

Your Natural Learner

FREE SAMPLE OF THE KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM



Introduction Excerpt

I'm so happy that you made this investment in your child's education and future; and I know that you are going to love what you find in here! The activities in this curriculum are all things that I have done with my children, so they are tried and tested by a parent, teacher, and child!

I highly recommend reading through these introductory materials before beginning any of the activities. They will tell you more about my personal educational philosophies which will provide insight into why I chose the activities that I did for this curriculum. You will learn more about how to engage your child in nature in a way that is safe and exciting. You will also find a sample calendar for how to implement this curriculum throughout the year, and suggestions for ways to set up an indoor and outdoor learning space, as well as specifics about how to implement the individual portions of the themes themselves.

In line with what the great Maria Montessori taught, I firmly believe that play is a child's work. Developmentally speaking, a child is truly not ready to sit down for a focused and structured lesson until at least the age of seven. Obviously, this is not what we are doing in our public school system in this country. There are studies being released all the time showing that we are harming our children by forcing them to learn things before they are developmentally ready - things like reading, advanced math concepts, spelling, writing, etc. are forcing our young children to give up play in exchange for a jumpstart on high test scores.

This is why my program uses only quality literature and hands-on experiences in nature, art, and sensory play. Young children are fully capable of learning literacy lessons and math skills, but the way in which they are taught is imperative to their overall development. Real world, hands-on experience is absolutely the best way for a child to learn, especially at the preschool age! And nowhere but in nature are these experiences more readily available!

-Leah McDermott

Several studies have been done in recent years that show us the many benefits of children being outdoors that are not at all surprising!

Supports multiple domain development: Connecting with nature helps your child develop socially, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. (Kellert, 2005).

Supports creativity and problem solving skills: Children who play outside have more active imaginations and are more likely to be able to solve a complex problem than peers who spend most of their time inside. (Kellert, 2005)

Enhances concentration and lessens ADD-like behaviors: Daily exposure to nature increases a child's ability to focus, enhances their cognitive ability, and significantly lessens symptoms of ADD in children as young as five (Kuo and Taylor, 2004).

Improves academic performance: Schools that use outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based education show significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. (American Institutes for Research, 2005).

Improves nutrition: Children who grow their own food are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables and a well-balanced diet. They are also more likely to continue healthy eating habits throughout their lives (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002).

Improves social relations: When children are free to explore and engage in unstructured play outdoors (both by themselves and with others), they are smarter and better able to get along with others. (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005).

Reduces stress: Green plants and vegetation reduce stress among highly stressed children. Locations with greater number of plants, greener views, and access to natural play areas show more significant results (Wells and Evans, 2003).

Improves eyesight: More time spent outdoors is related to reduced rates of nearsightedness, also known as myopia, in children and adolescents (American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2011).

These are just a few of the many benefits that have been scientifically found to having children get daily time playing and engaging in nature! Don't you feel wonderful that you are helping your child improve in every area of their lives, simply by taking them outside? You should!

Excerpt from "Setting Up a Learning Space" Section of the Curriculum

Setting up a learning space, no matter how big or small, is a wonderful way to encourage child-led learning throughout the day. Whether you have an entire room dedicated to this, or simply a small table in the family area, intention is more important than quantity of items!

Some things I definitely recommend including are:

Nature table: This can be a full table dedicated to nature or a small bin which can be brought out and put away as needed, but it is a wonderful idea to have a designated space for your child to keep the treasures and other items for collection that are found on a nature walk...

Art space: Having a space for your child to do art is something that they will definitely benefit from. If you have the space this can be...

Quiet space: Not only is a designated quiet space an excellent place for daily quiet time, but it is also a great way for your child to have a space of their own where they can go if they are feeling...

Outdoor space: A place for your child to explore and create outside is another learning space that I highly recommend setting up. Three important elements to a great outdoor playspace are...

Each theme contains notes to parents & tips on extending activities for deeper learning & integration.

Earth Theme Purpose

Obviously there is no study more important to a nature-inspired curriculum than the study of the Earth! Without our Mother Earth we simply cannot exist. By teaching our children to love and care for the Earth, keep it clean, and preserve its natural resources, we are creating a sustainable future for generations to come! The most important thing that you can teach your child during this theme is that it is important to care for and clean up the Earth every day, not just on days like Earth Day or when you are doing earth-themed activities. In this theme your child will learn about conservation, ways to go green, and about the uniqueness of planet Earth compared to other planets in the solar system. Through a variety of sensory experiences, science investigations, and fun art activities, your child will get to explore their love for the Earth and all that it has to offer us as its inhabitants.

Note:

As mentioned in the curriculum introduction, please be aware of how you discuss issues like conservation and preserving the Earth with your young child. While you want to instill a sense of responsibility for caring for the planet, you want to be careful not to place undue stress about the responsibility on your young child. Make it a light-hearted and fun discussion to make your child excited about wanting to clean up the Earth instead of doing it out of guilt.

What subjects are included in the Kindergarten Curriculum?

- Art Activities
- Math Connections
- Science Experiments
- Sensory Activities
- Nature Explorations
- Food Fun
- & more!



Want to know more?

Scroll to the last page of this sample booklet for a complete Scope & Sequence that provides one possible order of themes, you can do the themes in any order that works for your child and family! It also shows the skills and academics covered in each of the themes.

Ready to buy all 21 themes?



Purchase Pre-K/ Kindergarten Curriculum

naturallearningshop.com

Literature Lesson in Critical Thinking using The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

Purpose

Equally as important as being able to read, is being able to adequately comprehend the material being read! Part of reading comprehension is the ability to both ask and answer critical thinking questions. Critical thinking questions are questions that cannot be answered solely by looking in the text - they may be opinion questions or more abstract questions. At this young age, your child should just now be starting to have the capability to answer critical thinking questions. Having this complex thinking will also help your child with descriptive writing when they reach that stage!

Guidance

Before you begin reading, take a "picture walk" through the text with your child. To do this, you will simply flip through the book looking only at the images in the story. This will give your child a preview of what the story will be about and grab their attention. Read through *The Lorax* with your child, stopping to allow them to ask questions or engage with the text and images. This is a powerful story and one that will most likely touch your nature-loving child; give them a chance to process things before moving on. After you've finished reading, ask your child some open-ended, critical thinking questions. Some examples: "What was the land like before the Once-ler came?" "Why was the Lorax sad?" "The Lorax helped his environment by standing up for the trees. How can you help your environment?" etc.

ABC Nature Walk from the Nature Activities Section

To practice letter and sound recognition as well as celebrating the earth, make your nature walk a bit challenging by going on an ABC nature hunt! Before heading out on a nature walk, make a scavenger hunt sheet with boxes for each of the letters A through Z.

You could do this by hand by making a quick grid or print something out. As you are on your walk, have your child draw objects that they find for each letter. You may have to help younger children with this if they are unfamiliar with letters and sounds. For some of the trickier letters, get creative... for "Q", maybe you spy a "quiet tree" or for "X", perhaps that bird whistle sounds like a "xylophone song"!

Tissue Paper Earth from the ART Activities section

This fun art activity is also wonderful practice for fine motor skills. You will need a piece of thin cardboard or card stock, blue and green tissue paper, and white craft glue.

Cut a circle out of the card stock or cardboard to be your Earth. Either in advance of the project or with your child's help, cut or tear small square shapes out of the green and blue tissue paper. Squirt some glue onto a plate or small container, then show your child how to pinch a tissue paper square, dip it in the glue, and stick it to the Earth.

One way that seems to work easily for small children is to stick their finger in the center of the square, pull up around it, and then use that finger to dip and press on to the Earth. Fill the entire earth with land and water and then hang in celebration!

Earth Layers Playdough from Sensory Activities Section

This awesome play dough activity also makes a fantastic science investigation!

For this activity you will need the following colors of play dough (homemade or store-bought): red, orange, yellow, brown, blue, and green. Have your child help you construct the following layers of the earth by making a ball and then covering each ball in the next color by forming a ball around the smaller ball. Start with a small red ball, cover that in orange, then a yellow ball, then brown, then blue.

On top of the blue, press in green landform shapes, keeping the earth round. When your 3-D Earth is complete, have your child cut the play dough Earth right down the center. The easiest way to do this in a clean cut is to use a long piece of dental floss ?wrap it around the center and pull the ends in opposite directions to cut through the play dough.

Your child will then be amazed to see all of the layers of the Earth's crust! Explain to your child that the red is the Earth's solid inner core, which is almost as hot as the sun! The orange is the liquid outer core, that is constantly spinning and is magnetic. The yellow is the mantle, which is the thickest layer made up of super hot rocks. The brown is the Earth's crust, also made of rocks. The blue, of course, is the ocean and the green is the land that we walk on!

Water Pollution Experiment from the Science Experiments Section

While I believe it is important to not burden young children with too many harsh realities of environmental disasters, I also think that it is important to instill some responsibility for proper care of the Earth at a young age. It's all about balance! To do this experiment, you will need a bin or basin filled with water, any kind of vegetable oil, and assorted kitchen trash such as plastic bottles and paper. Explain to your child that, sadly, many people do not throw their trash away in proper places, and that big companies sometimes spill oil into water. Demonstrate these events by having your child place the trash in the water and pour some oil into the water.

Now, ask your child if they think it will be easy to clean up the mess to get the water back to the way it was. Present your child with various items to use as cleanup tools - tongs, sieve, strainer, sponge, towel, etc. and have them experiment with cleaning up. They should observe that although they can remove the bigger pieces of trash, removing the oil is a much more impossible task.

This easy experiment will certainly leave a lasting impression on your child - it may even spur you to want to do some cleanup at your local water space. Indulge if you can!

Follow up with a reading of *Oil Spill* by Melvin Berger.

Recycled Paper Number Hunt from the Math Connections Section

Recycled Paper Number Hunt - This is a fun way for your child to practice number recognition skills as well as cutting and pasting practice! Gather an assortment of old magazines or newspapers. With your child, sift through the pages on a Number Hunt. If your child is in the beginning stages of number recognition, simply finding any number (as opposed to a letter) is perfect. If your child has a better understanding of the specific numbers, make this more challenging by giving them a certain number to look for. When they find the number, have them cut it out and paste it to a piece of paper, making a recycled number collage.

Fruit Earth from the Food Fun Section

Make this simple and delightful little Earth made of sweet blueberries and green grapes! Your child can easily assist with this project. Give them a safe knife to help you cut the grapes in half if they are able, or simply let them help you assemble the Earth. Pair this snack up with a reading of *The EARTH Book* by Todd Parr.

Ingredients:

blueberries
washed green grapes
small round plate

Directions:

1. Cut the green grapes in half, across the short sides.
2. Have your child assemble an Earth on the round plate with the blueberries (ocean) and the green grapes (land).
3. Enjoy!

Tip #1: This is easiest to do if you place the grapes cut side down first to make your land masses, and then fill in the remaining space on the plate with the blueberry ocean. Tip#2: This is great to serve alongside a bowl of yogurt for dipping the fruit!

Watch a Learning Lab!

Ready to purchase the curriculum, including parent notes & all 21 themes?

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PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM SCOPE & SEQUENCE

	Autumn <i>Trees / Space /Rocks / Rainforest/ Autumn</i>	Winter <i>Arctic / Light/ Ice / Holiday / Winter</i>	Spring <i>Weather / Flowers / Eggs / Earth Birds / Spring</i>	Summer <i>Ocean Life / Garden / Colors Bugs / Summer</i>
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary practice problem and solution in stories letter and sound exploration sound words prediction retelling character descriptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary practice descriptive language prediction rhyming compare/contrast sequencing spelling and writing your name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary practice similes critical thinking rhyming problem and solution cause and effect observational and descriptive language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary practice critical thinking letter recognition text to self connections sequencing print direction
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> small to large vocabulary number comparison basic 2D shape exploration simple measurement number recognition counting number writing balance/weight estimation pattern recognition simple adding/subtracting with numbers up to 20 sorting/categorizing symmetry simple graphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> comparing measurements sorting making patterns labeling reading thermometers using measurement tools size comparison counting estimation balancing weights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> counting charting/graphing temperature exploration subtraction of single digits short to tall vocabulary number recognition pattern recognition estimation liquid measurements more than/less than comparison shape recognition symmetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sorting by size counting graphing number writing number lines and ordering length and height number sorting classification matching dividing equally shape recognition distance measurement
Science & Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tree study changes in nature photosynthesis night vs day space exploration moon cycle rock identification and sorting microhabitats erosion creature camouflage ecosystems seasonal changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effects of global warming animal homes states of matter shadows and light transparency ice exploration animal adaptations in cold climates magnets hibernation dissolving seasonal changes snowflake exploration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weather exploration storm study and preparation cloud types expansion growing flowers parts of a plant gravity sinking/floating weight distribution animals that lay eggs environmentalism ecosystems water pollution bird studies transfer observation & seasonal changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ocean life exploring shells animal communication saltwater vs freshwater gardens and how plants grow sprouting seeds bug exploration and their importance in the environment gravity exploration
Art & Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> photography painting sculpting 3D art new mediums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cutting skills recycled art watercolor shadow art building and construction nature art weaving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> color mixing still life nature drawing physical art painting pressing flowers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recycled art printmaking color recognition shades of colors painting symmetry
Social Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working together taking care of the Earth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> physical health senses cultural holiday celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> caring for animals and the planet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gardens as self-sustainability sunscreen use
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensory explorations reflections baking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> baking sensory explorations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensory explorations foraging fine motor practice cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sensory explorations gross and fine motor exploration cooking creative problem solving