



# Teaching & Learning

# in Your School Gardens & Greenspaces

Ideas & Inspiration from Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Educators





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WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVANCY

*ABOVE: Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8*

*Dear Pittsburgh Public School Early Childhood Educators,*

This packet was developed to provide you with ideas and activities that will allow you to continue educating your students outside of the regular classroom. It was designed to align with the units in our Big Day for Pre-K curriculum. We hope you find it useful and hope that your students will enjoy learning about new concepts and skills when they are outside enjoying their time in the greenspace.

Sincerely,

School Grounds Greening Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Early Childhood Educator Cohort, Spring 2020

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*Obama Academy, Early Childhood*



*Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8*



**The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Grable Foundation, and Pittsburgh Public Schools**, worked to bring sustainable greenery to 57 different Pittsburgh Public High Schools and Elementary Schools. The project provided outdoor classrooms, natural play spaces and low-maintenance plantings to provide shade, landscape accents and natural points of interest for children.

Building upon the impact that the school grounds greening project had on Pittsburgh Public Schools, WPC placed emphasis on Early Childhood Centers (ECC) that serve preschool-aged children in the City of Pittsburgh. Thanks to the generosity of PNC Grow Up Great®, we construct natural playspaces that can be used by centers for education and play. In many instances, ECC do not have available space for children to play and learn outside, but our school grounds greening projects have changed that at centers throughout Pittsburgh.

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*“If a child is to keep  
alive his inborn sense  
of wonder ... he needs  
the companionship  
of at least one adult  
who can share it,  
rediscovering with him  
the joy, excitement,  
and mystery of the  
world we live in.”*

—Rachel Carson

**The connections among nature**, learning and development are wide-ranging and well-documented. Learning and playing in nature has positive academic, physical, and mental health benefits – however, learning outdoors is not a common practice in our schools. Once we’ve helped set the stage for nature-based learning with school ground greenspaces, how do we support the adults – the educators – who are nurturing each student’s sense of wonder and discovery?

In 2019, Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Centers and School Grounds Greening staff began a collaboration to support year-round, robust teaching and learning in the school greenspaces. In our inaugural project, we formed a cohort of eight early childhood educators who shared ideas and inspiration, peer-to-peer, to integrate learning and exploration outdoors into their curriculum. The result of those sessions resulted in this guide, mapped to school year units and broken out by themes, such as Art & Music, Dramatic Play, Gross Motor, Language and Literacy, Math, Science, Social Emotional, Social Studies.

It is our hope that this is the start of an ongoing dialogue among and with early childhood educators to support professional development around powerful learning and development outcomes for students. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy’s educational partnerships are made possible through the support of the Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation and the Jack Buncher Foundation, connecting youth to nature nearby and throughout the region.

## 2 - INTRODUCTION

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## Ideas & Inspiration from Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Educators



**ART &  
MUSIC**



**DRAMATIC  
PLAY**



**GROSS  
MOTOR**



**LANGUAGE  
& LITERACY**



**MATH**



**SCIENCE**



**SOCIAL  
EMOTIONAL**



**SOCIAL  
STUDIES**

# Unit 1: Ready for School

*Exploring the greenspace supports gross motor skills development.*

*Pittsburgh Sunnyside PreK-8*



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## ART & MUSIC

Students tour the greenspace and **sketch a map** of the space while outdoors, using pencils, paper, and a clipboard. Indoors, students use crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc. to add color to their maps. Ties in with all classroom introduction activities. (9.1.V PK.E)

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

### BEAR HUNT:

- **Shared writing:** What should we pack for our bear hunt? Write list on chart paper.
- Have students **pretend to pack** their bags.
- Outside, play *Bear Hunt* on the iPad for children to **sing along** to.
- **Act out the song** while singing it through the greenspace.
- **Run back** to the “home” at the end.
- Back in the classroom, children can **write journals** about what they saw on their bear hunt.

This works well with theme one when learning about letter Bb. Can also be used with *We're Going on a Lion Hunt* in theme 8. (AL.4 PK.A; 9.1.D PK.E)

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Play “Find and tag it.”** This is a versatile game that can be used to review many different skills. Just tell your learners to find something and tag it. For example: “Find and tag something green.” Or “Find and tag something that starts with /s/.” (10.5 PK.A)

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Introduce self and learn the names of others.** Stand in a large circle and toss a ball of yarn, holding onto the end of the yarn. Before tossing the ball of yarn, say the name of the friend. The child will say his/her own name when the ball is caught. (1.1 PK.C)

Children will hold the edges of the parachute (or large sheet), raise it overhead, lower it to waist-level, and close their eyes. Two children will be selected to hide under the parachute. Ask the other children to open their eyes and name the children who are under the parachute. (1.1 PK.C)

**Reread the story, *My Friends*.** Practice the movements/actions as they are presented in the story. After each action, gather as a group and continue rereading the story. (1.2 PK.C)

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## MATH

**Number recognition:** Review numbered rules. (2.1 PK.A.1)

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## SCIENCE

Introduce the Greenspace Rules / Routines / Procedures and the importance for **taking care of the greenspace**. (5.1 PK.A)

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### COOPERATION:

Based on the story *Owen*, take a blanket outside and hide it in the greenspace. Group students in pairs and have them walk around the greenspace looking for the blanket. (16.1 PK.B)

Have all of the students line up and place their hands around the waist of the student in front of them to make a train then walk around the greenspace as a train. Sing “Chugga, Chugga, Chugga, Chugga Choo, Choo, Chugga, Chugga, Choo, Choo.” Have the students sit in a circle on the ground. Pick a student as the class sings “Hickety, Pickety, Bumble Bee, please say your name for me.” Continue singing the song until all students have said their name. (16.1 PK.B)

Pick a buddy and play in different areas of the greenspace together. (16.1 PK.B)

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

Have the students **make an American flag**. Take their flags outside and have them place their hand over their heart and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” (5.1 PK.F)

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# Unit 2:

## My Family

*Loose parts can be used for counting, sorting, storytelling, making art – the possibilities are endless!*

*Obama Academy, Early Childhood*



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### ART & MUSIC

In the classroom or outdoors, students **listen to a variety of world music** in conjunction with “You and Me Together.” Outdoors, students play instruments including drums, cymbals, bells, etc. to create their own music. *Suggested for Unit 2, Week 4, Monday, Big Experience 2: Explore World Music. (9.1.M PK.B)*

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### DRAMATIC PLAY

Students pretend play that they are a family **on a camping trip!** Students can use leaves and sticks to create a pretend campfire for pretend s’mores, sing songs, and act out different types of family roles. *(9.1.D PK.E)*

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### GROSS MOTOR

**Capture the flag or an object.** Have students work together to find the missing object. *(10.5 PK.A)*

**Play music** from different cultures and have students dance. *(9.1.V PK.E)*

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### LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Use sets of natural objects:** rocks, sticks, leaves, and pinecones of various sizes. Invite the children to use the objects to represent family members. Encourage children to name the family members. Listen to and recite the Family Rhyme:

“Mother, father, sister, brother

Family members are kind to each other.

Grandmother and grandfather, too-

They are people who love you!” *(1.2 PK.C)*

**Recite the fingerplay, “On Our Camping Trip.”** Pretend that this is a camping adventure. Complete the sentence starter, “On our camping trip we will\_\_\_\_\_.” Act out the suggested activity. Create a list of the suggestions using a marker and paper. Display the list in the classroom. *(1.1 PK.C)*

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### MATH

**Nature Family (sorting, comparing and categorizing).** Students will gather natural items (grass, leaves, sticks...) and sort them according to shape, color, size, etc. Students will then use these items, also referred to as loose parts, to create portraits of themselves and their family members. *(2.2 PK.MP)*



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## SCIENCE

**Solids, Liquids and Gas:** Explore solids, liquids and gas from Science Poster 4. After introducing science poster 4, explore solids, liquids and gases in the greenspace by providing small amounts of water and ice cubes to be explored. Invite children to find their own, and record what they find on chart paper. *Suggested for Unit 2, Week 3. (3.2 PK.A.1)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### KINDNESS:

Bring bags to the greenspace and have the students **pick up the trash**. This is how we can be kind to nature and work together. *(16.2 PK.A)*

Encourage students to **find a leaf, stick, rock, etc.** in the greenspace. Talk about how they can be kind to the materials they found in the greenspace. *(16.2 PK.A)*

**After reading “The Kissing Hand,”** have the students practice using the “I Love You” sign with their friends. Middle finger and ring finger down and thumb, pointer finger, and pinky up. *(16.2 PK.A)*



**Make a Kindness Banner.** Take paint, a paint brush, butcher paper, a bucket of water, and a rag outside. Paint each students’ hand and have them put it on the paper. They can write their name under their handprint if they can. Let it dry and hang it in the classroom. *(16.2 PK.A)*

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

Look around the greenspace for baby animals. Discuss the **life cycle of birds**. Show the students pictures of robin eggs. Talk about how the mom and dad find objects in nature to build a nest like dirt, grass, straw, and leaves. The mom or dad bird sits on the eggs to keep them warm (incubation) allowing the baby birds to grow inside their egg. After 21 days of incubation, they hatch. Once they hatch, their mom and dad have to feed them worms. After 2 or 3 weeks of being taken care of by their mom and dad they are ready to fly off and leave the nest. They will live in nature with their mom and dad and brothers and sisters. A bird’s life cycle starts with an egg, chick in 2-3 weeks, then adult in about 3 months. *(5.2 PK.A)*

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# Unit 3: Our Community

*Art in and around the greenspace can inspire creative expression.*

*Grandview PreK-5*



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## ART & MUSIC

Students look for **examples of community art** found in the greenspace (for example, bird mosaics at Crescent). If no art exists in greenspace, students look at examples of community art photographed from around the neighborhood. Students then create chalk art murals as a piece of community art. *Suggested for Unit 3, Week 1, Monday, Big Experience 1: Places We Go. (9.1.V PK.E)*

While outdoors using clipboards, **students create night time drawings** using black paper and chalk. They look at their surroundings and imagine what the greenspace would look like at night, including animals that they would see, the sky, trees, etc. *Suggested for Unit 3, Week 2, Wednesday, Big Experience 1: A Good Night Walk. (9.1.V PK.E)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

Have students imagine they are going on **A Goodnight Walk**. The greenspace can be their pretend neighborhood and they can share with the group what they saw on their walk. *(AL.4 PK.A; 1.2 PK.C; 1.2 PK.J; 9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Obstacle Course.** Recreate the community or a familiar street to the students and have the students do different movements to get through the street. *(10.4 PK.B)*

**Red light, green light, yellow light game.** To play: One person is chosen to be 'It' (the traffic light) and stands a good distance away from the other players with his back to them. The other players stand in a line facing It. When 'It' calls "Green Light," the other players move towards him until he spins around, calling "Red Light." *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Use community helpers' vests and preprinted places in the community cards.** Select children to wear a vest and the other children will name the community helper. The children who are not wearing a vest will take turns selecting a card with the name of the place. The child will select a place in the greenspace area for the child to stand with the card. Ask the children to identify the community helper that belongs with that place. Then, that community helper will stand near the child holding that card. When each community helper is near the place, give the other children a chance to wear a vest and continue the activity. *(1.2 PK.J)*

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## MATH

**Shapes in the community.** Students look for different shapes in their neighborhoods and then recreate the shapes using elements from nature. (2.3 PK.A.1)

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## SCIENCE

**Big Earth, Little Me:** Conduct a read aloud of *Big Earth Little Me* in the greenspace. Invite children to discuss ways they can take care of the earth and take care of the greenspace. *Suggested for Unit 3, Week 4.*

**Staying Safe:** After introducing and discussing Science Poster 5, involving fire safety, invite children to think of ways to stay safe in the greenspace. Discuss what rules / routines keep us safe, and what ways we can keep nature safe. *Suggested for Unit 3, Week 1. (5.1 PK.A)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

**Responsibility:** Read *The Clean Up Surprise* then take bags outside and have the students clean up the greenspace.

Take out clipboards, drawing paper, and crayons and have the students **draw the buildings they see** around the greenspace.

Have the students **collect sticks and create houses and buildings** in the community. (16.1 PK.D)

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Learn about a compass.** Have the cardinal directions on paper North, South, West, East. Use the real compass to hang the North, South, West, East directions around the greenspace. Show the students what a real compass looks like. Explain to the students that a compass is used for navigation, location, and direction. It allows people to find their way when they are outside. Create a compass. Use a paper plate. Have each student place the letters N, S, W, E on the paper plate to make a compass. Cut out an arrow or paperclip and use a brass fastener to place the arrow in the center of the plate. Have the students walk around the greenspace finding the North, South, West, East. (7.1 PK.B)

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# Unit 4: Awesome Animals

*Discuss animal habitats and discover what animals need to survive – water, food, shelter.*

*Crescent Early Childhood Center*



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## ART & MUSIC

**After taking a nature walk**, students find an animal home outdoors, and use colored pencils or crayons to sketch the animal home. Examples include a nest, ant hill, bird house. Students design and decorate bird houses to place in the greenspace. *Suggested for Unit 4, Week 2, Wednesday, Big Experience 2: Nature Walk. (9.1.V PK.E)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

Have students **pretend to be animals** in the greenspace. Make a large circle and play Animal Action! Have student pick a couple animals, and talk about how these animals move. Sing song: “Animal action is so much fun, animal action is so much fun, animal action is so much fun, animal action, let’s move like a\_\_\_\_\_!” and students act out moving like the chosen animal. *(AL.3 PK.A; 9.1.M PK.A; 9.1.M PK.B; 9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Animal movement games.** Examples, jump like a frog, run like a cheetah, crawl like a spider. *(10.4 PK.B)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Observe, identify, and describe animals** that are in the greenspace. Use magnifying glasses or hand lenses to assist the exploration. Use the preprinted theme words: burrow; hive; nest; tunnel; web; woods, to read and try to find examples of. Ask the children to think of what type of animal might have a \_\_\_\_\_ as a habitat. Think of animals for each habitat. *(1.1 PK.D)*

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## MATH

### **Math on the Farm / Zoo / Pets (measurement)**

- Laminated pictures of animals. (about 4 to a page, cut out individually)
- Math cubes. (some other manipulative for children to use to measure the length of the animals)
- Discuss which animals are longer, shorter or the same. *(2.3 PK.A.2)*



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## SCIENCE

**Animal Homes:** After learning about animal habitats, explore the greenspace for potential animal habitats. Ask the children what animals may live in the greenspace, and discuss the things animals would need to have there to live (water, food, shelter). *Suggested for Unit 4, Week 1. (3.1 PK.A.2)*

**Bug Hunt:** Go for a bug hunt in the greenspace. Invite children to look for bugs, in a safe way (no squishing or hurting the insects). If there are not any bugs outside due to weather, try hiding some plastic bugs for the children to find. Discuss with children how we can be kind to insects and take care of them. *Suggested for Unit 4, Week 2. (4.1 PK.A)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### ATTENTION:

**Lay on the ground and listen to animal sounds.** Look up at the clouds. Pay attention to the clouds in the sky. Do you see any clouds that look like animals?

Take paper and a pencil outside and **make a list of the animals** you see.

When you are getting ready to line up the students after playing **sing** “Doggies big, doggies small, bark three times when you hear me call,” and then line up. *(16.3 PK.B)*

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

Gather materials from around the greenspace that are on the ground and **create an animal habitat.**

Make a **list of living and non-living things** that are found in the greenspace.

**Take the “Let’s Look at Nature Science Poster #7” outside.** Discuss what animals and insects need to live in the greenspace. For example: birds use their wings to fly up to their nests in trees; fish use gills to breathe in the water; monkeys use their hands to pick the food they eat. *(7.2 PK.A)*

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# Unit 5: Imagine It, Make It

*Free play engages the senses, imagination, and curiosity as well as allows for unique groupings and individual exploration.*

Roosevelt School



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## ART & MUSIC

Students **view examples of still life paintings**. Outdoors, students use natural materials to compose a still life arrangement. Using watercolors, students then paint still life art. *Suggested for Unit 5, Week 4, Friday, Big Experience 3: Fruit Still Life. (9.1.V PK.E)*

Use imagination and creativity to **express self through visual arts**. Students watch YouTube video explaining Navajo sand painting, and learn about natural pigments. Students then collect items to make natural pigment outdoors, including dirt, grass, flowers, pollen, etc. Students create art using these natural pigments. *Suggested for Unit 5, Week 4, Thursday, Big Experience 2: Sand paintings. (9.1.V PK.E)*

Engage students in an outdoor **read aloud of *Too Loud Lily***. Students then use instruments, body movements (clapping, stomping), and singing to be loud like Lily and perform music. *Suggested for Unit 5, Week 4, Wednesday, Big Experience 2: Class Talent Show. (9.1.M PK.B)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

Bring large cardboard boxes outside and encourage children to use their imaginations with the boxes like the bunny in ***Not a Box!***

After reading ***The Shape of Things***, have students **find the shape of things** in the greenspace. *(AL.4 PK.A; 1.3 PK.J; 2.3 PK.A.1; 9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Free Play/Explore:** Bring out different materials to use such as hula hoops, parachute and allow free play. *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Make, explore, and describe Goopy Goop.** Write the directions, read, and work together to make goopy goop. Provide a large bowl, a mixing spoon, individual containers, measuring cups, water, craft sticks, and cornstarch, paper towels, and a spray bottle of water (for cleaning hands). Explore and describe the water and the cornstarch. Follow the directions to mix (1 part water to 1½ – 2 parts cornstarch). Take turns mixing the ingredients. Notice the change in consistency. Describe the properties of the new product (slimy; cold; slippery; wet). Divide the mixture in the individual containers as the children are invited to explore the new product. *(1.5 PK.C)*

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## MATH

**Nature Find and Count:** Students will collect objection from nature, count them out before creating and art piece. *(2.4 PK.MP)*

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## SCIENCE

**Science Tools:** Invite children to use science tools outside in the greenspace. Provide them with a variety of tools (googles, magnifiers, scoopers, shovels, tweezers, etc.) and discuss how they used the tools. *Suggested for Unit 5, Week 2. (4.4 PK.D)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### INITIATIVE:

**Create a picture of yourself** using materials found in the greenspace. Have the students **plan a game to play** outside and then play that game.

**Practice Balancing Rocks.** Gather rocks and have the students stack the rocks.

Take chalk outside and **create a sensory path.** Draw lines on a flat surface. The students can place to feet together to jump horizontal, vertical, horizontal, vertical etc. -- || -- || -- || (16.1 PK.D)

**Pretend your body is a rocket** and blast off into space. Place your hands to your side, count backwards from 10 to 1 and blast off, run around the greenspace as a rocket. *(2.1 PK.A.1)*

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

Take out paper and crayons and have the students **draw different landmarks** in the greenspace. Describe the location of places in the home, school, and community to gain an understanding of relative location. *(7.1 PK.B)*

**Make mud sculptures** using water and dirt to make the mud. Allow the students to get creative and make whatever they would like using the mud. *(9.1.V PK.B)*

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# Unit 6: Growing Up Healthy

*Caring for plants can foster responsibility and affinity for nature.*

*Crescent Early Childhood Center*



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## ART & MUSIC

**Students go on a “Sniff Walk” outdoors.** The select an item in the greenspace that has a smell they like, and sketch the item using a clipboard, crayons, and paper. Alternatively, students can collect fragrant items from outdoors and create a scent collage. *Suggested for Unit 6, Week 1, Monday, Big Experience 2: “Look, Listen and Learn.” (9.1.V PK.E)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

**Read *Please Stay Safe!*** Have children act out different ways to stay safe in the greenspace. *(AL.4 PK.A; 9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Dancing.** Give them instructions to dance a particular way. They can dance slow, fast, in a circle, silly, etc. Help teach them to stay active and keep their bodies healthy. *(9.1.M PK.E)*

**Alphabet movement cards** each letter of the alphabet shows a different move for the kids to do. *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Identify (play) foods for an outdoor picnic.** Prepare a set of color words and a basket of (play) foods. Select and say the name of each color. Invite the children to select find a food from a basket that is the color that was selected. *(1.1 PK.D)*

**Explore, identify and describe parts of a plant.** Provide magnifying glasses and printed words: stem; roots; leaves; bud; flower. Read the words and look for examples of each. *(1.1 PK.D)*

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## MATH

### HEALTHY STEPS:

- Count the steps it takes to wash hands.
- Count the steps it takes to brush teeth.
- Count body parts.

*(10.2 PK.A; 2.1 PK.A.1)*



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## SCIENCE

**Five Senses:** Invite children to use their five senses in the greenspace. Conduct a discussion and record children's responses on chart paper.

*Suggested for Unit 6, Week 1*

**How Does Your Salad Grow?** After reading *How does Your Salad Grow*, plant some vegetables outside in the greenspace. Discuss what veggies they would want in their salad. Try planting the veggies and see if they grow. Discuss with children what the plants need to grow and how we can take care of them. *Suggested for Unit 6, Week 3. (3.1 PK.A.2)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### SELF-AWARENESS:

Have the students **identify how things smell** in the greenspace. Pick up grass, a leaf, a stick, etc. How does it smell? Talk about smells that make them happy. *(16.2 PK.A)*

Have the students **identify how things feel** in the greenspace. Touch a stick, a rock, a leaf, a flower. How does it feel? *(16.2 PK.A)*

Listen to the **sounds in nature**, like birds chirping, kids playing, running water, rain, thunder, lightning, trees falling down, and the wind blowing. What sounds make them feel happy and which make them feel sad? *(16.2 PK.A)*

**Body Bubbles:** Have all the students stand up straight. Get out their bubble wands and have them touch their feet with their wand to create a body bubble. Take the wand up over their heads to create a body bubble. Run around the greenspace with their body bubble making sure they don't bump into anyone popping their body bubble. *(16.2 PK.A)*

Lay down in the grass and **look at the clouds**. Breathe in and then blow the clouds away. *(16.1 PK.C)*

**Practice deep breathing.** Find a flower. Smell the flower, then blow the flower. Repeat. *(16.1 PK.C)*

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Hide plastic fruits and vegetables** around the greenspace. Have the students find the fruits and vegetables and create a pretend salad. Talk about where fruits and vegetables are bought at. *(6.5 PK.C)*

**Read *The Carrot Seed*.** Take a pot, dirt, water and carrot seeds outside. Teach the students how to plant the carrot seeds and then water them. Every time you are in the greenspace water the pot and watch the carrots grow. When the carrots are finished growing, pull them out of the dirt, wash them off, and have the students taste the carrots. *(6.5 PK.A)*

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# Unit 7: Nature All Around Us

*Unstructured time to explore builds curiosity  
and observation skills.*

*Crescent Early Childhood Center*



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## ART & MUSIC

Students **collect natural materials outdoors** to create a collage of nature items. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 1, Monday, Big Experience 1. (9.1.V PK.E)*

After engaging in an outdoor read aloud of “Little Cloud,” students lie back and observe the clouds. Using blue paper and white crayons, students sketch what they see in the daytime sky. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 2, Monday, Big Experience 2. (9.1.V PK.E)*

Students use musical instruments outdoors to create noises for different types of weather, such as rainsticks for rain, drums and cymbals for thunder, bells/chimes for windy. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 3, Wednesday, Big Experience 3: “Weather” (9.1.M PK.B)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

**Read *Growing Vegetable Soup*.** If there is not a garden, have students pretend to plant a garden and work together to grow their own vegetables for soup. Play food can be brought out for this activity. *(9.1.D PK.E)*

**Read *Little Cloud*.** Bring students outside to look for different shapes of clouds in the sky and imagine Little Cloud’s adventure. *(9.1.D PK.E)*

**Read *What Makes the Season*.** Have students act out being different animals waking up from hibernation in the greenspace. *(9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

Practice **yoga** poses. *(10.4 PK.B)*

Go outside and explore to **find out what season it is** based on what they find on the ground, temperature, and how the trees look. *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**After reading the story *Little Cloud*,** observe things that are found in the sky. Describe the clouds (shape; movement; color; quantity). Invite the children to create a picture of clouds in the sky. Provide blue construction paper, cotton balls, and glue. *(1.5 PK.C)*

**Look for colors in nature.** Use preprinted color words. Take turns selecting and identifying the color. Search for outdoor objects that are that color. When all color words have been selected, recall the objects that were found for each color. *(1.5 PK.A)*

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## MATH

### **SORTING, PATTERNS, NUMBER RECOGNITION:**

- Sorting nature materials
- Nature patterns
- Scavenger hunt (looking for a certain number of objects ... 1 stick, 2 leaves...) (2.1 PK.MP)

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## SCIENCE

**How Do Plants Grow?** Review what plants need to grow. If you were not able to plant for Unit 6, invite the children to plant something. Discuss gardening and what it means to take care of plants. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 1. (3.1 PK.A.2)*

**What is in the Sky?** Invite children to go outside and make observations about what they see in the sky. They could record/draw what they see on a clipboard or use iPad to take photos. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 2. (3.3 PK.B.1)*

**The Weather:** Children can complete a weather journal daily outside in the greenspace. They can record the weather, how it feels, what it looks like, what they see, etc. in their journal. *Suggested for Unit 7, Week 3. (3.3 PK.A.5)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### **CURIOSITY:**

**Discuss the Butterfly Life Cycle.** If possible, get caterpillars that turn into butterflies. Talk about the life cycle of a butterfly. (3.1 PK.A.3)

**What will it be?** Show students a variety of seeds. Ask, "What will it be? A flower, a plant, a vegetable?" Plant the seeds in dirt. Discuss how seeds grow. Take care of the seeds by watering them. Watch the seeds grow over time. (4.1 PK.C)

**Play the Sun and Moon Tag.** Make a sun from a paper plate. Color the paper plate yellow. Make a moon from a paper plate. Leave the paper plate white. Have the students gather in an area. Give one student the sun paper plate and give another student the moon paper plate. The sun and the moon will run around tagging other students. If a student is tagged by the sun the student must stretch out his/her arms and stop. If a student is tagged by the moon the student must lay down pretending they are sleeping. Play until only the moon and sun are left. (3.3 PK.B.1)

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Take pictures of the trees** in each season. Discuss how the trees change in each season. (4.1 PK.E)

**Grow Flowers!!** Take the Science Poster #13 Plants Live and Grow outside. Discuss how plants live and grow. Take a container, soil, and flower seeds outside and plant them. Once they grow, you can pretend to sell them to your friends using fake money. (6.2 PK.D)

Have a discussion with the students about **jobs that people do in nature** like a gardener, farmer, florist, forester, and conservationist. (5.3 PK.C)

# Unit 8: Moving On

*In addition to free play, structured games like relay races can help interact with peers in a positive way.*

*Obama Academy, Early Childhood*



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## ART & MUSIC

Students **view landscape photography** in book *In Our Country*. Discuss photography and how camera works, prints, etc. Students take turns taking a photo with cell phone or, preferably, disposable camera. Prints are made and displayed. *Suggested for Unit 8, Week 1, Monday, Big Experience 2: "In Our Country." (9.1.V PK.E)*

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

Read ***Giraffes Can't Dance!*** and have children act out the animal dance! *(9.1.D PK.E)*

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Race / Tag / Follow the Leader.**

Based off the book *Lion Hunt* **reenact the story.** *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Follow directions:** Introduce a game. Begin by giving directions for others to follow. Ask a child to be the "direction-giver" to the other children. "First, go to the \_\_\_\_\_ and then go to the \_\_\_\_\_, and last go to the \_\_\_\_\_." *(1.5 PK.C)*

**Does it rhyme?** Designate an area to stand in if the answer is yes, and another area if the answer is no. Gather in a central area and put the words "Yes" and "No" in opposite areas. Ask the children to listen and move to the designated area signifying their response to each set of words. Call out 2 words: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_. Ask, "Do they rhyme"? Gather back together and continue giving 2 words. *(1.1 PK.C)*

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## MATH

**Number recognition, sorting, counting, patterns:**

- Outside counting fun (number find - hiding and finding numbers)
- Collecting and sorting objects
- Nature patterns
- Counting jumps/hops

*(2.2 PK.MP)*



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## SCIENCE

**Compare and Make Predictions:** Invite students to use the scale with items from nature (leaves, sticks, rocks, etc.). Ask them to make predictions about what would be heavier/lighter and then test their prediction. *Suggested for Unit 8, Week 1. (3.2 PK.B.7)*

**What Animals Could Live Here?** Invite the children to make predictions about what animals could live in the greenspace (now that it is most likely warm enough for birds, squirrels, insects, etc.) Discuss what the animals need to survive and whether or not they have those things in the greenspace. *Suggested for Unit 8, Week 3. (3.1 PK.A.2)*

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

### PERSISTENCE:

**Discuss how the seasons change.** Talk about how nature is persistent. Use a tree for example. In the fall the leaves fall down. In the winter the trees are cold and nothing is on the trees. In the spring the leaves begin to bud. In the summer the trees are in full bloom. *(4.1 PK.E)*

**Practice walking on a curb or tree and balancing.** Talk about when things are hard at first, then they become easier the more they try. Chant “I think I can, I think I can.” *(10.4 PK.B)*

**Have a relay race.** Race from one end of the greenspace to the other. Try to run as fast as you can to finish first. *(10.4 PK.A)*

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Take chart paper outside.** Make a list of one thing each student enjoyed doing in the greenspace this year. *(6.1 PK.D)*

Discuss with the students **how they feel about the greenspace** and how the greenspace makes them feel. Talk about what the returning students need to do to keep the greenspace a fun place to grown and learn. Like keeping it clean, don't hurt the plants and trees by swinging or pulling them on them, water the flowers and plants in the garden, etc. *(5.3 PK.F)*

# Anytime Ideas

*Natural elements in the greenspace, like this tree stump table, can be a setting for dramatic play.*

*Crescent Early Childhood Center*



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## ART & MUSIC

Look around the greenspace and **identify all of the colors** that you see. (9.1.V PK.A)

**Make music using the stumps and sticks.** You can hit the stump to create a beat and you can hit the sticks together to create a beat. (9.1.M PK.A)

With a partner or a small group **“perform” a song or fingerplay** from the current theme. (1.1 PK.C)

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## DRAMATIC PLAY

**Re-enact characters** and/or events from a current story. Show what the character(s) did or what happened next. (10.4 PK.A)

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## GROSS MOTOR

**Download the Nature Passport App** and complete the different activities. (10.4 PK.A)

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## LANGUAGE & LITERACY

**Use outdoor materials to fill-in the block letter cards** (A/a — Z/z when they are presented). Use the block letter templates. Select natural objects to fill-in the upper and/or lowercase letter. (1.1 PK.B)

Listen to and **recite rhymes and fingerplays**.

Reread and **re-enact events** of stories. (1.2 PK.L)

Use sidewalk chalk to **write letters on the stones**, or use paintbrushes and water to have the students write letters on the stones. (1.4 PK.F)

Notice and discuss any **changes in the environment**, make predictions or begin a discussion on cause and effect. (3.3 PK.A.5; 4.5 PK.B; AL.1 PK.A)

**Find items** that begin with a specific letter / sound (weekly). (1.1 PK.C; 1.1 PK.D)

Reinforce **vocabulary theme words** for the week. (1.2 PK.J)

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## MATH

Use sidewalk chalk to **write numbers on the stones**, or use paintbrushes and water to have the students write numbers on the stones. (2.1 PK.A.1; 1.4 PK.F)

**Measure** the length of sticks and leaves. (2.4 PK.A.1)

**Compare** the height of the students and the trees. (2.4 PK.A.1)

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## SCIENCE

**Identify** the parts of a plant. (3.1 PK.A.5)

**Gather items** from outside and bring them inside for the Science Center. (3.3 PK.A.1)

**Read and follow** recipes such as playdough. (3.2 PK.A.3)

**Plant seeds** and water them after choosing flowers from a catalogue. (3.1 PK.A.2; 3.1 PK.A.3; 4.4 PK.A)

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## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

**Establish a line-up routine:** "Name one thing that you saw that was \_\_\_\_\_." (e.g., "green") (AL.4 PK.A)

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

**Draw a map** of the greenspace. (7.1 PK.A)

**Create a routine** for the greenspace. Arrival song, free play, line up song etc. (8.1 PK.A)

**Look at a map** of other greenspaces in other schools. Compare and contrast the maps. (8.1 PK.C)

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# DISCOVERY, SENSORY & MINDFULNESS CONNECTIONS

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## DISCOVERY

**Introduce space** at start of year – identify play spaces and growing spaces. *(AL.1 PK.B)*

**Provide tools** to take pictures. *(3.1 PK.A.9)*

**Discover what happens when it rains**, when it's too dry, when it snows, when strong winds blow. Take photos if possible. *(3.3 PK.A.5)*

**Take photos** of or draw changes each season. *(3.3 PK.A.5)*

**Plant seeds** to monitor and report on as seasons change. *(3.1 PK.A.3)*

**Make a compost bin** and add coffee grounds, paper strips, orange rinds. Report on how it changes each week. *(3.1 PK.A.9; 1.5 PK.D)*

**Explore worms** that are added to the compost bin. How do the worms benefit the bin? *(3.1 PK.A.2)*

**Recycle** some of the materials found in the greenspace (during seasonal changes) and incorporate them back into the space. *(4.4 PK.D)*

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## SENSORY

Notice **how things feel outside** – the wind, sun, raindrops. *(3.3 PK.A.5)*

**Take photos** of different kinds of weather to reflect or experience. *(3.3 PK.A.5)*

**Find items** that can be made into collages or sensory bottles. *(9.1.V PK.E)*

**Observe signs** of animal life in the greenspace – footprints, nibbled leaves, shed skin, etc. *(3.1 PK.A.9)*

**Plant mint** and herbs that add scents to the space. *(3.1 PK.A.3)*

**Add** wind socks or wind spinners. *(9.1.V PK.E)*

**Incorporate** fake plants among the plants growing in greenspace. Note the difference in how they feel. Discuss the differences. *(3.1 PK.A.1)*

**Add** a space for sand play and add seasonal items. Allow for students to possibly add greenspace materials to the sand. *(3.3 PK.A.1)*

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## MINDFULNESS

Choose to **go to the quiet area** to de-escalate. *(16.1 PK.A)*

Do **yoga** outside on cool days. *(9.1.M PK.A)*

**Discuss** how the space makes you feel. *(16.1 PK.A; 1.5 PK.E)*

Discuss ways to **take care of the space** such as cleaning up and adding things to brighten up the space. *(5.2 PK.A)*

**Care for** the plant life and items that are in greenspace. *(3.1 PK.A.2)*

**Create a colorful sensory path** using stepping stones and colorful signs on the fence to follow. *(9.1.V PK.E)*

**Play soft mellow music** while in space. Use for a wind down activity, breathing activities, or for de-escalating. Search for videos on kid-friendly breathing techniques such as One Conscious Breath. Music and even be played softly while reading stories. *(16.1 PK.A)*



# Highlights of the Seasons



- Flowers
- Sun
- Vegetables
- Clouds
- Birds
- Green Leaves
- Bees
- Heat
- Bugs
- Grass



- Browning Plants
- Birds
- Colored Leaves
- Squirrels
- Acorns
- Bugs
- Fallen Pinecones
- Clouds
- Mums
- Rain
- Sticks
- Breeze
- Soil



- Snow
- Pine Needles
- Icicles
- Pinecones
- Evergreen Trees
- Birds
- Winter Berries



- Emerging Plants
- Worms
- Butterflies
- Green Leaves
- Ladybugs
- Caterpillars
- Daffodils/Tulips
- Bees
- Bird's Nests
- Soil
- Birds
- Rain



## PENNSYLVANIA LEARNING STANDARDS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

AL.1 PK.A	Explore and ask questions to seek meaningful information about a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks.	Anytime Ideas, Language and Literacy
AL.1 PK.B	Demonstrate a willingness to participate in new and challenging experiences.	Discovery
AL.3 PK.A	Use music, art, and/or stories to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings.	Unit 4, Dramatic Play
AL.4 PK.A	Relate knowledge learned from one experience to a similar experience in a new setting.	Unit 1, Dramatic Play; Unit 3, Dramatic Play; Unit 5, Dramatic Play; Unit 6, Dramatic Play; Anytime Ideas, Social Emotional
1.1 PK.B	Identify basic features of print	Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy
1.1 PK.C	Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).	Unit 1, Language & Literacy; Unit 2, Language & Literacy; Unit 8, Language & Literacy; Anytime Ideas, Art & Music Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy
1.1 PK.D	Develop beginning phonics and word skills.	Unit 4, Language & Literacy; Unit 6, Language & Literacy; Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy
1.2 PK.C	With prompting and support, make connections between information in a text and personal experience.	Unit 1, Language & Literacy; Unit 2, Language & Literacy; Unit 3, Dramatic Play
1.2 PK.J	Use new vocabulary and phrases acquired in conversations and being read to.	Unit 3, Language & Literacy; Unit 3, Dramatic Play; Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy
1.2 PK.L	With prompting and support, actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.	Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy
1.3 PK.J	Use new vocabulary and phrases acquired in conversations and being read to.	Unit 5, Dramatic Play
1.4 PK.F	Spell simple words phonetically.	Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy; Anytime Ideas, Math
1.5 PK.A	Participate in collaborative conversations with peers and adults in small and larger groups.	Unit 7, Language & Literacy
1.5 PK.C	Respond to what a speaker says to follow directions, seek help, or gather information.	Unit 4, Language & Literacy; Unit 7, Language & Literacy; Unit 8, Language & Literacy
1.5 PK.D	Use simple sentences; share stories, familiar experiences, and interests, speaking clearly enough to be understood by most audiences.	Discovery
1.5 PK.E	Use simple sentences; express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, speaking clearly enough to be understood by most audiences.	Mindfulness

2.1 PK.A.1	Know number names and the count sequence.	Unit 1, Math; Unit 5, Social Emotional; Unit 6, Math; Anytime Ideas, Math
2.1 PK.MP	Use mathematical processes when quantifying, comparing, representing, and modeling numbers.	Unit 7, Math
2.2 PK.MP	Use mathematical processes when representing relationships.	Unit 2, Math; Unit 8, Math
2.3 PK.A.1	Identify and describe shapes.	Unit 3, Math; Unit 5, Dramatic Play
2.3 PK.A.2	Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes.	Unit 4, Math
2.4 PK.A.1	Describe and compare measurable attributes of length and weights of everyday objects.	Anytime Ideas, Math
2.4 PK.MP	Use mathematical processes when measuring; representing, organizing, and understanding data.	Unit 5, Math
3.1 PK.A.1	Recognize the difference between living and non-living things.	Sensory
3.1 PK.A.2	Identify basic needs of plants (water and light) and animals (food, water, and light).	Unit 4, Science; Unit 6, Science; Unit 7, Science; Unit 8, Science; Anytime Ideas, Science; Sensory; Mindfulness
3.1 PK.A.3	Recognize that plants and animals grow and change.	Unit 7, Social Emotional; Anytime Ideas, Science; Discovery; Sensory
3.1 PK.A.5	Name basic parts of living things.	Anytime Ideas, Science
3.1 PK.A.9	Participate in simple investigations about living and/ or non-living things to answer a question or to test a prediction.	Discovery; Sensory
3.2 PK.A.1	Sort and describe objects according to size, shape, color, and texture.	Unit 2, Science
3.2 PK.A.3	Notice change in matter.	Anytime Ideas, Science
3.2 PK.B.7	Participate in simple investigations of energy and motion to answer a question or to test a prediction.	Unit 8, Science
3.3 PK.A.1	Sort different types of earth materials.	Anytime Ideas, Science; Sensory
3.3 PK.A.5	Identify seasons that correspond with observable conditions and identify how weather affects daily life.	Unit 7, Science; Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy; Discovery; Sensory
3.3 PK.B.1	Identify objects that can be found in the day or night sky.	Unit 7, Science; Unit 7, Social Emotional
4.1 PK.A	Identify living and non-living things in the immediate and surrounding environment.	Unit 4, Science
4.1 PK.C	Identify that plants need the sun to grow.	Unit 7, Social Emotional
4.1 PK.E	Identify the change of seasons in the environment.	Unit 7, Social Studies; Unit 8, Social Emotional
4.4 PK.A	Identify what plants and animals need to grow.	Anytime Ideas, Science
4.4 PK.D	Identify basic tools used in gardening at home and at school.	Unit 5, Science; Discovery
4.5 PK.B	Identify things in the natural environment that can be harmful to people, pets, and other living things.	Anytime Ideas, Language & Literacy

5.1 PK.A	State rules and their consequences.	Unit 1, Science; Unit 3, Science
5.1 PK.F	Identify basic American symbols. (e.g., American flag)	Unit 1, Social Studies
5.2 PK.A	Identify self-membership of a group such as the class or family.	Unit 2, Social Studies; Mindfulness
5.3 PK.C	Identify community workers through their uniforms and equipment.	Unit 7, Social Studies
5.3 PK.F	Identify appropriate behaviors for responsible classroom citizens.	Unit 8, Social Studies
6.1 PK.D	Identify a choice based on individual interest.	Unit 8, Social Studies
6.2 PK.D	Explain how money is used.	Unit 7, Social Studies
6.5 PK.A	Differentiate between work and play.	Unit 6, Social Studies
6.5 PK.C	Identify local businesses.	Unit 6, Social Studies
7.1 PK.A	Explain how a map is a representation of places.	Anytime Ideas, Social Studies
7.1 PK.B	Describe the location of places in the home, school, and community to gain an understanding of relative location.	Unit 3, Social Studies; Unit 5, Social Studies
7.2 PK.A	Describe the characteristics of home and frequently visited locations to gain an understanding of physical features.	Unit 4, Social Studies
8.1 PK.A	Identify a sequence of events through a day.	Anytime Ideas, Social Studies
8.1 PK.C	Understand that information comes from many sources such as books, computers, and newspapers.	Anytime Ideas, Social Studies
9.1.D PK.E	Use imagination and creativity to express self through dramatic play.	Unit 1, Dramatic Play; Unit 2, Dramatic Play; Unit 3, Dramatic Play; Unit 4, Dramatic Play; Unit 5, Dramatic Play; Unit 6, Dramatic Play; Unit 7, Dramatic Play; Unit 8, Dramatic Play
9.1.M PK.A	Know and use basic elements and principles of music and movement.	Unit 4, Dramatic Play; Anytime Ideas, Art & Music; Mindfulness
9.1.M PK.B	Respond to different types of music and dance through participation and discussion.	Unit 2, Art & Music; Unit 4, Dramatic Play; Unit 5, Art & Music; Unit 7, Art & Music
9.1.M PK.E	Use imagination and creativity to express self through music and dance.	Unit 6, Gross Motor
9.1.V PK.A	Know and use basic elements of visual arts.	Anytime Ideas, Art & Music
9.1.V PK.B	Combine a variety of materials to create a work of art.	Unit 5, Social Studies
9.1.V PK.E	Use imagination and creativity to express self through visual arts.	Unit 1, Art & Music; Unit 2, Gross Motor; Unit 3, Art & Music; Unit 4, Art & Music; Unit 5, Art & Music; Unit 6, Art & Music; Unit 7, Art & Music; Unit 8, Art & Music; Sensory; Mindfulness

10.2 PK.A	Identify fundamental practices for good health.	Unit 6, Math
10.4 PK.A	Demonstrate coordination of body movements in active play.	Unit 3, Gross Motor; Unit 5, Gross Motor; Unit 6, Gross Motor; Unit 7, Gross Motor; Unit 8, Gross Motor; Unit 8, Social Emotional; Anytime Ideas, Dramatic Play; Anytime Ideas, Gross Motor
10.4 PK.B	Exhibit balance while moving on the ground or using equipment.	Unit 3, Gross Motor; Unit 4, Gross Motor; Unit 7, Gross Motor; Unit 8, Social Emotional
10.5 PK.A	Use hands, fingers, and wrists to manipulate objects.	Unit 1, Gross Motor; Unit 2, Gross Motor
16.1 PK.A	Distinguish between emotions and identify the socially accepted ways to express them.	Mindfulness
16.1 PK.B	Recognize that everyone has personal traits which guide behavior and choices.	Unit 1, Social Emotional
16.1 PK.C	Recognize that everyone makes mistakes and that using positive coping skills can result in learning from the experience.	Unit 6, Social Emotional
16.1 PK.D	Establish goals independently and recognize their influence on choices.	Unit 3, Social Emotional; Unit 5, Social Emotional
16.2 PK.A	Interact with peers and adults in a socially acceptable manner.	Unit 2, Social Emotional; Unit 6, Social Emotional
16.3 PK.B	Recognize there are socially acceptable ways to behave in different places.	Unit 4, Social Emotional

**The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and preserves Fallingwater, a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy recognizes that a sustainable future depends on an engaged and informed youth. We support environmental education in our region by offering WPC properties, projects and staff expertise to local teachers and student groups and through education programs at Fallingwater.

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
800 Waterfront Drive • Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
412-288-2777 • [waterlandlife.org](http://waterlandlife.org)

**Pittsburgh Public Schools** has a long-standing history of implementing successful and effective early learning programs in the City of Pittsburgh that foster the educational, nutritional, social-emotional, health/mental health, and physical development and well-being of all children, including those with special needs.

Our goal is to equip children with the educational tools and social skills necessary for a seamless transition to kindergarten and beyond. We provide children, ages Birth to five, with comprehensive programming designed to reinforce and respond to the unique strengths of each child individually.

Supportive learning environments help stimulate social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth in children. We cultivate meaningful relationships with families to build bonds that encourage and support parent engagement and participation in program activities to help strengthen the family unit. Community partnerships are formed to establish a core network of support services and resources to children and families.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Education  
Conroy Early Childhood Center  
1398 Page Street • Building A, Room 226 • Pittsburgh, PA 15233  
412-529-4291 Select Option 2 • [earlychildhood@pghschools.org](mailto:earlychildhood@pghschools.org)



## NOTES

## WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVANCY

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## PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



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