

Vocabulary

Adventure	An exciting or unusual experience.
Alphabet	The letters that make up our language, in order.
Cabin	A small house or cottage of simple construction.
Forest	A large tract of land covered with trees and underbrush.
Hidden	Hard to find; not in plain sight.
Nature	The material world and its phenomena; the elements of the natural world, as mountains, trees, animals, or rivers.
Pretend	To make believe.
Search	To look carefully in order to find something missing or lost.
Story	A narration of events.
Tent	A portable shelter used when camping.
Waterfall	A flow of water from high to low.

Activity: Classroom Letter Bottle

Create a class-made toy as you work through the alphabet. Use letters and natural objects to create an alphabet seek-and-find jar similar to the kind students will explore in the Story Forest.

Materials

Large plastic bottle with lid

Various natural materials like pebbles, sand, sticks

Alphabet beads or blocks that will fit in the bottle

Procedure:

1. Introduce the idea of making a new toy for the classroom—a bottle with the alphabet inside!
2. If students have already participated in the Story Forest workshop or have used a seek-and-find letter jar, remind them of the experience. If not, demonstrate the idea by making a very simplistic model by putting sand or colored water and a letter inside a bottle. Show them how when they move the bottle they can try to find the letter.
3. Have students bring in stones or rocks from home or fill the bottle with natural materials found near the school yard. Show the students the full bottle. It's like a forest in a bottle.
4. As your class studies or reviews different letters unscrew the lid, add the letter and screw the lid back on. Put masking tape around the lid to prevent it from opening.
5. Have the letter jar available during playtime.

Extension Idea

Help students make small personal letter jars. Give each student an alphabet bead with their first initial and a small plastic container (like a plastic baby food jar or pint size water bottle.) Make various materials available including bits of paper, rocks, and recycled objects. Have each student put their bead in their jar and then add whatever materials are attractive to them.

Alignment with State Goals

State and EC Goal 1

Read with understanding and fluency

State and EC Goal 11

Uses senses to explore and observe materials and natural phenomena.

Activity: Portrait Alphabet

Children learn better when they connect personally to new knowledge. Present or practice letters using a portrait alphabet that's unique to your class, and show your students that a portrait of them is something worthy of display.

Materials

Camera and printer
Sturdy paper
Crayons or markers

Procedure:

1. Take a picture of each student and print out the photos. Mount them onto sturdy paper with lots of additional room for writing letters.
2. Have everyone sit in a circle and pass out pictures to each student, giving each their own.
3. One by one, have each student stand in the middle of the circle and hold up his or her picture. Repeat this rhyme using the name of whoever is in the middle:

This is my friend Adam
He's as good as they get
Adam starts with A
That's part of the alphabet

This is my friend Lily
She's as good as they get
Lily starts with L
That's part of the alphabet

4. Continue until each student has a chance to be in the circle. Encourage the students to clap hands in rhythm and join you as you chant.
5. Have everyone return to their seats and write their first initial onto the extra space beside their photo. If they're able, encourage them to also write their name.
6. Hang the finished portrait alphabet up in the classroom, stacking multiple letters vertically.
7. As a class, brainstorm what you should take a photo or draw a picture of for the missing letters. Take a walk around the room and see what you can add!

Story Forest

Alignment with State Goals

State and EC Goal 1

Read with understanding and fluency.

State and EC Goal 2

Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Activity: Link a Book - *ABC's Naturally*

Students will enjoy the sensory experience of creating letters using natural materials after listening to a book about finding the alphabet in nature.

Materials

Book, *ABC's Naturally* by Lynne Smith Diebel and Jann Faust Kalscheur
A variety of natural materials as available by season (leaves, pine needles, twigs, seeds, etc.)
Baskets
Paper and Pencil
Glue
Slips of paper with one letter written on it, enough for each child

Procedure:

1. Gather natural materials that are available near you. Place them in baskets.
2. Gather the class together and read from the *ABC's naturally* book. You may want to read only a portion of it. Make sure to give students plenty of time to study the pictures. When needed, use your finger to outline the shape of the letter.
3. Introduce the idea of making a book of *ABC's* all together. Point out the natural materials. Explain that instead of photographs, like in the book, you'll use natural materials to make letter shapes. The book will have all sorts of textures and will be wonderful to read because it can stay in your own class library.
4. Assign students to different letters by letting them pick a slip of paper out of a basket.
5. Have students first draw their letter with a pencil onto paper.
6. Then, allow students to chose natural materials and glue them into place to outline the shape of the letter. Encourage them to choose whatever is interesting to them.
7. Once dry, use contact or lamination paper to secure the individual pages and bind the book in alphabetical order. Present it to the class. Make sure it has a place in the class library.

Extension Idea

As a class, brainstorm something you might find in nature that starts with each letter. Add this to each page of the book. For example, under the student's letter A, you can write apple tree.

Story Forest

Alignment with State Goals

State and EC Goal 1

Read with understanding and fluency.

State and EC Goal 2

Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Activity: Learn a rhyme - *We're going on a Field Trip*

A field trip is a very exciting thing! Use this call and response rhyme to help students anticipate the event. You can also make up verses specific to your classroom, including waving good bye to a class pet or walking through a certain door or gate.

Materials

Labeled pictures of a school bus, lunches and other objects from the rhyme
Rhyme: *We're Going on a Field Trip* (included)

Procedure

1. Print and label pictures of lunches, buses and other objects to hold up.
Familiarize yourself with the song.
2. Gather students together and introduce that you're going to be going on a field trip soon. In preparation, you're going to learn a special song.
3. Have students repeat each line after you, and keep an ongoing rhythm by slapping the floor or clapping hands. Make motions and sounds as you go through the rhyme.

Story Forest

Alignment with State Goals

State and EC Goal 1B

Apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency.

State and EC Goal 4

Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Rhyme: We're Going on a Field Trip

(You can use the same rhythm as with the book *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury)

Refrain:

We're going on a field trip
It's going to be a lot of fun
I've got my teacher and my friends
So let's leave now!

Oh wait!
Lunches!
We can't forget our lunches!
Where are they?
Here they are!
Put them in the bin.
(plop plop plop plop)

(Refrain)

Oh wait!
The bus!
We can't forget the bus!
Where is it?
Here it is!
Everyone get on!
(step step step step)

Oh wait!
The parents!
We can't forget the parents!
Where are they?
Here they are!
Tell them to hurry up!
(c'mon, c'mon, c'mon c'mon)

(Refrain)

Oh wait!
Nametags!
We can't forget our nametags!
Where are they?
Here they are!
Put them on now
(stick stick stick stick)

(Refrain)

Oh wait!
The trip is tomorrow!
I forgot that it's tomorrow!
I guess I'll have to wait 'til then
To take our field trip!

Activity: Forest Finds

Students will use investigation skills to explore the nature in their school's backyard.

Materials

Paper and pencils

Clipboards

Magnifying glasses and other scientific tools as appropriate

Procedure

1. Invite parents to come on a mini-field trip outside.
2. Review or introduce your class trip to the Chicago Children's Museum to visit the Story Forest! Talk about what a forest is. Show pictures of a forest. Make a list of the kinds of things that could be in a forest, like tall trees, animals and streams.
3. Ask students, do we live in a forest? No, but maybe some of us have visited one or have a forest preserve near them. Explain that although you don't live in a forest, there is still nature nearby. You are going to go find it!
4. Remind students that they are going to look for things that are natural; something that is growing, living or part of the earth. Brainstorm some natural things that you might find in the school's backyard. Make a web of these ideas.
5. With chaperone help if possible, explore a grassy area near the school. Hand out magnifying glasses and other scientific tools to encourage exploration. Hand out clipboards with paper and pencils attached. Encourage students to make a sketch of one natural object they see outside so they can remember it back in the classroom. Older students should label their sketch if possible.
6. While outside, activate other senses by asking students what they hear, smell or feel.
7. Once back in the classroom, make a second web of nearby nature to encompass all the things your class discovered.

Story Forest

Alignment with State Goals

State and EC Goal 3

Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

State and EC Goal 11

Uses senses to explore and observe materials and natural phenomena.

State and EC Goal 11.A.ECb

Collect, describe and record information.

Storybooks

- Castella, Krystina and Brian Boyle. *Discovering Nature's Alphabet*
- Diebel, Lynne Smith and Jann Faust Kalscheur. *ABCs Naturally*
- Green, Jen. *Why Should I Protect Nature?*
- Green, Janice. *Backyard ABCs*
- McGeHee, Claudia. *A Tallgrass Prairie Alphabet*
- Rammel, S. Kelly. *City Beats: A Hip Hoppy Pigeon Poem*
- Rosen, Michael and Helen Oxenbury. *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*
- Thornhill, Jan. *The Wildlife ABC and 123*
- Ward, Jennifer. *Forest Bright, Forest Night*

Nonfiction and Reference

- Cornell, Joseph. *Sharing Nature with Children*
- DK Publishing. *First Nature Encyclopedia*
- Nail, James. *Whose Tracks are These?*
- Sobel, David. *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education*
- Worth, Karen and Sharon Grollman. *Worms, Shadows and Whirlpools*