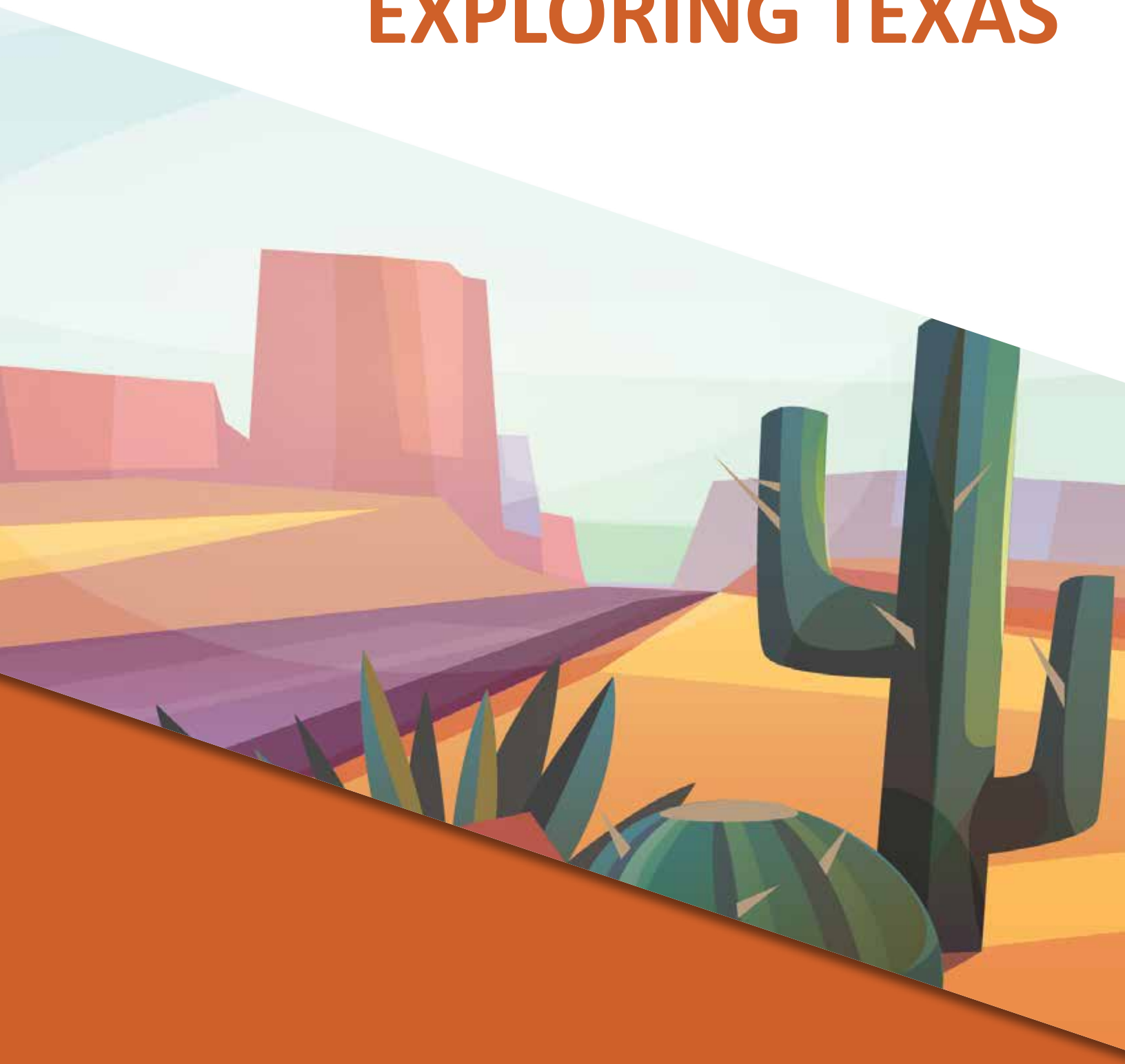
EXPLORING TEXAS



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Language and Literacy

Build a Letter: Themed Alphabet

EZ.043.LA.1001-1002

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify letters of the alphabet.
Students will distinguish between features of letters.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. Students use small classroom manipulatives to form uppercase and lowercase letters on letter mats with a community/neighborhood theme. Magnetic alphabets are tactile and allow children to learn through hands-on exploration while engaging multiple senses.

WHAT TO DO

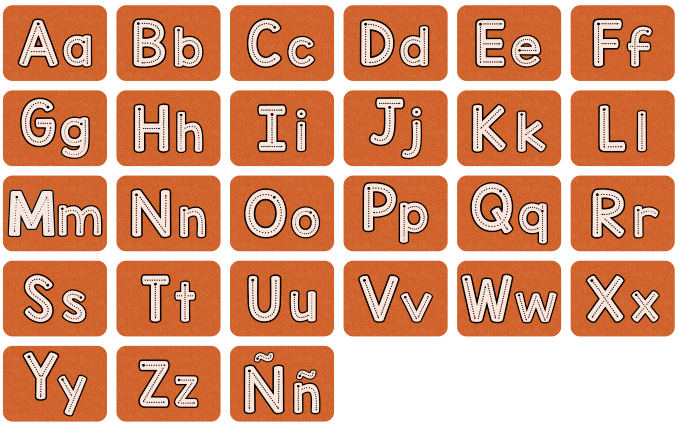
Using the themed magnetic letters as a reference or pre-activity review, encourage students to "trace" letters on letter mats. Students use the manipulatives (math link cubes and color chips) to form uppercase and lowercase letters on the mats.

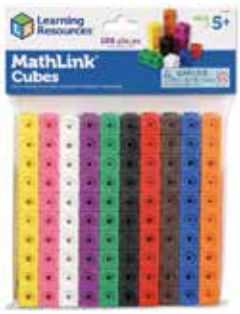
PLAY TIPS

- Ask students to form uppercase and lowercase letters using the manipulatives without tracing. In this instance, the letter mats will serve as a guide.
- Create your own letter cards. Present letters in a variety of fonts to help students begin to recognize letters in the environment. This activity helps to develop environmental print awareness.

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Mathematics

What's Missing?: Number Cards

EZ.043.LA.1003-1004

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will begin to recognize numerals 0-10.
Students will compare quantities of objects by using number recognition and one-to-one correspondence.

Each themed classroom includes themed number cards. A featured activity will be included with each set of themed number cards. Students begin to recognize numerals by participating in number line activities. In What's Missing? students will determine the missing numeral in a number line after reviewing the complete number line. Number cards aid in developing subitizing, which is the ability to instantly recognize the number of items at a glance.

WHAT TO DO

1. Align the numbers in order in a number line, then have students (as a group) say the numbers with you, pointing at each number as you go.
2. Align the numbers in order again, this time removing a number. Have students say the numbers with you, prompting students to determine what number is missing. Continue with this activity, removing more numbers as students are able to recognize the missing number(s).

PLAY TIP

Turn the number cards over, face down, and mix them up. Leave one card out of the mix. Have students flip the cards over and align them in numerical order, determining the missing card.

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Mathematics

Counting and Measurement

EZ.043.LA.1005

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will count items up to 10 with one-to-one correspondence.
Students will begin to add to and take away items.
Students will begin to use nonstandard measurement tools.

Students use counting manipulatives, non-standard forms of measurement like Unifix Cubes, and themed counters, to practice one-to-one correspondence and early practices of measurement using themed math cards. Measurement can be an abstract concept for young children. Manipulatives like blocks, cubes, or cups provide a tangible way to understand concepts like length, and height. By physically comparing and ordering objects, they can build a foundation for understanding measurement units later.

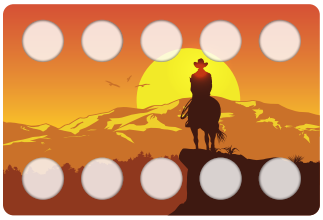
WHAT TO DO

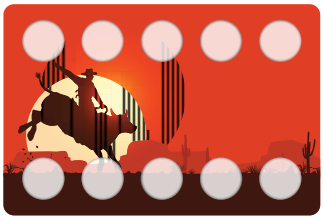
After modeling how to use the mats, place the counting and measurement mats in a learning center as a teacher-directed or student-directed experience. As a teacher-directed experience, guide students to use manipulatives to show one-to-one correspondence and length. As a student-directed experience, allow students to freely explore the manipulatives and mats.

PLAY TIPS

- Use the math manipulatives to reinforce sorting by color and type. Encourage students to count how many are in each category. Encourage students to think of other ways to sort the manipulatives.
- Ask students to use the manipulatives to create patterns. Create simple pattern mats (ABAB, AABB, ABB) for additional support and guidance.

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Mathematics

Making Patterns

EZ.043.LA.1006

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will recognize common 2-D shapes.
Students will sort by features and attributes.
Students will recognize patterns.

Students explore patterns and properties of shapes as they create whole images using pattern blocks and themed pattern block mats. Pattern blocks boost students' ability to think critically, make predictions, and test their predictions.

WHAT TO DO

Pattern block mats and pattern blocks work well as a self-directed activity. The intuitive nature requires little direction. Place the mats and pattern blocks out for students to explore freely, encouraging students to match the pattern block shape and color to the correlating space on the whole image.

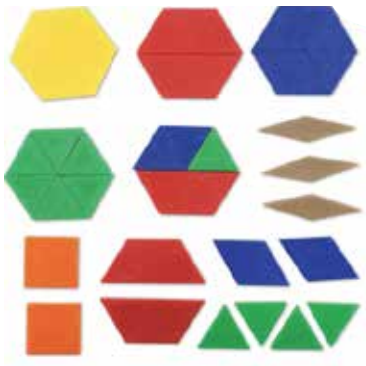
PLAY TIPS

- You can make your own pattern block cards by simply tracing pattern blocks on paper. Create a design using the pattern blocks and place the design on paper. Trace around the outer edge of your design and allow students to fill in the design with pattern blocks.
- Have students take a two-handed scoop of pattern blocks and sort by shape or color. Use graphing paper or a graphing mat to visualize the sorting process.
- Students can use mirrors to create patterns and make observations in the reflections. Ask students to describe what they are seeing as they create patterns in the mirrors.

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Language and Literacy

Pre-Writing Line Tracing

EZ.043.LA.1007

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will build pre-writing skills by tracing curved, notched, and zigzag lines.
Students will recognize directionality in print and writing.

Students work on emergent literacy and transition to letter formations by tracing lines, patterns, and shapes with a theme in a dry erase, reusable format. To connect to fine motor development, students are encouraged to add detail. Themed templates are included for tracing.

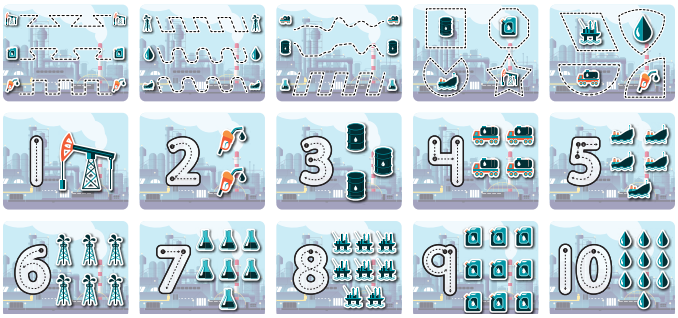
WHAT TO DO

1. Place the dry erase templates in the writing center. Students have the choice to use dry erase markers on the dry erase templates or place paper on the template and trace using a pencil/crayon. Remind students to start from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Encourage students to make their own tracing templates using the dry erase templates as a guide. Students can work on tracing shapes, lines, and numbers by repetitively tracing the same shape, line, or number using a different color crayon each time.

PLAY TIPS

- Include the themed tracing patterns in the writing center to align with other free-choice writing exercises. Using a clipboard will help students control the writing utensil.
- Tape the template vertically, on an easel or teacher board, to encourage the strengthening of fine motor development.

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Language and Literacy

Syllable Awareness

EZ.043.LA.1009

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to blend and segment syllables in words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Recognizing that words can be broken down into syllables or units of sound is a phonological skill.

WHAT TO DO

Introduce the vocabulary cards as a guided activity or free choice center activity. Have students clap the number of beats on the vocabulary card and indicate the number by moving the clip.

PLAY TIPS

- Provide simple instruments to reinforce the number of syllables. Rather than clap the number of syllables in a word, students can shake the number of syllables.
- Students can use their body to emphasize syllables in a word. Have students jump up and down, tap their toes, march in place, do jumping jacks, or tap their head to count syllables.

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Language and Literacy

Rhyming Awareness

EZ.043.LA.1010

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to recognize rhyming words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Rhyming activities help children listen for ending sounds in words, a precursor to phonics activities in late preschool.

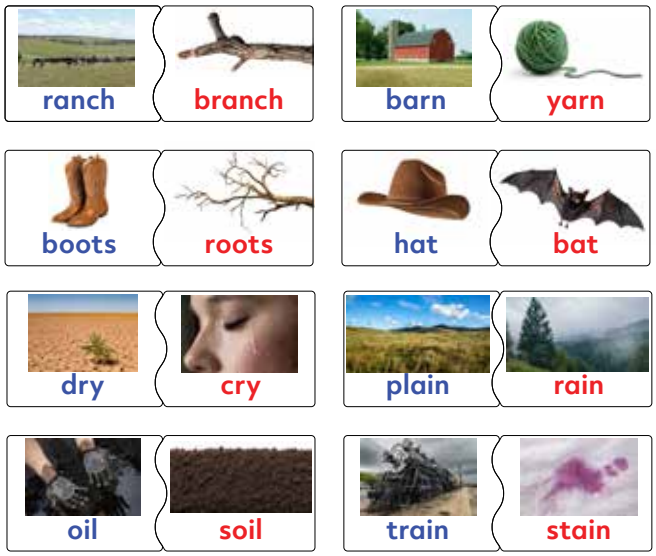
WHAT TO DO

Introduce the rhyming and matching cards as a small group, guided activity. Have students say the words on the rhyming cards and find the matching sound card. Students can place the matching sound card on the correlating picture.

PLAY TIPS

- Play rhyming words with body parts. Have students touch their head, nose, arm, etc. and think of a word that rhymes with the body part.
- Play, *I Spy with My Little Eye*, using target items in the classroom. For example, decide on something in the classroom, like *door* as the target word. Then state, "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with *floor*." The students look around the classroom for something that rhymes with floor.

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Language and Literacy

Onset and Rime Awareness

EZ.043.LA.1011

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will understand and use recognizable and new vocabulary.
Students will begin to identify and segment one-syllable words.

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds of spoken language. It is an essential skill in the process of learning to read and write. Young children participate in various sound activities to build sound awareness. Onset and rime activities help children identify patterns in words.

WHAT TO DO

Introduce the picture puzzles as a small group or free choice activity. As a small group exercise, model saying the onset together, the rime together, and the picture that identifies the word. As a free choice exercise, have the students put the pieces together to create a word.

PLAY TIP

Attach beginning and ending sounds to a set (2) of large dice. Have students roll the dice and say the word created, putting the onset and rime together.

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Language and Literacy

Shaving Cream Words: Word Bank Words

EZ.043.LA.1012

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify letters of the alphabet.
Students will recreate letters of the alphabet in unconventional ways.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. Students use shaving cream as a medium to practice writing word bank words. Young students gain from having numerous chances throughout the day to enhance their fine motor skills and finger dexterity by using different writing tools and mediums.

WHAT TO DO

Place the word bank words and craft trays filled with a layer of shaving cream in the writing center. Students can practice writing word bank words, their name, and/or the alphabet in the layer of shaving cream. To practice a new word or letter, students simply spread the shaving cream layer again.

PLAY TIPS

- Students can use a spatula to spread the shaving cream into a thin layer or use the opposite end as a writing utensil.
- Provide opportunities for students to draw freely in the shaving cream.

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Social and Emotional

Building Our Community

EZ.043.LA.1013

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will interact with peers in play-based ways.
Students will create stories and scenarios using dramatic materials.

Play is such an important part of children's learning and development. Children play and interact with their peers by exploring simple building materials and using the experiential learning classroom (murals and flooring) to recreate the city they live in. Students can build a fire department, a police station, homes, add people, and more on the community floor map.

WHAT TO DO

1. Help students celebrate the work people do in our communities by sharing books and stories from the classroom library. Be sure to reiterate that communities can be big or small and people in communities help each other by offering goods and services.
2. Introduce the build-a-community materials (wooden buildings, vehicles, community members, and blocks). Review the community helpers who live and work right alongside us in our communities. Students can use the build-a-community materials to create a community on the town flooring. Encourage students to create scenarios or provide play scenarios such as a family taking an afternoon trip to the zoo or a fire truck putting out a small fire.

PLAY TIP

While walking in the school neighborhood, stop and observe community helpers. A neighborhood walk could include observing a local construction site, garbage and recycling trucks, or a delivery service. Have discussions about the services the community helpers provide.

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Stockyards BINGO

Language and Literacy

Stockyard Bingo

EZ.043.LA.1014

Activity Type:
Small Group

Objective:
Students will listen for word bank words and identify word and picture matches.

Bingo games help students associate pictures with words and build a robust vocabulary. In addition, students learn to take turns and play alongside peers. Using stockyard-themed images, students match each image to the corresponding item as it is called by the Bingo caller. This activity strengthens listening comprehension, reinforces word-picture connections, and encourages social interaction, all foundational skills for early literacy development.

WHAT TO DO

1. Pass out the Bingo cards and review the words and pictures on each game board. Explain that each box will be covered with a Bingo chip when the corresponding item is called. Remind students that each box may only be covered once and that not all boxes will be used in every game.
2. As you call out items from the caller cards, prompt students to listen carefully and cover the matching picture or word with a Bingo chip. When a student completes a row, announce a Bingo!

PLAY TIP

Bingo games can be easily created to apply to other concepts. You can create a Bingo game for alphabet recognition, word bank words, pictures, and even numbers using laminated paper or contact paper for durability.

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Social and Emotional

Life on the Ranch

EZ.043.LA.1015

Activity Type:
Small Group and Routines

Objectives:
Students will build relationships with educators and peers through communication and cooperative play.
Students will act out ranch and farm life scenarios to explore roles, emotions, and teamwork.

Early learners can strengthen their sense of community by imagining life on a ranch or farm. Through dramatic play and conversation, students use puppets to share their background know about ranching and farm life. Students can take on roles such as a rancher, farmer, cowboy, veterinarian, or animal caretake, learning about collaboration and responsibility in a fun, social way.

WHAT TO DO

1. Introduce the ranch theme: Gather students in a circle and show them the puppets and props. Briefly discuss what happens on a ranch or farm, such as taking care of animals, growing food, and helping one another.
2. Demonstrate role-playing with the puppets. Model how puppets can "talk" to each other. You might role play the following scenarios:
   - ·The cowboy puppet and horse puppet talk about getting ready for a big cattle roundup.
   - ·The farmer puppet and veterinarian puppet discuss how to care for the animals.
3. Invite students to join in. Encourage students to choose puppets and act out their own ranch stories.

PLAY TIPS

- Create a "Ranch Jobs" chart with students, listing helpers and their responsibilities (feeding animals, fixing fences, gathering eggs).
- Use the puppets to teach social skills in other ways. You can use the puppets to role-play big emotion situations, model kindness with one another, acknowledge and identify empathy, and practice taking turns.

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Social Studies

Map Symbols

EZ.043.LA.1016

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will explore geography tools and resources.
Students will recognize symbols as representations.
Students will recreate symbols building fine motor skills.

Maps are pictures of places and usually include symbols to show us special places. We use maps to show us where we are and where we need to go. Students have discussions about the meaning of symbols and practice writing map symbols in sand using a legend template.

WHAT TO DO

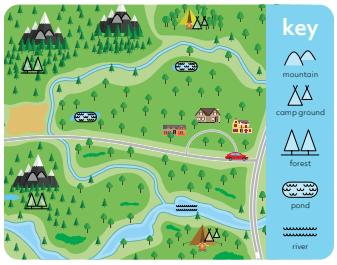
1. Begin by introducing the atlas and comparing it to a globe. This will help students connect their prior knowledge about the world. Ask students the following questions: “What features make up the land?,” “What features make up the ocean?,” and “How do you know what countries are home to people and animals?” Give students plenty of time to explore the atlas on their own and ask questions.
2. Fill the sand trays with colored sand. Demonstrate “drawing” in the sand with your finger. Introduce the legend examples, pointing out the symbols and discussing representation. Students can use the legends to practice “drawing” the symbols in the sand.

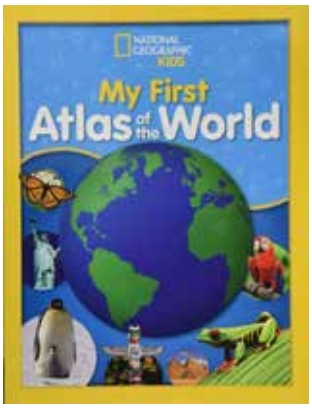
PLAY TIPS

- Encourage students to create their own symbols and share their representations.
- Go on a treasure hunt. Make a map of the classroom, hide an item in the classroom, and indicate the location with an “X” on the map. Students can use the map to find the hidden item.

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Social Studies

Urban, Suburban, and Rural

EZ.043.LA.1017

Activity Type:
Large Group and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will identify common features in communities.
Students will demonstrate an understanding of features in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

As an introduction to urban, suburban, and rural communities, students read *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton, discussing how the environment around the house changes. Students can sort urban, suburban, and rural photo cards using sorting mats. Sorting activities reinforce vocabulary and provide the opportunity to introduce new words.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton, discussing how the environment around the little house changes over time. Ask students the following questions throughout: "What does the little house see?," "What does the little house hear?," and "What kind of things surround the little house?" Picture walk through the community books, making comparisons to *The Little House*.
2. After reviewing the stories, place the suburban, rural, and urban photos and sorting mats in a free-choice center for sorting and further discussion.

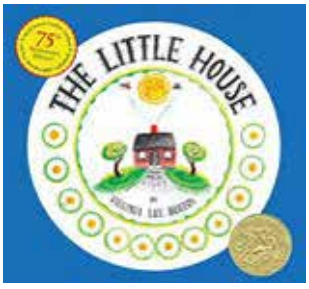
PLAY TIPS

- *The Little House* feels lonely and neglected over time because she wasn't taken care of. Discuss taking care of material things. Ask questions like, "How should we treat the things that belong to us?" and "What happens when we don't take care of our things?" Relate the discussion to respecting materials in the classroom.
- Using pictures from the story, ask students to sequence the progression of events from beginning to end.

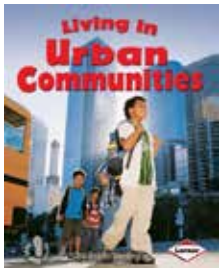
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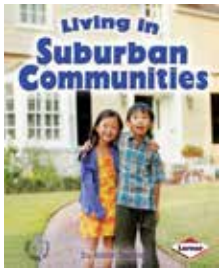


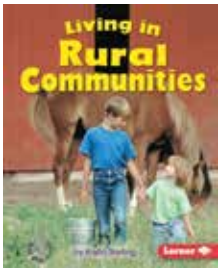












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Language and Literacy

Train Stories

EZ.043.LA.1018

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will retell stories, building oral language skills.
Students will use manipulatives to retell stories.

Trains move people and freight, but they often see, feel, and hear as they journey between cities and across the country. After reading *Two Little Trains*, by Margaret Wise Brown, students can talk about the things the two little trains see, feel, and hear. Students will work together to create a train village in the classroom, telling stories about their creations with story cards. Retelling stories helps children improve their language skills, memory, and critical thinking abilities.

WHAT TO DO

1. Read *Two Little Trains* by Margaret Wise Brown, discussing things the train sees, feels, and hears along the journey. Relate to student personal experiences. For example, ask students to think of a time when they have traveled on a train or subway. Ask students to recall things they saw, felt, or heard on their own journey.
2. Introduce the train tracks and accompanying pieces as a free-choice or storytelling activity. Ask students to make a one-to-one correspondence using the story cards and train set pieces. Also, ask students to order the story cards from left to right and tell an adventure story about trains, highlighting what the train does and sees on the adventure. Provide the following storytelling prompts if necessary: "Tell the story of how the train delivered the wood to the cabin" and "Tell the story of the bridge and the train."

PLAY TIPS

- Use the story cards before reading the story to build vocabulary around trains and transportation.
- Invite students to tell stories during morning meeting. Ask students to share what happened on a trip to the supermarket, an appointment with the dentist, or an outing to grandma's house. Storytelling helps young children learn new words and become emergent readers and writers.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED







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Fine Arts

Stockyard Dramatic Play

EZ.043.LA.1019

Activity Type:
Free Choice and Small Group

Objectives:
Students will engage in associative and cooperative play for creative expression.
Students will create and recreate stories using stockyard-themed roles and props.

In this dramatic play center, students step into the world of a stockyard by exploring how ranchers, veterinarians, livestock handlers, auctioneers, and buyers work together. Through dress-up items, props, and hands-on materials, students explore the responsibilities, tools, and teamwork needed to care for animals and run a stockyard. This experiential play strengthens communication, social cooperation, and problem-solving skills as students negotiate roles, build stories, and work together to keep the stockyard in business.

WHAT TO DO

1. Set the scene by helping students arrange animal pens, a vet station, and an auction ring. Introduce the costumes and props, discussing the different roles people play in a stockyard, such as feeding animals, checking their health, and transporting/selling the animals.
2. Encourage role playing by asking students to choose a job: rancher, livestock handler, veterinarian, truck driver, auctioneer, or buyer. As they develop their stories, continue offering new prompts that encourage thought and creative expression. Provide starting prompts such as:
   - "The calves need fresh hay. Who can help deliver it?"
   - "The auction is starting! Who will call out the bids?"
   - "One of the goats needs a check-up. Who can help the veterinarian?"

PLAY TIPS

- Add writing opportunities by encouraging students to create auction tickets, feed logs, animal tags, and vet check-up sheets to deepen the learning experience.
- Consider scheduling a visit from someone connected to ranching, farming, or animal care, or explore a virtual tour of a stockyard to extend learning.

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Science

Texas Oil Field Geology Dig

EZ.043.LA.1020

Activity Type:
Free Choice

Objective:
Students will interact with sensory materials to engage the five senses through exploration of Texas oil field and geological features.

Open-ended sensory exploration fosters creativity, self-expression, and imagination, while offering children the chance to succeed, regardless of their language proficiency or cognitive abilities. This hands-on approach supports developmental growth by encouraging problem-solving, critical thinking, and sensory awareness. In addition, the materials provided for the classroom *Stock Tank Sensory Table*, such as faux dirt, large rocks, agate slices, pipe pieces and a variety of rocks and minerals, enhance tactile learning and engagement. These materials promote sensory discovery and offer opportunities for children to explore textures, shapes, and patterns, enriching their understanding of the world around them.

WHAT TO DO

1. Pour the faux dirt into the Stock Tank Sensory Table and add the rocks, minerals, fossils, and agate slices throughout the bin, hiding some pieces to encourage digging and discovery. Place construction trucks and pipe builders around the table to represent oil field drilling tools and transport equipment.
2. Invite students to explore freely. Suggested play scenarios include:
   - Drilling for "oil" by pushing rocks or minerals through the pipe builders.
   - Excavating underground layers to reveal agate slices and fossils.
   - Loading and hauling materials with construction trucks
   - Sorting geological finds by shape, color, texture, and type.

PLAY TIPS

- Make your own taste-safe dirt by combining cocoa powder, water, and flour. Mix 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder and 1 cup of flour in a container. Slowly add 1 cup of water and mix.
- Add several PVC pipes or pieces of cut cardboard to allow students to freely explore and investigate the movement of objects (agate slices, play dirt, and rocks) on ramps.

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