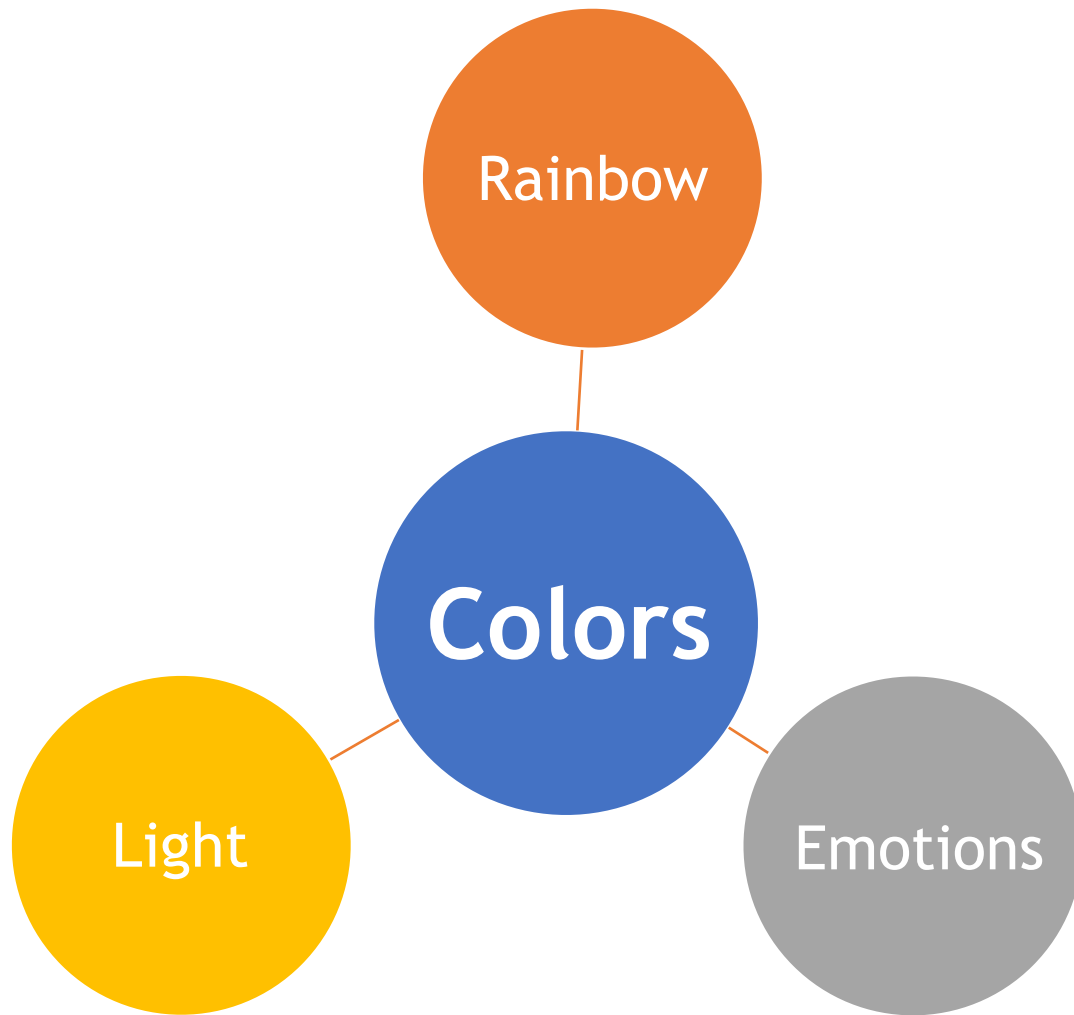
- What kinds of play repeated?*
- Who played where?*
- How did compost bottles go?*
- Compare bottles and what is happening at Morning Meeting tomorrow... Which has changed; what is changing?*

Books:



- Lifetimes: The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen*
- Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty*
- When Sue Found Sue by Toni Buzzeo
- Zephyr Takes Flight by Steve Light
- Round is a Tortilla: A Book of Shapes by Roseanne Thong*

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Colors

How do we use color?
Where does color come from?
How do colors make you feel?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of **Color**.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Emotions**

Key Learnings:

Purpose of color in nature | colors for emotions | cultural meanings/uses of colors | how we get our skin color

Colors | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Graph: favorite colors, colors being worn
- Is there a happy color? A sad color? Do we all agree?

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: adding essential oil to water color paints
- Loose Parts: Magnatiles, battery operated tea lights, pattern blocks
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: Offering potion making with colored water
- Expression/Arts: See color mixing 5 ways
- Small Group: Mixing and naming our skin color with tempera paints

Outside:

- Scavenger hunt for pieces to create a rainbow

Parent/Family Participation: Is there language they already use at home about color? Give them a heads up about skin color matching plan and language you plan to use.

Other: Be ready to correct misconceptions about girl/boy colors, black and/or brown as ugly colors, other chances for anti-bias conversations



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: *COLORS!*

Topic/Question: *Emotions/ What color do you feel?*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

We've Been Waiting for You greeting song

Read: *All the Colors We Are* by Katie Kissinger

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- *Magnatiles*
- *Color mixing with baking soda and colored vinegar*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Skin color matching with tempera paint
– what name do you give your skin color?

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Rainbow scavenger hunt: find different colors to make a rainbow

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Video skin color matching to watch later

Share quotes with families for feedback

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

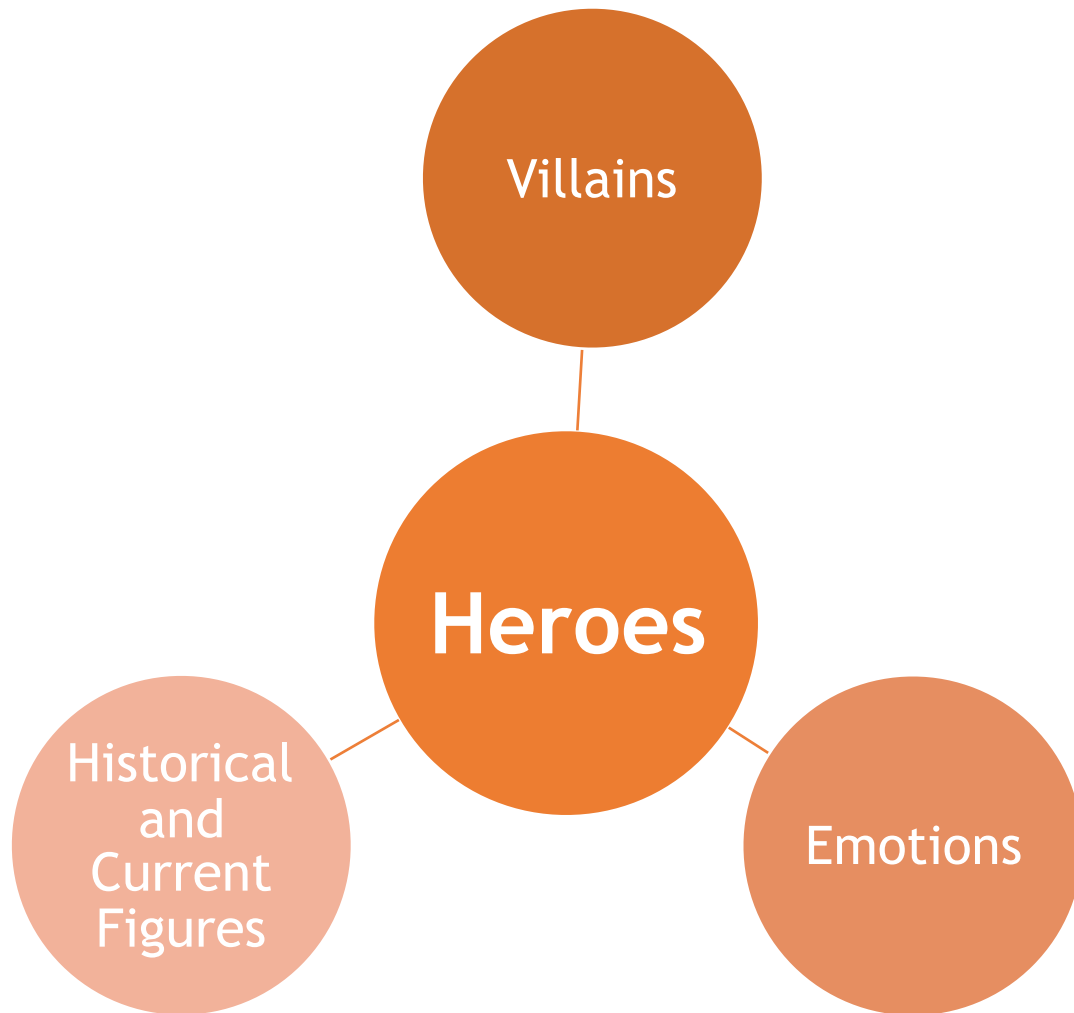
- *What kinds of play repeated?*
- *Who played where?*
- *What colors are popular? Which ones could use a boost?*
- *Are my kids attaching emotions to colors? Would that help them?*

Books:



- White Rabbit's Colors by Alan Baker
- Festival of Colors by Surishtha Sehgal, Kabir Sehgal*
- Beautiful Blackbird by Ashley Bryan*
- The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family by Ibtihaj Muhammad*
- Georgia's Terrific, Colorific Experiment by Zoe Persico*
- Black Book of Colors by Menena Cottin*
- All the Colors We Are/Todos los colores de nuestra piel by Katie Kissinger
- The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh by Surpriya Kelkar*
- My Mother's Sari by Sandhya Rao*
- Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors by Hena Khan*
- Kaleidoscope of Creatures: The colors of Nature Explained by Cath Ard

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Heroes

What does a hero do?
Do heroes make mistakes?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of Hero.

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as **Bravery**

Key Learnings:

Sacrifice | bravery | protest | current and historical heroic figures

Heroes | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Ron's Big Mission by Rose Blue
- Conversation: What was a time that was scary and what would you do if it happened again?

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: mystery bag/box with toys, materials to feel and guess what it is
- Loose Parts: fabrics, tools to build high – no-slip material for blocks, corners to build in to stabilize
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: change up environment to include inclines, changes in height
- Expression/Arts: Protest songs
- Small Group: sculpt together with clay/playdough

Outside: Focus on understanding the risks your children are up for taking – physically, socially, in exploration

Parent/Family Participation: Ask for stories of bravery, protest, heroism to share with children

Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: *HEROES*

Topic/Question: *Bravery*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

Read: Ava the Monster Slayer by Lisa

Maggiore or Jabari Jumps by Gaia

Cornwall

Conversation: when did you do something that was scary and what helped you be brave?

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Fabrics large enough to tie as capes in drama*
- Offering new risks in play – building on inclines, more textured materials, harder puzzles*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Sculpting a super hero – pair together children who don't always gravitate towards each other for a chance to do some risky play with social connections

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Focus on celebrating risks you see children taking – climbing, new friends, etc.

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Ask adult helper to focus on photos of risky play

Take notes or audio recording of Morning Meeting to share with families – can they also share back stories of bravery in their family

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

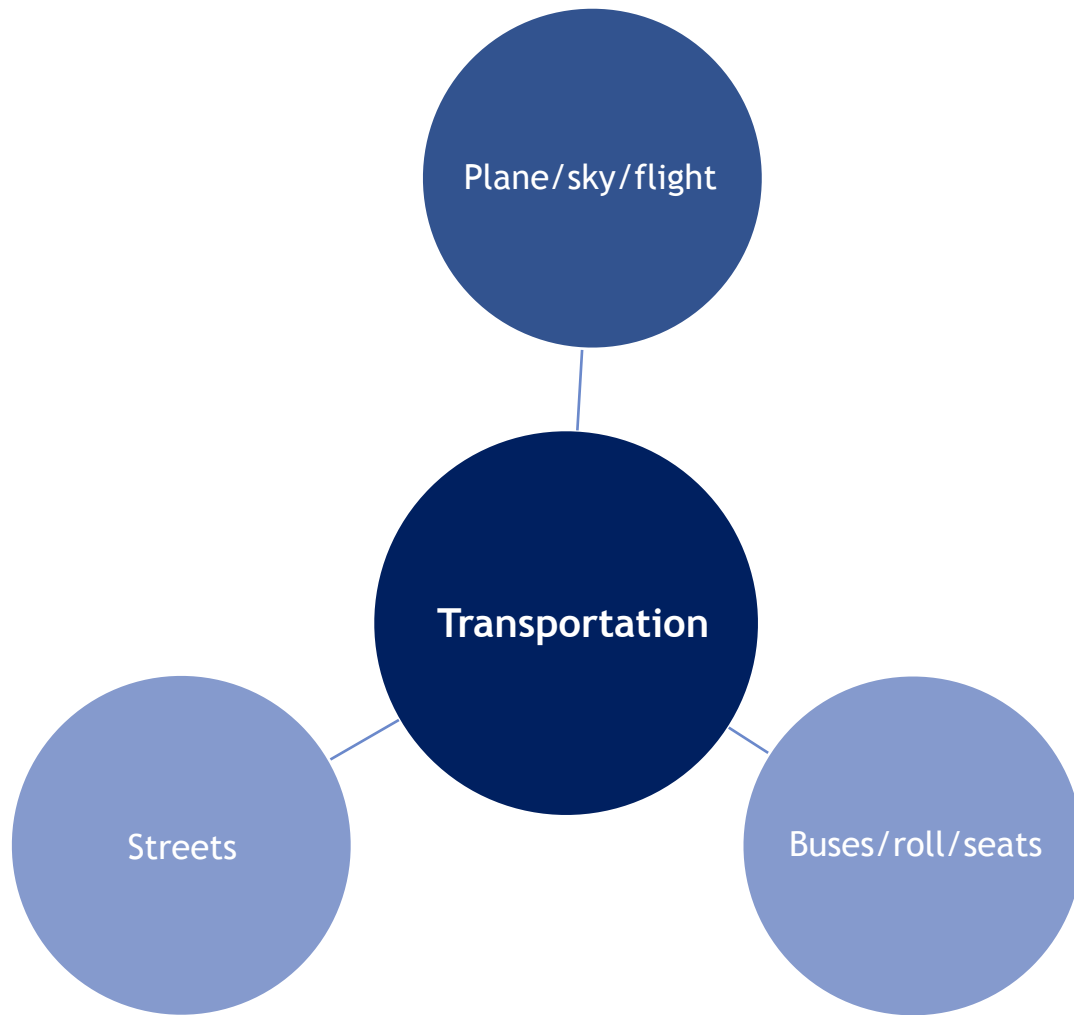
- What kinds of play repeated?*
- Who played where?*
- What risks did my children take? Did I take?*
- What kind of heroes are they familiar with? Who is missing?*

Books:



- Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai*
- Ron's Big Mission by Rose Blue*
- Ava the Monster Slayer by Lisa Maggiore
- My Name Is Not Isabella: Just How Big Can a Little Girl Dream? by Jennifer Fosberry
- What's My Superpower? by Aviaq Johnston
- Ned the Knitting Pirate by Diana Murray
- When We Were Alone by David Alexander Robertson*
- Monster Trouble by Lane Fredrickson
- Girl Who Thought in Pictures: the Story of Dr. Temple Grandin by Julia Finley Mosca
- This Day in June by Gayle Pitman

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library



Transportation

How do we get ourselves and things from place to place?
How do animals get from place to place? How fast?

These questions and more can be explored with the theme of [Transportation](#).

The theme allows you to choose one (of many) entry points to start with, such as [Speed](#)

Key Learnings:

[transportation vocabulary](#) | [animal migration](#) | [speed](#)

Transportation | Ideas to get you started:

Morning Meeting:

- Conversation: what kind of vehicles did you see today? How did you get to school?
- Go, Girls, Go! By Frances Gilbert

Open Play / Investigation Stations:

- Sensory experience: collage project onto contact paper or with glue/paste from pre-cut magazine images
- Loose Parts: napkin rings, ramps, balls
- Dramatic/ Pretend Play: Pieces that can be vehicle parts – seats, wheels, steering...
- Expression/Arts: Roll car toys or balls through paint onto paper using flat and inclined surfaces or with paper in a tray and tipping the tray; 3-d painting with boxes or other materials to create vehicle;
- Small Group: sculpt together with clay/playdough

Outside: Animal races, observe what goes fast and slow in nature

Parent/Family Participation: Help cut out images for collaging – vehicles, roads, tracks, bus/train stops/stations

Other: Vocabulary related to momentum and inertia, physics



Guide for the Day – *Get Started!*

THEME: *Transportation*

Topic/Question: *Speed/ How fast do things go?*

Date:

Morning Meeting:

Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

Greeting Song

Read: Quickest Kid in Clarksville

Conversation: ways we go fast (running, on a train, dancing, heartbeats, etc)

Open Play:

What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

- Balls, ramps, tunnels*
- Cardboard boxes for vehicle pretend play*
- Tempera paint and car toys across paper in trays*

Small Group:

What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Group project: roll a ball across a designated space – can we make it all the way to the other side of the room?

Outside:

What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

- Ramps and balls*
- What fast animals do we see outside? What goes slowly?*

Documentation:

*How will you document the children's learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Ask adult helper to help at car and tray painting – getting new paper for kids, putting wet pieces on drying rack

Document the process of trial and error and fixes during small groups – share back those problem solving strategies with kids

Reflection:

What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

- What kinds of play repeated?*
- Who played where?*
- Did we keep the fun in our investigating?*
- What strategies did my students use to change speed? Do those strategies work with other materials?*

Books:



- Last Stop on Market Street by Matt Pena*
- A Fire Engine for Ruthie by Lesléa Newman
- Quickest Kid in Clarksville by Pat Zietlow Miller
- When You are Brave by Pat Zietlow Miller*
- Between Us and Abuela by Mitali Perkins*
- Angel in Beijing by Belle Yang
- Go, Girls, Go! by Frances Gilbert*
- A Bike Like Sergio's by Maribeth Boelts*

*Available from Port Townsend/Jefferson County Public Library

Core Activities – 5 Ways!

Do not underestimate the basics of paint and paper or a lump of playdough. These mediums offer many important ways to interact with not only the material itself, but to also express ourselves and our ideas.

These offerings of “5 Ways” are simply to expand on those valuable foundations and find ways to see a material, a concept, an idea from a new perspective. It can also help a child feel like their work is more accurate in communicating what they want.

There are categories that aren’t included that offer versatility (e.g. markers and paper). Feel free to add your own!

Some of the “5 ways” activities shared here are best done in a small group so that it is safer and/or easier to cultivate conversation to better understand the work the children are doing. Others can be offered at an open play time. It is going to depend on your classroom, your children, and you.

Whatever you decide, include a plan for how to document the process and learning; when you will take the time to reflect on the experience with your peers; and how you will give the children a chance to reflect, as well.

And have **FUN!**

Paint– 5 (+) Ways!

1. Paint on aluminum foil
2. Secure paper in a tray/box; choose object (e.g. ball, car toys, pinecone, stone) and dip in paint; tilt box back and forth to roll to paint with object
3. Add sand or salt to paint for texture
4. Use food scraps and other organic material as stamps/brushes (e.g. pepper or carrot tops, celery sticks)
5. 3-D painting on cardboard boxes or other 3-D objects (e.g. rocks, pine cones)
6. Thin paint with water and use spray bottles to apply paint to paper or fabric

Watercolor– 5 Ways!

1. Crayon resist: draw with crayons first then paint
2. Add scent to paint with extracts, oils
3. Use eye droppers to drop paint onto paper, shaving cream, coffee filters
4. Focusing in on colors to support specific ideas by limiting color options: What are the colors in the garden? What are the animals you're researching?
5. Painting on absorbent and water resistant materials (e.g. playdough, plastic/rubber toys, wood, metal)

Color Mixing– 5 Ways!

1. Add baking soda to tray, use food coloring or liquid watercolors to color white vinegar, add to baking soda with eye droppers
2. Add food coloring or liquid watercolor to plain playdough in drops and let colors mix as it's used
3. Mix tempera paint to match individual skin tones
4. Use clearer containers to mix colored water using eye droppers on a light table or a shelf in front of a window

Playdough/Clay– 5 Ways!

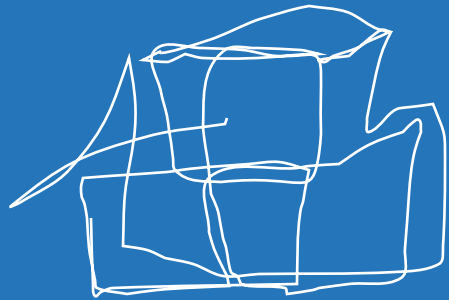
1. Add scent to playdough with spices, extracts, oils
2. Use playdough with animal or people toys
3. Combine loose parts and playdough for design making: self-portraits, mandalas, sculptures, and more

Scissors– 5 Ways!

1. Cut flowers
2. Create puzzles
3. Cut out crowns
4. Cut out clothes/decorations for animals and/or people toys
5. Cut playdough

Tools– 5 Ways!

1. Maker's station with loose parts and glue/tape
2. Use magnifying glasses while outside
3. Hammer and nails or screwdriver and screws with wood pieces; cardboard for construction/deconstruction
4. Sewing through fabric, cardstock, cardboard
5. Use flashlights to explore colors, light, translucence



Plug & Play - Templates

Guide for the Day (blank template following page)

This tool meant to help you organize activities, prep, and share the goings-on with the other adult-helpers in the classroom.

It's a guide to look to knowing that things will evolve and will not go fully to plan.

A large chunk of this guide is dedicated to reflection for a reason - make sure to document key observations that can help inform the following days' activities.

Give yourself an hour to plan for a few days at a time, especially if there are time sensitive plans. Remember that some plans will come after reviewing what actually happened.

Guide for the Day

THEME:

Topic/Question:

Date:

Morning Meeting:
Jot down what stays the same (e.g. morning song, or mindful movement game) and what new ideas you are going to introduce and how (e.g. read story about bugs)

Open Play:
What materials do you need for sensory, drama, building, loose parts, art experiences?

Small Group:
What small group activities are happening? How will groups be broken up?

Outside:
What are the new experiences or activities happening outside?

Documentation:
*How will you document the children’s learning?
What can the parent/adult-helper do?*

Reflection:
What did you observe today? What surprised you? How does this inform the next day(s) plan/guide/approach? What do I need to change? Keep the same for further exploration?

Additional Resources

THINGS TO WATCH:

[Making Learning Visible from Reggio Children](#)

[Documentation and Communication from Reggio Children](#)

[Talking about Race with Young Children](#)

[Diversity Meets Picture Books! What You Need to Know to Select Inclusive Materials from Early Childhood Investigations](#)

[Teaching Social Justice: Navigating the Deep Waters of Equity in Early Childhood Programs](#)

THINGS TO READ:

[Tom Drummond - Resources & Writings](#)

“Going Deeper: Exploring Reflective Practices with Inspiration from Reggio Emilia” By Sarah Adams-Kollitz (pdf)

“The Contribution of Documentation to the Quality of Early Childhood Education” By Lillian Katz & Sylvia Chard (pdf)

“Inspired by Reggio Emilia: Emergent Curriculum in Relationship-Driven Learning Environments” By Mary Ann Bieermeier (pdf)

“The Emergence of Emergent Curriculum” by Elizabeth Jones (pdf)

“Negotiating with Art Media to Deepen Learning” by George Forman (pdf)

“Making your Environment The Third Teacher” by Margie Carter (pdf)

“Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins” by Loris Malaguzzi (pdf)

SELF GUIDED LEARNING:

Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Teacher Leadership: [Complete the module including learning activities \(duration 1 hr\)](#)

Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Family and Community Engagement: [Complete the module including learning activities \(duration 1 hr\)](#)