

March

A young boy with short hair, wearing a striped polo shirt and jeans, is sitting on a couch and reading a book. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The entire image has a teal color cast. The book he is reading is open, and he is holding it with both hands.

The Sky

About the Unit

During this unit, “The Sky,” children will learn about weather, the moon, sun, stars, and other things commonly seen in the sky. Children will also become aware of the importance of rain and how rainbows are formed. Activities will focus on helping children develop language and math skills, as well as fostering creativity. The learning centers provide children with opportunities for hands-on explorations. Children will listen to the sounds water makes at the science and sensory learning center and will use new vocabulary to describe the sounds they hear. They will use reasoning skills and make predictions about stories while spending time in the library and language arts learning center. Children will enjoy themselves as they learn new songs, play games, and tell group stories while learning about the sky.

About the Books

Little Cloud by Eric Carle

Little Cloud begins his journey traveling with other clouds in the sky. He decides to wander off and experiment with the many shapes he can form in the sky. This story provides text that encourages children to predict how Little Cloud will change his shape from one page to the next. Little Cloud is the shape of a hat, but what shape will he form next? Children

enjoy stories with repetitive text and simple illustrations that allow them to tell the story on their own. Children will not only develop language skills as they identify the many shapes of Little Cloud, but they will also build on reasoning skills as they consider how Little Cloud will change his shape.

Good Night, Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

It’s bedtime at the zoo, but not for Gorilla and his group of animal friends! As the zookeeper passes Gorilla’s cage and says good night, Gorilla sneaks the zookeeper’s keys. He quietly tiptoes behind the zookeeper while he makes his rounds through the zoo, saying good night to the animals as he passes their cages. Gorilla sneakily unlocks their cages and invites the animals on a journey around the zoo and all the way back to the zookeeper’s house. Children will make predictions during this story—making predictions is an important critical-thinking skill. Encourage children to share their predictions about what the zookeeper and animals will do next.

Supplementary Book List

The following books are not required to implement this unit. However, teachers may find these books useful in illustrating concepts introduced in the unit or as read-aloud material to be used during the unit. This list is intended as a starting point in locating literature appropriate to this age level and the unit:

Good Night, Mr. Night by Dan Yaccarino
Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
Good Night Sun, Hello Moon
 by Reader's Digest
I Love You, Sun, I Love You, Moon
 by Karen Pandell
Sun, Snow, and Rainbow! (My Turn)
 by Diane James and Ivan Bulloch
What Can You Do in the Sun?
 by Anna Grossnickle Hines
What Can You Do in the Rain?
 by Anna Grossnickle Hines
Up in the Sky by Raymond Bryant

The books on this list were in print at the time this manual was constructed. Unfortunately, children's books go in and out of print very quickly. It is entirely possible that some of the books on this list are no longer widely available. This is not an exhaustive list of all possible books that could be used to support the unit's concepts. Use your local bookseller or children's librarian as a resource to locate supplemental books.

The Sky

Learning Centers

Library: Photo Cards and Books 6
 Language Arts: Spring Flannel Stories 7
 Math and Manipulatives:
 Small, Medium, and Large 8
 Science and Sensory: Water Play 9
 Blocks: Airport 10
 Dramatic Play: Picnic at the Park 11
 Creative Arts: Sculptures 12

Daily Activities

Day 1	14
Day 2	18
Day 3	22
Day 4	26
Day 5	30
Day 6	34
Day 7	38
Day 8	42
Day 9	46
Day 10	50
Day 11	54
Day 12	58
Day 13	62
Day 14	66
Day 15	70
Day 16	74
Day 17	78
Day 18	82
Day 19	86
Day 20	90
Day 21	94
Day 22	98
Day 23	102

March — The Sky

This month children will learn about sky-related topics, including weather, the moon, sun, stars, and other things commonly seen in the sky.

Day One

- Little Cloud Group Reading
- Math-Card Sort by Size
- "It's Raining, It's Pouring"

Day Two

- Flannel-Board Story
- Photo-Card Sort
- Wind Dance

Day Three

- Which Tower Has More?
- Cotton-Ball Art
- Photo-Card Story

Day Four

- "Reaching Up and Down"
- Find a Kelsey Counter
- Exploring Letters

Day Five

- How We Know It's Morning
- Numeral ID
- Passing the Sun

Day Six

- "Morning Song"
- Photo-Card Discussion
- Rereading Little Cloud

Day Seven

- Open and Close
- Blue and White Feely Box
- Finger-Puppet Story

Day Eight

- Rain Discussion
- Story-Card Sequencing
- "Raindrops"

Day Nine

- Sky Gazing
- Counting Mat
- Little Cloud, May I?

Day Ten

- What Do You Wear Each Season?
- Mystery Box
- Body Storm

Day Eleven

- Good Night, Gorilla Group Reading
- Math-Card Sort by Size
- "Down By the Bay" Flannel-Board Story

Day Twelve

- Rainbow Discussion
- Rainbow-Crayon Drawings
- "Down By the Bay"

Day Thirteen

- Build to the Sky
- Heavy or Light? Long or Short?
- Obstacle Course

Day Fourteen

- Night Sky Discussion
- Star Box
- "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

Day Fifteen

- "I'm a Little Airplane"
- Shape Puzzles
- "Side to Side"

Day Sixteen

- Cloud Hopping
- Sky Writing
- Rereading Good Night, Gorilla

Day Seventeen

- Airplane Moves
- Shape Identification
- Bubbles in the Sky

Day Eighteen

- Day and Night Skies
- Little Cloud Predictions
- Rolling the Ball

Day Nineteen

- "Here We Go Looby Loo"
- Beanbag in the Middle
- Sky-Object Match

Day Twenty

- Daytime and Nighttime Activities
- Will It Move?
- Silent Stop and Go

Day Twenty-One

- Rainy-Day Group Story
- Umbrella Sequencing
- "Rain, Rain, Go Away"

Day Twenty-Two

- Birds, Birds, Birds
- Painting with Craft Feathers
- Move Like a Bird

Day Twenty-Three

- Up, Up in the Sky
- Patterning with Math Cards
- "Hey, Diddle, Diddle"

Learning Centers

Dramatic Play

Picnic at the Park

The dramatic play center will be transformed into an outdoor picnic area. Children will role-play people enjoying a picnic in the park on a pleasant spring day.

Science/Sensory

Water Play

Children will explore water in the sensory table. They will also discover how water changes when bubbles are added.

Creative Arts

Sculptures

Children will create individual and group sculptures using play dough, collage materials, and boxes.

Blocks

Airport

Children will use the blocks to build airports for the airplanes. They can also build runways.

Library/Language Arts

Spring Flannel Stories

Flannel pieces will be used on the flannel board to help children tell stories.

Featured Books: *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle
Good Night, Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann



Math/Manipulatives

Small, Medium, and Large

Children sort by size using all three sorting mats and the math cards. The words *small*, *medium*, and *large* will be used to describe different sizes.

Family Connection

Assessing Children's Development

Young children are growing and progressing at a rapid pace. As they play, learn, and discover through cognitive, physical, and social activities, children are mastering skills and developing new ones. Assessing a child's growth throughout the year ensures he or she is presented with daily activities within the curriculum that meet his or her individual needs in a developmentally appropriate way.

As teachers interact with and observe young children, they are able to form a more complete understanding of a child's development. Assessment allows teachers to recognize and appreciate skills children have mastered as well as identify areas with room for further development. This information allows teachers to provide children with a well-rounded learning environment based on their interests and abilities. Regular developmental assessments provide an opportunity to celebrate each child's growth and support future learning.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Young children learn by repeating experiences. Children this age like to have the same books read over and over again. Support this learning process by keeping favorite books in the library for an extended period of time.

LIBRARY**Photo Cards and Books****Materials**

Sky-related photos, photo cards #1 through #12 from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
Early Foundations® photo-card tray
Fiction and nonfiction books about the sky that are appropriate for children
Little Cloud by Eric Carle
Good Night, Gorilla by Peggy Rathman

Preparation

Place the photo cards in the photo tray in the library.
Enrich the library with books from the supplementary list on page 3.
Visit your local library or bookseller to obtain the books. Or gather books about the sky from the center's book collection and place the books in the library.

Learning Opportunities

As children enter the library and library during child-directed learning, direct their attention to the photo cards. **"Sasha, let's look at the clouds in these photographs."** Look through the photo cards with a child or a few children at a time. Ask questions about the photos. **"This is a photograph of a rainbow. What colors do you see in the rainbow?"**

Similarly, as children look at the books, ask open-ended questions about the pictures. **"On this page, the little girl is flying a kite. What do you think she is going to do next?...Turn the page and let's find out."**

LANGUAGE ARTS

Spring Flannel Stories

Materials

Flannel pieces from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
Finger puppets of bear, bee, goose, moose, and whale
Early Foundations® flannel board
Tub or basket
CD player
Music CD from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit

Preparation

Weeks 1 and 2: Choose a quiet area of the classroom for a flannel-board center. Set up the flannel board with the flannel pieces. Place the remaining flannel pieces in a tub or basket and set it near the flannel board.

Weeks 3 and 4: Place the finger puppets of the bear, bee, goose, moose, and whale on the flannel board. Set up the CD player in a safe location near the flannel board. Cue the CD to “Down By the Bay,” song #6, for children to listen to during Weeks 3 and 4 of the unit.

Learning Opportunities

As children visit the library and language arts learning center, encourage them to use the flannel pieces on the flannel board. When a child shows interest in a flannel piece, talk with him or her about how the flannel piece can be used to help tell a story. **“Simon, you have a flower flannel piece. What could the flower do in our story?”**

After children have had a couple of weeks to explore the flannel pieces, add the CD player to the learning center. Play “Down By the Bay” on the CD and encourage the children to use the flannel pieces to act out the song. Invite children to sing along with the song.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Children learn vocabulary words and language skills by being exposed to verbal language. Use simple words and adjust the amount of detail to correspond with the vocabulary level of the child with whom you're talking. Over time, children's vocabulary and complexity of language should increase.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Children learn shape names and other math vocabulary through repeated exposure and correct modeling.

Throughout each day, use the words *circle*, *triangle*, *square*, *small*, *medium*, and *large* in different contexts. Be sure to use clear and precise vocabulary and to repeat the words often as you work with the children.

Model sorting the shapes and encourage the children to sort the shapes by shape and then by size. Also allow the children to manipulate the shapes in any way they choose.

Small, Medium, and Large**Materials**

Math cards from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
Early Foundations[®] size sorting mats

Preparation

Weeks 1 and 2: Choose three sets of pictures from the math cards. Place the chosen math cards for small and large and the size sorting mats for small and large in a cleared area on the floor or on a child-size table to be accessible during child-directed learning.

Weeks 3 and 4: Add the remaining math cards and the medium sorting mat to the size sorting mats for use during Weeks 3 and 4.

Learning Opportunities

During child-directed learning, invite children to sort the math cards. Model how to use the size mats to sort the cards. Verbally describe how you are using the cards. **"This mat is for the cards with small pictures. Let's put all of the cards with small pictures on this mat."** As children work to sort the math cards, gently guide the process as needed. **"You found a picture of a large umbrella. Now find a picture showing a small umbrella."** Encourage the children to work together to sort the cards.

After children have sorted by small and large for two weeks, add the remaining medium-size math cards and the medium-size sorting mat. Encourage the children to sort by size using all three mats. Use the words *small*, *medium*, and *large* as you talk with the children about the different sizes.

Science and Sensory

Water Play

Materials

Sensory table or tub	Whisks
Water	Towels
Turkey basters	Blue food coloring
Plastic spoons	Smocks
Liquid dish soap	

Preparation

Weeks 1 and 2: Fill the sensory table or tub with two inches of water. Mix in a few drops of blue food coloring. Arrange the turkey basters and plastic spoons nearby so they are accessible to the children for use during child-directed learning.

Weeks 3 and 4: Mix a few drops of liquid dish soap in the water. Add the whisks to the turkey basters and spoons for use during Weeks 3 and 4.

Learning Opportunities

During child-directed learning, invite children to explore the water. **“Natalie, you can squeeze a turkey baster to fill it with blue water.”** Allow time for children to play with the water. As you play with the children, talk about the sensory experience. **“The water makes splashing noises. Do you like the sound it makes when you pour water from the spoon?”** If a child is hesitant about touching the water, offer a spoon for him or her to use to explore the water.

After children have had two weeks to play with the water, instead of food coloring, mix in a few drops of liquid dish soap and set out the whisks for use during Weeks 3 and 4. Encourage the children to make bubbles by whisking the water. As children use the whisks, ask open-ended questions about their work. **“Robbie, what do you like about the bubbles?”**

CAUTION! Spills are inevitable during an activity of this type. Keep towels and a mop nearby to clean up spills as soon as they occur to prevent injuries from slips and falls. Placing a rubber mat on the floor under the sensory table may also protect children from injuries. Never leave standing water unattended.

Note Remind children to wash their hands before and after using the sensory table. Remember to drain the water from the table each day.

TEACHER'S NOTES

It is normal for children this age to splash and spill water outside of the sensory table. Have towels available nearby to dry any spills. If necessary, tell children, **“The water needs to stay in the sensory table. If you want to play with the water, you need to be at the sensory table.”**

TEACHER'S NOTES

Children at this age should not be expected to consistently share materials. Therefore, it is important to supply enough toy airplanes and toy people for each child in the learning center to have access to a toy airplane and a few toy people.

Airport**Materials**

Toy airplanes
Toy people
Baskets or plastic tubs
Toy airport, if available

Preparation

Place the toy airplanes and toy people in separate baskets. Put the baskets on the floor or on a low shelf in the block area. If a toy airport is available, set it in the block area for the children to use during child-directed learning.

Learning Opportunities

As children visit the block area, encourage them to use the blocks to build airports and runways for the airplanes. Children can also use the airport as the center of play and build runways nearby. Whenever possible, use vocabulary introduced during the unit to discuss the sky. **"Charlotte, you are flying a big airplane. Where are you flying?"**

Dramatic Play

Picnic at the Park

Materials

Dress-up clothes, such as sun hats, sandals, and sundresses	Plastic toy dishes
Sunglasses	Napkins
Unbreakable, full-length mirror	Unbreakable binoculars
Picnic baskets	Quilt batting or cotton balls
Outdoor blanket	Yellow and green paper
Child-size table and chairs	Scissors (for teacher use only)
Tablecloth	Tape (for teacher use only)
Plastic toy food	String (for teacher use only)

Preparation

- Transform the dramatic play area into an outdoor picnic area.
- Make clouds by cutting the quilt batting into cloud shapes or by gluing the cotton balls to paper. Cut a sun from the yellow paper and grass from the green paper.
- Hang clouds and the sun from the ceiling with string, so they are low enough for the children to see but just out of their reach. Attach the paper grass to the wall.
- Arrange the child-size chairs around the child-size table and place the tablecloth over it; this will be the picnic table.
- Place the picnic items so they are accessible to the children.
- Hang dress-up clothes and arrange the sandals and sunglasses near this area. Place a mirror close to the dress-up clothes.

Learning Opportunities

- Help children who visit the dramatic play center to dress up to go on a picnic. Allow the children to put on any items they choose.
- Encourage children to put on and remove clothing on their own.
- Provide assistance as needed.

Invite children to look at themselves in the full-length mirror. Offer suggestions for what children can do within the dramatic play area. **“John, you look ready for a picnic. Can you pack the picnic basket?”** Take on a role yourself, such as a child asking to play a game. Ask open-ended questions that encourage children to verbalize their thinking and to use vocabulary related to the picnic. **“I am getting hungry. What are we going to eat on our picnic?”**

Note Secure permission from your director before hanging anything from the ceiling. Always use a stepladder to hang things. Never stand on a chair or table.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Children naturally enjoy creative expression. Allow children to freely explore the props that are provided and to use the props in creating roles for themselves. Avoid stepping in to dominate the children's activities. Instead, take on a role yourself and help direct play from within the activity.

TEACHER'S NOTES

During Weeks 1 and 2 of this unit, the children can use play dough to form three-dimensional sculptures and push collage items into the dough. Then, during Weeks 3 and 4, the children can glue collage items onto cardboard boxes and/or tubes. While children work at the creative arts learning center, allow them to explore the materials in any way they choose.

If any children in the class do not have experience with play dough, take time to demonstrate how to shape the dough. Be sure to phrase expectations positively by saying, **"The ribbons stay at the table. You can put them in your play dough."**

CAUTION! Paper clips are a choking hazard. Keep paper clips out of children's reach at all times.

Sculptures**Materials**

Commercial play dough or ingredients and tools to make play dough
 Plastic containers with lids
 Two-dimensional collage materials, such as confetti, scraps of paper, ribbon, and yarn pieces
 Three-dimensional collage materials, such as shredded paper, cotton balls, crumpled paper, dry pasta pieces
 Small plastic tubs or bowls
 Small cardboard boxes and/or cardboard tubes
 Large cardboard boxes
 Glue
 Paint trays and/or large plastic lids with rims
 Newspaper
 Craft sticks
 Paper plates
 Paper clip (for teacher use only)
 Marker

Preparation

Week 1: If needed, make play dough using the Basic Play Dough recipe in Appendix D on page 384. Organize two or three collage items in tubs or bowls. Place fist-size balls of dough on the child-size table in front of each chair. Arrange the baskets of collage items on the table for the children to use during child-directed learning. Set paper plates and additional play dough available nearby.

Week 2: Continue using play dough. Place additional collage items in separate tubs or bowls and add the tubs and bowls to the art table.

Week 3: Cover the art table with newspaper. Set the small cardboard boxes and/or tubes in the learning center for children to choose from. Pour small amounts of glue on paint trays and/or plastic lids. Place the containers of glue and the craft sticks at the table. Place the collage items in tubs or bowls so they are within reach of the children while they work.

Week 4: If space allows, arrange newspaper on the floor. If space does not allow children to work on the floor, cover the art table with newspaper. Place a large cardboard box on the newspaper. Set the glue, craft sticks, and collage items within reach of the box.

Learning Opportunities

Encourage the children to visit the creative arts learning center to make play-dough sculptures during Week 1 of the unit. If necessary, demonstrate how the collage materials can be pushed into the dough. Allow children the freedom to create in any way they choose. As children work, comment on the process and encourage exploration.

“The dough holds the yarn in place. What are you going to push into your ball of dough?” When a child finishes a sculpture, place it on a paper plate and use the end of a paper clip to etch the child’s name and the date on the bottom of the dough. Place the sculpture in a safe place while it dries.

During Week 2, invite children to make more sculptures using the additional collage items.

In Week 3, introduce the cardboard boxes and/or tubes and allow children to create sculptures by gluing collage items on the cardboard pieces. When a child finishes, write his or her name and the date on the sculpture and place the finished sculpture in a safe place to allow the glue to dry.

For Week 4, encourage children to work together to create a group sculpture using the large cardboard box. Ask the children open-ended questions. **“Robin and Nicole, you spread the glue across the box. Which collage items are you going to stick to the glue?”**

Morning Group Time

Calendar/Morning Routines

Begin group time each morning with as many of the following routines as children's interest and time allow:

- "Gathering Song"
- Who's Here Today? Name Activity
- What Day Is It? Calendar Activity
- Daily Weather
- What We'll Do Today Discussion
- Special Days Discussion

Each of these activities is described in detail in Appendix C, page 378, and in the *Early Foundations® Discovery Preschool Teacher's Guide*.

This Unit's Theme Bring the theme label "The Sky" to group time. Direct the children's attention to the sentence at the bottom of the Early Foundations® calendar pocket chart. Tell the children the theme and show them the card with the words on it. Place the word card on the calendar at the end of the sentence that reads "This unit's theme is...." Read it to the children: **"This unit's theme is 'The Sky.'"** Talk about the theme and discuss some of the things children will learn and do throughout the unit. Take time to point out the enrichments you have added to each learning center and review any special rules that go along with these items, for example, **"There is water in the sensory table. Be sure to wear a smock while you play in the water to help keep your clothes dry."**

What We'll Do Today Today, introduce children to this unit's theme, "The Sky." The book *Little Cloud* offers a simple way to get children thinking about clouds, rain, and other things in the sky.

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Little Cloud Group Reading

TEACHER'S NOTES

Although a young child may not be able to read, he or she can develop an understanding of a story through the images on a page. Encouraging children to predict text based on pictorial clues in a book offers another way for children to expand their story sense.

Objective

To listen and show interest in stories read aloud

Materials *Little Cloud* from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit

Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the book *Little Cloud*. Place the book where it will be easily accessible for this activity.

Description

Invite the children to listen to a story. Show the children the cover of the book and read the title. Have the children look at the pictures. Ask them to make predictions. **"When you look at this book cover, what do you think this book will be about?"** After a few children have had a chance to predict, read the story.

As you read each page, encourage the children to comment on the things they see and predict what will happen next. **"On this page, Little Cloud is the shape of a hat. What do you think he'll turn into next?"** Allow time for children to respond. When you're finished reading the book, talk about the story. **"What were some of the shapes Little Cloud turned into?"** Continue the discussion for as long as children show interest or time allows.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Place the book in the classroom library for children to look at during child-directed learning.

MARCH

Small-Group Activity

Math-Card Sort by Size

TEACHER'S NOTES

Sorting encourages children to recognize the attributes of objects. Although some children may be comfortable sorting the pictures cards by size into three groups, others may need additional practice before being ready for this complex step. Allow children to master this skill by first sorting into two size groups, small and large. When they are familiar with these categories, the medium cards can be added.

Objective

To sort objects into subgroups based on attributes

Materials

Math cards from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
Early Foundations[®] size sorting mats, small and large

Preparation

Gather one group of math cards representing two sizes, such as the small and large umbrella cards. Collect the small and large sorting mats. Place the cards and the mats on a child-size table to be accessible during child-directed learning.

Description

Ask two or three children at a time to join you for a sorting activity. Show the children each of the sorting mats and the three math cards. **“Olivia, join us in sorting these math cards. Each math card has a picture on it. What picture is on all of the cards?... You’re right. An umbrella. The umbrellas are different sizes. Some are small and some are large. Let’s work together to sort them by size on these mats.”**

Show the children each of the sorting mats and ask them to identify their sizes. **“I have two size mats. Which one is the small sorting mat?...Right, it’s the one with the smaller square. The large square is much bigger.”**

Encourage the children to look at both cards and determine which card shows the small umbrella. **“Which of these umbrellas is small?...That’s right; let’s put it on the small sorting mat.”** Continue sorting with the additional math cards, placing small on small and large on large. When all of the cards have been placed on a sorting mat, discuss how their sizes are different. Then reshuffle the cards and repeat the process.

As children become confident in their sorting abilities, replace the current math cards with a different set, such as those picturing the watering can. Children can then work together to sort the new cards appropriately.

TIPS FOR OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Observe children as they sort the math cards according to size. Note whether the children need more practice sorting two sizes or sort two sizes successfully and are ready to progress to sorting three sizes. Document your observations and use them when you complete the children’s Early Foundations[®] Discovery Preschool Developmental Assessments.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

When children are comfortable sorting into small and large groups, introduce the medium math cards and sorting mat and have the children sort into three groups.

Place the math cards and the sorting mats in the math and manipulatives learning center for children to use during child-directed learning. Tell the children the items will be in the learning center so they can practice sorting them at another time.

TEACHER'S NOTES

Singing songs with repetitive verses helps children expand their developing vocabulary. When children are repeatedly exposed to words they gain a better understanding of the sounds and how they are used in relation to other words, and are more likely to start producing them independently.

"It's Raining, It's Pouring"

Objective

To participate cooperatively in group music experiences

Materials

"It's Raining, It's Pouring" song and fingerplay chart from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
Music CD from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
CD player

Preparation

Place the CD player near the group area. Cue the CD to "It's Raining, It's Pouring," song #2. Familiarize yourself with the song. Display the song chart so it will be clearly visible to all the children during group time.

Description

Invite the children to participate in a music activity. Explain to the children you would like to teach them a song about the rain. **"I would like to teach you a song about the rain. Where does the rain come from?...Right, the rain falls from the clouds in the sky."** Next, tell the children you will sing the words to the song one time through. Children can sing along as they become familiar with the song.

After singing the song through once, encourage the children to sing it with you.

Repeat the song for as long as the children show a continued interest.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Encourage the children to think of movements they can perform to accompany the words of the song and encourage them to perform the movements while they are singing.

Closing Routine

What We Learned Today

Materials

Chart paper

Marker

Preparation

Each day prior to afternoon group time, create the What We Learned Today chart. The information on the chart should communicate what the children have learned or experienced throughout the day. It should make sense to the families and to any visitors who do not know about the activities in the classroom. Print neatly and carefully. Be sure spelling and grammar are correct before displaying the chart.

Description

After completing any additional group-time activities selected for the day, close group time by reviewing with the children the What We Learned Today chart you prepared earlier. Begin the activity by reading the chart, pointing to each word as you read it. Help the children reflect on the day's activities. As you review the chart with the children, prompt their thinking about the day's events by asking questions, such as **"What shapes did Little Cloud become?"** If children have any information to add, craft their ideas into simple sentences and add them to what is already listed on the chart.

Here's how a What We Learned Today chart might read:

Today we started a new unit called "The Sky." We read a story called *Little Cloud*. Clouds are something we see up in the sky. The little cloud in the book turned into different shapes, like an airplane and a hat. Rain falls from the sky, and this afternoon, we sang the song "It's Raining, It's Pouring." It was a fun song to help us start thinking about the sky and weather.

When the children have finished discussing the chart and the day's activities, hang the chart near your family information display.

DAY 1

Morning Group Time

Calendar/Morning Routines

Begin group time each morning with as many of the following routines as children's interest and time allow:

"Gathering Song"

Who's Here Today? Name Activity

What Day Is It? Calendar Activity

Daily Weather

What We'll Do Today Discussion

Special Days Discussion

Each of these activities is described in detail in Appendix C, page 378, and in the *Early Foundations® Discovery Preschool Teacher's Guide*.

What We'll Do Today Today children will continue their exploration of the sky. They will further their understanding of how rain falls from the sky as they help to tell a flannel-board story. They will also enjoy pretending to be clouds floating across the sky.

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Flannel-Board Story

TEACHER'S NOTES

Use the flannel board and pieces to help children understand how props can be used to tell a story. As you tell the story, encourage the children to take turns working with the props by placing the flannel pieces on the flannel board.

Objective

To use props to dramatize a story

Materials

Early Foundations® flannel board
Sky-related flannel pieces, such as the rain clouds, sun, stars, and moon from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit
People finger puppets from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit

Preparation

Think of a story ahead of time that can incorporate the flannel pieces and finger puppets. Consider which finger puppets should be the main characters, what could happen in the story, and how it should end. Position the flannel board so it will be clearly visible to the children during group time. Place the flannel pieces and finger puppets where they will be easily accessible during group time.

Description

Show the children the finger puppets and the flannel pieces. Explain that you are going to tell them a story about a little boy, his grandma, and their day together splashing in rain puddles. Show the children each of the flannel pieces and name them.

Next, tell the children a story using each of the pieces, for example, **"One day not long ago, a boy named Kyle and his grandma went for a walk. While they were walking, it started to rain."** As you tell the story, encourage the children to help by placing the flannel pieces and finger puppets on the flannel board as the story unfolds. Encourage children to use any new vocabulary introduced during the story to describe what is happening or how they are using the flannel pieces.

Continue telling flannel stories for as long as the children show interest or time allows.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

When group time is finished, place the flannel pieces and board in the library and language arts learning center. Encourage children to use them during child-directed learning to create their own stories. Tell the children the items will be in the learning center so they can tell stories with them at another time.

MARCH

Small-Group Activity

Photo-Card Sort

TEACHER'S NOTES

Younger children may not have the vocabulary to identify all of the images on the photo cards. Review the names of each of the images prior to working with the children to help them learn new vocabulary and be better prepared to sort the photos into categories.

Objective

To identify similarities and differences

Materials

Photos of sky-related and non-sky-related things, photo cards #1 through #20 from the Discovery Preschool Spring Kit

Preparation

Place the photo cards on a child-size table to be accessible during small-group time.

Description

Ask a few children at a time to join you to look at the photo cards. Begin the discussion by asking the children to think of different things they see when they look in the sky. **“What do you see when you look at the sky?...Yes, sometimes you do see birds in the sky. What else do you see in the sky?”** Allow time for children to respond.

Show each of the photo cards and ask the children to describe what they see. **“What do you see in this photo card?...Right, it’s a picture of lightning across a stormy sky. Lightning is a flash of light in the sky.”** Then explain to them that you need their help to sort the photo cards into two groups: one that shows things seen in the sky and one that shows things not seen in the sky. **“Let’s work together to sort the photo cards into two piles.”**

In the first group, we’ll put the cards with pictures of the sky or things you see in the sky. In the other pile, we’ll put the cards showing things not seen in the sky.”

Work with the children to identify the pictures on each of the photo cards as they sort them into categories. **“This is a picture of a cloud. Do you see clouds in the sky?...Right, clouds are in the sky. Let’s put this photo card in our sky pile. These items are in the same pile, because they are all items from the sky.”** Continue discussing and sorting each of the photo cards until they are all sorted. Review the cards in each pile to reinforce similarities and differences. Continue the discussion for as long as children express interest.

TIPS FOR OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Identifying similarities and differences requires children to use problem-solving skills. Observe as children work with the photo cards and note whether they correctly identify where an object is typically seen. Record your observations and use them as a reference when you complete the children’s Early Foundations® Discovery Preschool Developmental Assessments.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Place the photo cards in the library and language arts learning center and encourage children to continue talking about the pictures on each of the cards. Help children discover ways the pictures can be sorted into similar and different groups, such as pictures with people and pictures without people.

DAY 2

Afternoon Group Time

TEACHER'S NOTES

For this activity, children should not be expected to move in any particular way. Instead, they should be allowed to express their interpretation of the wind's movement as they dance. Allowing children to move in different ways encourages their creative expression.

Wind Dance

Objective

To participate in creative music, drama, or dance

Materials

Early Foundations[®] movement CD
CD player
Early Foundations[®] movement ribbons

Preparation

Place the CD player near the group area.
Cue the CD to a slow-tempo song, such as an instrumental piece.
Place the movement ribbons where they will be easily accessible during group time.

Description

Invite the children to join you in a dance. **"I have some movement ribbons. Let's use them to dance."** Tell the children you will lead them in a wind dance. **"Today we will dance like the wind moves. I will play some quiet music, and you can move your bodies and the ribbons like you are the blowing wind. You can move around the entire dancing area."**

Provide each child with a movement ribbon. Play the music and dance with the children. Remind the children the wind blows in different ways, such as a soft breeze or a heavy wind. Encourage them to move as though they were the wind blowing clouds across the sky. **"When the wind blows, it moves things across the sky. Pretend you are the wind blowing a cloud across the sky."** Allow the children to move freely for a few minutes.

As children continue to dance, encourage them to think of other ways the wind moves. **"How does the wind blow on a stormy day?...Right, sometimes the wind blows really hard. Let's try moving like a fast-moving wind."** Start the music and invite the children to continue moving to the music.

Continue for as long as children show interest or time allows.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Play music with varying tempos and encourage children to move to the rhythms. Children can pretend to be things that move more slowly while listening to slower-tempo music and things that move more quickly while listening to music with a faster tempo.

MARCH

Closing Routine

What We Learned Today

Materials

Chart paper

Marker

Preparation

Each day prior to afternoon group time, create the What We Learned Today chart. The information on the chart should communicate what the children have learned or experienced throughout the day. It should make sense to the families and to any visitors who do not know about the activities in the classroom. Print neatly and carefully. Be sure spelling and grammar are correct before displaying the chart.

Description

After completing any additional group-time activities selected for the day, close group time by reviewing with the children the What We Learned Today chart you prepared earlier. Begin the activity by reading the chart, pointing to each word as you read it. Help the children reflect on the day's activities. As you review the chart with the children, prompt their thinking about the day's events by asking questions, such as **"What did the little boy in our flannel-board story do in the rain?"** If children have any information to add, craft their ideas into simple sentences and add them to what is already listed on the chart.

Here's how a What We Learned Today chart might read:

This morning, we used the flannel pieces and finger puppets to tell a story about a boy who went for a walk in the rain with his grandma. They jumped in rain puddles and used their umbrellas. We spent time talking about things we see in the sky and then were challenged to decide whether certain objects belonged in the sky, such as airplanes and birds.

This afternoon, we moved our bodies like we were the wind moving clouds across the sky.

When the children have finished discussing the chart and the day's activities, hang the chart near your family information display.

DAY 2

Morning Group Time

Calendar/Morning Routines

Begin group time each morning with as many of the following routines as children's interest and time allow:

"Gathering Song"

Who's Here Today? Name Activity

What Day Is It? Calendar Activity

Daily Weather

What We'll Do Today Discussion

Special Days Discussion

Each of these activities is described in detail in Appendix C, page 378, and in the *Early Foundations® Discovery Preschool Teacher's Guide*.

What We'll Do Today Today, as children build with unit blocks, they will learn how some objects reach into the sky, for example, tall buildings. They will also make art with cotton balls.

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Which Tower Has More?

TEACHER'S NOTES

Estimation can be difficult for a child who is not yet able to connect a number to an amount. When considering size, though, a young child is capable of recognizing whether one set of objects contains more than another set of objects. Use similar unit blocks for each of the two piles, so children focus only on the different amounts as they practice their estimation skills.

Objective

To estimate small quantities

Materials

Unit blocks

Preparation

Create two piles of unit blocks in the group area using blocks of similar shapes and sizes. Create one pile that clearly has more blocks than the other.

Description

Ask the children to sit in an inward-facing circle. Show them the two piles of blocks and ask whether the two piles are the same or different.

"I have two piles of blocks. Are both piles the same?" Allow time for children to respond.

From their responses, encourage children to explain their reasoning. **"Yes, one pile has more blocks than the other. How can we tell which pile has more blocks?...Let's find out if we are right that one pile has more blocks."**

Work with the children to build a tower with each of the piles of blocks. Count each of the blocks as you use them to create a tower. **"One, two, three, four, five. This tower has five blocks. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. This tower has ten blocks. Which tower has more blocks?...Yes, the one with ten blocks has more and is taller because ten is more than five."**

Continue creating piles with different numbers of blocks and estimating which has more. First encourage the children to guess which pile has more blocks. Then build with the blocks in each pile, counting each block as it is added, to help the children determine which pile has more blocks.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Work with the children to estimate other classroom objects, such as stuffed animals, manipulatives, or markers. Create two piles, one clearly larger than the other. Have the children estimate which pile has more objects and then work with them to count the number of objects in each pile.

MARCH

Small-Group Activity

Cotton-Ball Art

TEACHER'S NOTES

To avoid overuse of the glue on any one piece of paper, put glue in trays and have children use cotton swabs to apply the glue to their papers. This process encourages children's creativity as they determine how and where to spread the glue and place the cotton balls. Their fine-motor skills also increase as the children manipulate the cotton swabs to apply glue.

Objective

To use a variety of art materials for tactile experience and creative exploration

Materials

Cotton balls
Glue
Small trays or cups
Cotton swabs
Baskets or containers
Blue construction paper

Preparation

Put the cotton balls in baskets or containers. Partially fill small trays with glue. Place the baskets of cotton balls, trays of glue, cotton swabs, and construction paper on a child-size table to be accessible during this activity.

Description

Invite two or three children at a time to join you at a table to work with cotton balls. Show the children the cotton balls and ask them what objects in the sky resemble cotton balls.

"I have some cotton balls. What do you see in the sky that looks like a cotton ball?...Right, clouds look like cotton balls."

Provide each child with a piece of blue construction paper. Encourage children to glue cotton balls to their papers to resemble clouds in the sky. **"You can dip a cotton swab in glue and spread the glue on your papers. Then you can stick cotton balls to the glue to look like clouds in the sky."** Allow children to arrange the glue and cotton balls on their papers in any way they like. As needed, provide assistance with applying the glue.

Encourage the children to continue gluing cotton balls to their papers for as long as they show interest or time allows. When the children's artwork has dried, display it at the children's eye level in the classroom.

TIPS FOR OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT

Observe children as they work with the glue and cotton balls and notice how they arrange the cotton balls on their papers to create designs. Note your observations and use them to complete the children's Early Foundations® Discovery Preschool Developmental Assessments.

Classroom Connections and Extensions

Provide the children with a variety of collage materials in the creative arts learning center and encourage them to explore gluing different objects to paper to create collages.