OUR COMMUNITY

Alief ISD

Early Childhood Center



EXPLORATION™ zones

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EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

Welcome to your new classroom! You may be experiencing many emotions—excitement, uncertainty, even apprehension. This is completely expected. Experiential learning may be new to you as a concept or theory, but rest assured, many of the principles that bind experiential learning have likely been applied by you for years. Experiential learning embodies the active participation, social engagement, and meaningful connections that we know are the pillars of play-based learning. Play is how young children learn!

This guide is intended to support you as you transition to a new classroom environment. You will find helpful background information on the theory, activity ideas organized by skill domains, experiential learning resources, and tools to assist you in reflective teaching practices. Most importantly, have fun with your students in this new learning environment. The classroom space really is a second teacher and the possibilities are endless!

What is Experiential Education?

Experiential education is a theory that acknowledges humans as active participants in the learning process. In the classroom, students are at the center of the learning process, actively engaging and participating in decision-making. Students' interests and needs drive topics of study with small group and individual projects evolving from their curiosities and real-life events. Experiential learning environments, like museums and zoos, naturally provide opportunities for inquiry-based learning that inspire curiosity and passion. These same features and opportunities are available in experiential learning classrooms.

How does experiential education impact your role as a teacher?

Teachers learn about students by actively listening and observing. You listen to conversations, observe students' choices, and communicate with families. Through this listening and observing, you can make assumptions about what students know and provide new materials, activities, and experiences that help expand upon this knowledge. By asking open-ended questions and encouraging students to make observations, students begin to build a schema that continues to grow.

How does experiential education impact the students' role?

Students are at the center of the learning process. Students' interests and needs drive topics of conversation and participation in activities. Students in experiential learning classrooms make choices and decisions throughout the day. They choose whether they play alone or in a group, they choose activity options that sound most appealing, and they choose to engage with interesting materials and equipment.

How Do I Use an Experiential Education Classroom?

A new classroom can be overwhelming, not only for you, but for your students too. Being prepared can help manage those overwhelming feelings and set you up for success in your new environment. Before introducing the classrooms to your students, take a gallery walk in each classroom, taking in the sights and sounds without interruptions. As you are noticing and observing features in the classroom, think about big ideas or themes that might naturally stem from these features. You can list activities or play-based items that might align with these ideas; several activity ideas and accompanying items are provided in the educator guide to help you get started. Introduce the classrooms to the students by taking a community gallery walk. Ask students to describe what they notice, how they feel, and what they would like to know more about.

What Will I Find in Each Experiential Education Classroom?

Each experiential education classroom includes similar best practices and strategies for working with young children, not only in the design but in the supportive activities. The unique themes and content can lead to new ideas and projects stemming from students' interests and questions. Each classroom includes:

- **A General Supply Kit:** A collection of materials that can be used in open-ended ways
- **Magnetic Boards:** Engagement tools for group learning or individual interactions
- **A Classroom Library:** Developmentally appropriate Spanish and English, non-fiction and fiction books, that support the theme
- **Sensory Exploration:** A station or area that encourages inquiry-based investigations
- **An Educator Guide:** A facilitation tool that includes supportive activities and ideas for assessment

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ACTIVITIES



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OUR COMMUNITY

Building Our Community

OC.01

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
VII.B.3 Child discusses the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and community helpers.
VII.C.1 Child identifies and creates common geographic features.

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 Alief Floor Map.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

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, and community members). 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 neighborhood play mat or Alief Floor Map. 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.

TEACHING STRATEGY

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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OUR COMMUNITY

Street Safety

OC.02

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
VII.C.2 Child explores geography tools and resources.
IX.A.1 Child demonstrates coordination and balance in isolation.

Rules keep us safe. Students learn the rules of the road by exploring and engaging with large scale road and safety signs through creative and imaginative play. Ride-on trikes add to the exploration and support in the development of gross motor skills.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Introduce the drivetime road signs and review the meaning behind each. If applicable, have students perform the action as part of the review.
2. Block off an area of the classroom that will serve as the designated "ride-on" area to avoid collision with others (use painter's tape or string to create boundaries). Encourage students to build a riding course within the designated area, placing the signs along the course. Encourage students to perform the action on the sign as they are riding through the course.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Take this activity outside to incorporate more space.
- Use orange traffic cones, empty cans, cardboard boxes, and chalk to create an obstacle course inside or outside. Be sure there aren't any sharp corners or narrow areas that students might find difficult to navigate.

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Classroom Volunteers

OC.03

I.A.4 Child shows initiative in trying new activities and demonstrates perserverance when attempting to overcome obstacles or challenges.
I.C.2 Child assumes various roles and responsibilities as part of the classroom community.
VII.B.3 Child discusses the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and community helpers.

As part of a larger discussion on being a good citizen, students can elect to volunteer for roles in the classroom on a daily or weekly basis. As a group, the students brainstorm roles and responsibilities and make self-selections.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

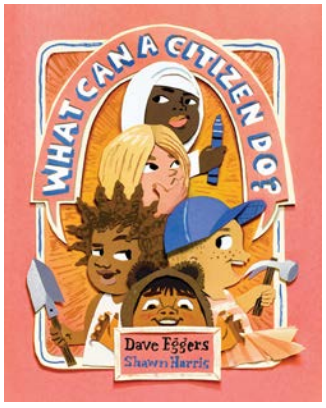
1. Students learn that being a good citizen starts with values like responsibility, empathy, honesty, and tolerance. Young students can learn these values by listening to stories and participating in activities that build knowledge around culture, and build skills like teamwork and critical thinking. Read *What Can a Citizen Do?* by Dave Eggers and *Quizás algo Hermoso* by F. Isabel Campoy, reviewing the responsibilities of a citizen and discussing ways to bring together a community (a group of people) throughout.
2. Brainstorm a list of classroom responsibilities with the students and write them on the volunteer chart. Creating the list together fosters student buy-in and the feeling that everyone is working together. Students can take turns participating in classroom responsibilities through a rotation system.

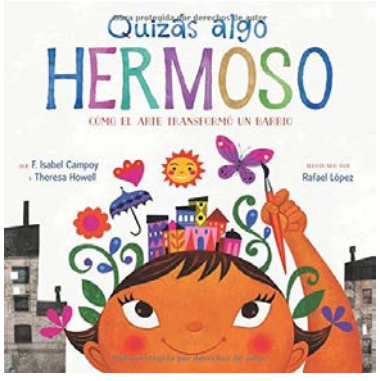
TEACHING STRATEGY

Invite family members in to talk about their contributions to society. Public servants including police officers, fire fighters, teachers, and government workers offer valuable insights into our society and keeping us safe.

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Who's That?

OC.04

I.B.3.b Child remains focused on engaging, teacher-led group activities for up to 20 minutes.
II.A.1 Child shows understanding by responding appropriately to what has been communicated by adults and peers.

Questions are at the heart of inquiry. Children are naturally inquisitive and ask questions to make sense of the world around them. By participating in questioning games and exercises such as Community Helpers Who's That and Career Bingo, students begin to ask deeper questions as adults model appropriate questioning techniques.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Young students learn about questions through modeling and direct participation. Introduce the concept of a question by asking students to participate in a question-of-the-day exercise. Before morning meeting, write a question and several answers on a sentence strip and place it in the pocket chart. During morning meeting, students can answer the question by placing their name (written on a sentence strip), under the answer of their choosing. Start with fact-based question such as, "Who is wearing red today?" and "Who has an 'A' in their name?" and moved toward opinion-based questions such as, "Do you like bananas?" and "Would you rather …?"
2. Encourage students to play Community Helpers Who's That and Career Bingo with educator support. Frequent participation in games that focus on questions and answers help students with skill development.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Ask parents (with student input) to send a picture, drawing, or item from home that represents their child. During morning meeting, ask students to share the picture, drawing, or item from home, while you and their peers ask questions about their shared item.

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Our Community Alphabet: Build a Letter

OC.05

III.C.1 Child recognizes and names at least 20 letters (upper- or lower-case letters).
IV.A.1 Child intentionally uses marks, letters, or symbol to record language and verbally shares meaning.
IX.B.2 Child shows increasing control of tasks that require eye-hand coordination.

Each themed classroom includes a magnetic alphabet. A featured activity will be included with each themed magnetic alphabet. **Build a Letter:** Students use small classroom manipulatives to form uppercase and lowercase letters on letter mats with a community/ neighborhood theme.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

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 links, counting bears, and counting chips) to form uppercase and lowercase letters on the mats.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- 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 (environmental print awareness).

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OUR COMMUNITY

Using Maps to Tell Stories

OC.06

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
II.A.1 Child shows understanding by responding appropriately to what has been communicated by adults and peers.
VII.C.2 Child explores geography tools and resources.

Using the Neighborhood Porch as a storytelling platform, students use storytelling maps and finger puppets to tell a story. Educator can provide prompts to encourage storytelling such as, “Name the characters in the story,” “Tell us what the characters do every day,” and “Tell us a problem the characters might have.”

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Maps present information about the world in a visual way, but they also help us tell a story about that information. Discuss the features on the maps. Ask the following questions: “What do you see on the map?,” “Where do you think this might be?,” and “How might you get from one place to another using the map?” Model an example story using a map and community helper finger puppets. Be sure to include characters, setting, and objects from the map in your story.
2. Encourage students to use the maps and community helper finger puppets to share stories with their peers. Students can use the Neighborhood Porch in the classroom as a storytelling platform. Educators can provide storytelling prompts to encourage storytelling such as, “Who are the characters?,” What do the characters do on a day-to-day basis?,” and “Do the characters have a problem they are trying to solve?”

TEACHING STRATEGY

Participate in this activity often. As students become more comfortable with listening to and telling stories based on information from the maps, they can create new maps of their own.

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OUR COMMUNITY

License Plate Game

OC.07

III.C.1 Child recognizes and names at least 20 letters (upper- or lower-case letters).
III.E.1 Child can distinguish between elements of print including letters, words, and pictures.
IX.B.1 Child shows control of tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.

The license plate game can be used to practice letter or number recognition. Each child gets a turn to be the "driver." Educator writes a letter or number on an index card and uses a clothespin to attach to the driver's back. The driver drives around to music and parks when the music stops; the other students call out the letter or number on the driver's "license plate."

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Write letters or numbers on index cards. Using a clothespin, clip a letter or number to a student's back. The student pretends to "drive" around to music until the music stops. The other students in the group identify the letter or number. Each student gets a turn to be the "driver."

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Write word bank words or students' names in lieu of letters or numbers on index cards.
- Have students write letters, numbers, or words of their choosing on index cards.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Our Community Word Bank: Shaving Cream Words

OC.08

III.C.1 Child recognizes and names at least 20 letters (upper- or lower-case letters).
IX.B.1 Child shows control of tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.

Each themed classroom includes a word bank. A featured activity will be included with each themed word bank. **Shaving Cream Words:** Students use shaving cream as a medium to practice writing word bank words.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

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.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- 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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Map Symbols

OC.09

IV.A.1 Child intentionally uses marks, letters, or symbols to record language and verbally shares meaning.
VII.C.2 Child explores geography tools and resources.
IX.B.2 Child shows increasing control of tasks that require eye-hand coordination.

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.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Introduce the atlas, comparing the atlas to a globe (students' background knowledge). 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.

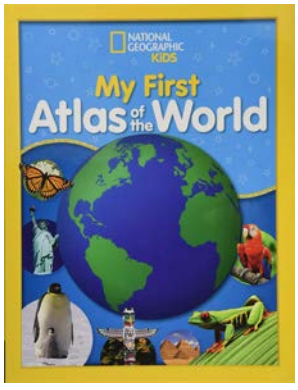
TEACHING STRATEGIES

- 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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Community Helper Puzzles

OC.10

V.C.2 Child creates shapes using materials and/or manipulatives.
IX.B.1 Child shows control of tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.

Students learn about parts to whole relationships and problem solving by manipulating puzzle pieces. Community helper puzzles help reinforce concepts students learn about community members and encourage students to ask questions.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Puzzles are a wonderful free-choice or center activity as they help young children think critically, visually discriminate, and problem solve with little assistance or direction. Place the puzzles in a free-choice center for individual or peer-to-peer exploration.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Create a puzzle sensory bin. Fill a small container with rice and add pieces from a puzzle. Give students clues to help them find puzzle pieces. For example, “Find the puzzle piece that includes a picture of a hat” or “Find the puzzle piece that includes a picture of a stethoscope.”
- Have students trace puzzle pieces onto paper and draw an image(s) that overlays the outline of the pieces. Students can cut out the pieces to create a puzzle of their own.

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Multicolor Mail

OC.11

IV.A.1 Child intentionally uses marks, letters, or symbols to record language and verbally shares meaning.
V.E.1 Child sorts objects that are the same and different into groups and uses language to describe how the groups are similar and different.
IX.B.2 Child shows increasing control of tasks that require eye-hand coordination.

Students sort mail by color in this self-directed activity. Using color-coded envelopes, letters, and stamps, students sort mail by color and place in the appropriate color sorting bin. Students can use the classroom US Postal Box to "mail" letters after sorting.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Review all of the colors on the envelopes. Students can attach the associated color stamp to the envelope, "write" a letter, and put the letter in the tabletop or classroom mailbox. The designated mail carrier adds the letters to the associated color sorting bin.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Ask students to sort mail in other ways, such as by recipient or letter length.
- Ask students to "write" letters to each other. Include a list of all students' names at the writing center and encourage students to write and mail a letter to a friend.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Recycling Center

OC.12

V.E.1 Child sorts objects that are the same and different into groups and uses language to describe how the groups are similar and different.
VI.C.4 Child demonstrates an understanding of the importance of caring for our environment and our planet.

Recycling and sustainability are important concepts to introduce to young children as they learn to take care of their environment, classroom, and their home. Using recycling bins and picture labels, you can set up a recycling center in the classroom, explain the types of items that might go in each one, and encourage children to sort the items they use every day.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Be sure to recycle real items in your classroom. You are likely to use the paper recycling bin the most often in the classroom. Encourage students to place scraps of paper in the paper-labeled recycling bin.
- Create an anchor chart with your students, highlighting other ways we take care of our planet. Start with planet Earth in the middle and branch out with ideas such as: turning off lights when we aren't using them, riding a bike instead of driving a car, and using public transportation. Continue to add ideas as you have more classroom discussions.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to name one thing they throw away in the trash (you'll receive a variety of answers). Ask students where the trash goes once we throw it away (garbage can, dumpster, landfill). Facilitate a discussion about landfills. Tell students that landfills can only hold a certain amount of trash and when it is full, we will have to find a new place for all of our trash. One way to limit the amount of items we throw in the trash is to recycle.
2. Ask students what it means to recycle (turning items into something new and useful). Review items that can be recycled (some glass, paper, metal, and plastic). Introduce the product sorting cards and ask students to "recycle" them by placing cards in the appropriate bins.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Motion: Push and Pull, Fast and Slow

OC.13

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
III.D.2 Child uses information learned from books by describing, relating, categorizing, or comparing and contrasting.
VI.A.2 Child observes, investigates, describes, and discusses position and motion of objects.

After reading *Motion: Push and Pull, Fast and Slow* by Darlene Stille, students can experiment with toy cars (with various sized wheels) and the classroom ramp. Educator can reinforce the concepts of force (push and gravity) and elevation by asking questions to encourage critical thinking.

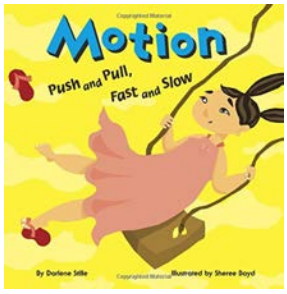
DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Read *Motion: Push and Pull, Fast and Slow* by Darlene Stille, reviewing the concepts of motion throughout (movement, speed, force, and inertia).
2. Have students explore concepts of motion by experimenting with the ramp, cars, and trucks. Compare and contrast observations about what happens, what is the same, and what is different between the type of pulls, pushes, and resistance. Be sure to talk about car material (weight), wheel type (size), and resistance (textured path on ramp), and how they factor into movement.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Continue the push/pull conversation by engaging in additional activities around motion. Ask each student to bring in an item from home that they can make move. Students practice making their item move and then sort by push/pull. Ask questions like, “How does your object move?,” “Can you make it move in a different way?,” and “How did you make it move?”

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OUR COMMUNITY

Gears

OC.14

III.A.1 Child engages in story-related pre-reading activities.
V.B.1 Child uses objects, pictorial models, and/or a verbal word problem to represent adding up to 5 objects.
VI.A.2 Child observes, investigates, describes, and discusses position and motion of objects.

By exploring gears, young children learn to problem solve, begin to understand cause and effect, and create spatial awareness. Students explore a set of gears to make comparisons between a bike and other items that use gears such as clocks, can openers, and amusement rides. Educator can read *Turn, Crank, Zoom! A STEM Gear Book* by Eric Carle, to reinforce concepts.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Introduce gears by taking a picture walk through *Turn, Crank, Zoom! A STEM Gear Book* by Eric Carle. Brainstorm places to find gears (bikes, watches, can openers, etc.). Ask students what gears do (help things move, help things work, etc.).
2. Demonstrate how the spinning elements of the gears work by lining up several gears in a row on the magnetic board. As a demonstration, the gears should be placed so that when one gear is moved, all of the gears move. Consider asking questions like, "Which way do the gears turn?," "What happens when you interlock a large gear with a small gear?," "What happens when you interlock two gears of the same size?" Provide students with the opportunity to explore the gears on their own, asking guiding questions as you make observations.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Try painting with gears. Have students dip the gears into a bowl of paint and free-choice paint. You can attach a paint brush (handle) to the gears with some clay or poster putty.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Learning to Vote

OC.15

I.D.1 Child demonstrates an understanding that others have perspectives and feelings that are similar and/or different from her own.
III.A.1 Child engages in story-related pre-reading activities.
VII.D.3 Child engages in voting as a method for group decision-making.

A class mascot is joining the class but before the mascot joins the class, students must vote on their preferred mascot! The students get to know each mascot by making observations about the mascots (candidates), researching features about the candidates (nonfiction books), and recording likes and dislikes as a group. Students choose their vote, record tallies, and welcome the new mascot.

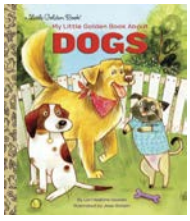
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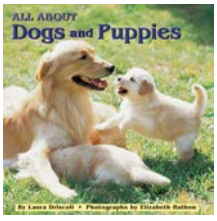
1. Read the books about dogs, cats, and llamas over several days, reviewing facts and even encouraging students to share their opinions about the animals as you read. Be sure to record the likes and dislikes that students state on chart paper or a dry erase board.
2. After reading the books and sharing facts and opinions about each animal, ask students to vote on a class mascot. Write dog, cat, and llama on chart paper or a dry erase board and record tally marks as each child votes. The new class mascot can serve as a reading buddy or role-play character in social situations and activities.

TEACHING STRATEGY

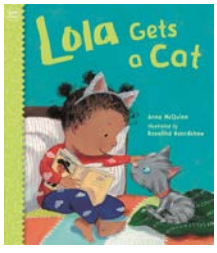
Continue reinforcing the concept of voting by participating in other voting activities and exercises. Students can vote on what book to read, what game to play during recess, and their favorite food to eat for lunch.

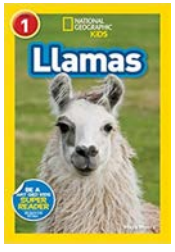
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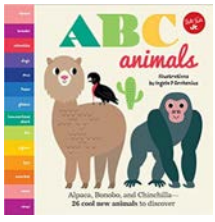
















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OUR COMMUNITY

Saving, Spending, Earning, and Giving

OC.16

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
VII.B.2 Child demonstrates an understanding of what it means to be a consumer.
VIII.C.1 Child creates or recreates experiences through dramatic representations.

Young children are just beginning to understand that we need money to buy things, we earn money by working, and there is a difference between items that we want and items that we need. By exploring money in a play-based way, students start recognizing and attaching value to coins (more vs. less). Students can create a community market in the classroom, buying and selling neighborhood market items using play money.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Introduce the cash register and grocery store items (fruits, vegetables, canned goods, boxed goods, and payment forms) in a free-choice center. Students can add price labels to grocery items and/or trade items with one another, determining their own value system. Be sure to reinforce terms such as earn, spend, save, and borrow as students interact with the materials.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Sort real coins in the classroom. Set out a sorting tray and some coins and encourage students to sort by color and size.
- Introduce an estimation jar in the classroom. Fill the jar with easily recognizable items like pom poms or bouncy balls and ask students to guess how many objects are in the jar. After students have made a guess, count the items as a class. As students become more comfortable with estimating, add smaller items like erasers or beans.
- Encourage students to save coins at home in a jar or piggy bank. Have discussions about how they "earn" their money.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Urban, Suburban, and Rural

OC.17

III.A.1 Child engages in story-related pre-reading activities.
III.D.3 Child asks and responds to questions relevant to the text read aloud.
VII.C.1 Child identifies and creates common geographic features.

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.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

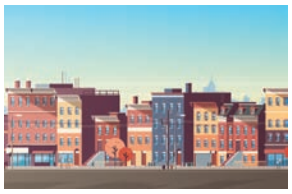
1. Read *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton, discussing how the environment around the little house changes over time. Ask students the following questions throughout: "What does the little house see?," "What does the little house hear?," and "What kind of things surround the little house?" Picture 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.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

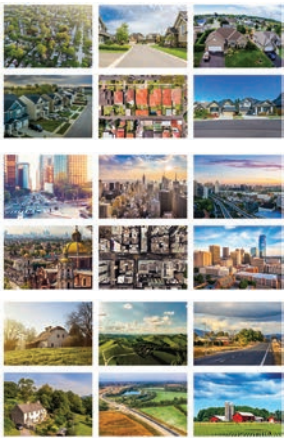
- *The Little House* feels lonely and neglected over time because she wasn't taken care of. Discuss taking care of material things. Ask questions like, "How should we treat the things that belong to us?" and "What happens when we don't take care of our things?" Relate the discussion to respecting materials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

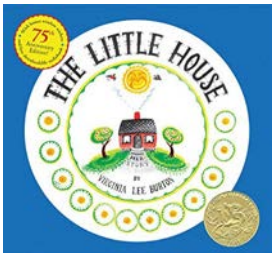
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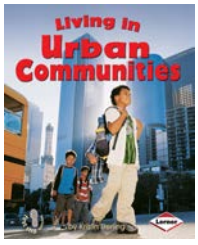


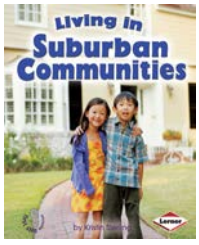


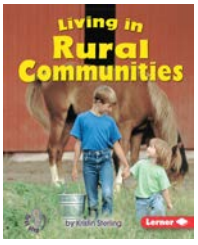












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OUR COMMUNITY

Learning About Perspectives

OC.18

I.D.1 Child demonstrates an understanding that others have perspectives and feelings that are similar and/or different from her own.
III.A.1 Child engages in story-related pre-reading activities.
VIII.A.3 Child demonstrates an interest in and shows appreciation for the creative work of others.

After reading *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, students have discussions about gratitude and perspective. Students can reinforce the idea of perspective by taking photos around the classroom and their own community, and sharing details about their photos with peers.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

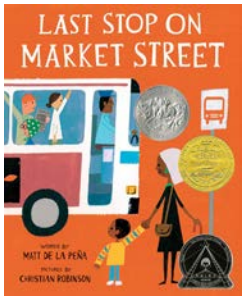
1. Activate and build upon prior knowledge by asking students if they have ever ridden on a bus before. Discuss the similarities and differences between a school bus and a public bus. Read *The Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, reiterating all of the things CJ and his grandmother notice while riding on the public bus. Ask students what types of things they notice while riding on a bus.
2. After reading the story, remind students that we all see the world differently. Introduce students to the Instax camera and ask students what a camera is used for. Have students use the camera to take photos of different perspectives. You can ask students to take a photo(s) of items of a certain color, objects that start with a certain letter, and/or items that are their favorite things. Have students share their photos and facilitate discussions about perspectives, reminding students that we all see the world a little differently.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Give students a disposable camera to take home for a weekend. After developing the photos, encourage students to use the photos to tell a story about their experiences away from school.
- Create a picture dictionary using items in the classroom. Ask students to take a picture that starts with A, B, and so on, glue into a scrapbook or onto index cards with the word for each object printed below.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Community Dramatic Play

OC.19

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
VII.B.3 Child discusses the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and helpers.
VIII.C.1 Child creates or recreates stories, moods, or experiences through dramatic representations.

Students discover that a community can include many different groups of people such as a school community, a neighborhood community, and even your family! Students can create communities in the classroom by assuming new and different roles using dress-up materials, props, and other dramatic play items.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Set the scene for a community exploration center by introducing the costumes and talking about the ways people help us (keep us healthy, keep up safe, maintain the city, help us commute, grow food, etc.). Ask students how they can be helpful at home and at school. Students can explore members of the community by role playing, using their imagination and creativity. Provide situations and prompts that help students get into character.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Invite family and community members into the classroom to talk about their careers, encouraging further interest and curiosity in students. If possible, visit a local library, museum, fire station or other community location to help students feel the experience.
- Encourage students to make supportive materials like menus, mail, and medical records to enhance the role playing.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Street Artist

OC.20

I.A.2 Child shows self-awareness of physical attributes, personal preferences, and own abilities.
VIII.A.1 Child uses a variety of art materials and activities for sensory experience and exploration.
IX.B.1 Child shows control of tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.

Many communities have street artists who provide art in public places. Street artists can include muralists, portrait artists, caricaturists, graffiti artists, and people making crafts. Students can make their own street art and display in the classroom using a clothesline.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to describe what an artist does and ask where they have seen art. Read *Where's Your Creativity* by Aaron Rosen and discuss how art is more than what we see and create, and includes dance, food, music, and much more. We often see artists in our community communicating and expressing themselves (ask students to provide some examples of art they have seen in the community).
2. Create an open-ended (process) art area using the included materials. Be sure to ask students questions about their work; be supportive and listen carefully. If students need a little inspiration, encourage them to create something based on how they are feeling, their favorite things, or dreams. Students can also look through the art books from the materials kit. Install the clothesline in a well-displayed location. With student permission, hang up their art pieces using the clothespins and continue to have discussions about how the art makes them feel.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Encourage students to make collaborative murals. Start with a color or theme and allow students to talk about their creations with one another.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for students to look at their own art and each other's. Taking a trip to an art museum sharpens students' observational skills and requires focus and attention to detail.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Map Towers

OC.21

I.A.2 Child shows self-awareness of physical attributes, personal preferences, and own abilities.
VII.C.2 Child explores geography tools and resources.
IX.B.1 Child shows control of tasks that require small-muscle strength and control.

Students manipulate nesting boxes (small motor development) with graduated images from Earth, North America, USA, Texas, Alief (city), to Alief Independent School District. Students can nest the boxes together or separate the boxes to create a tower, talking about where they live.

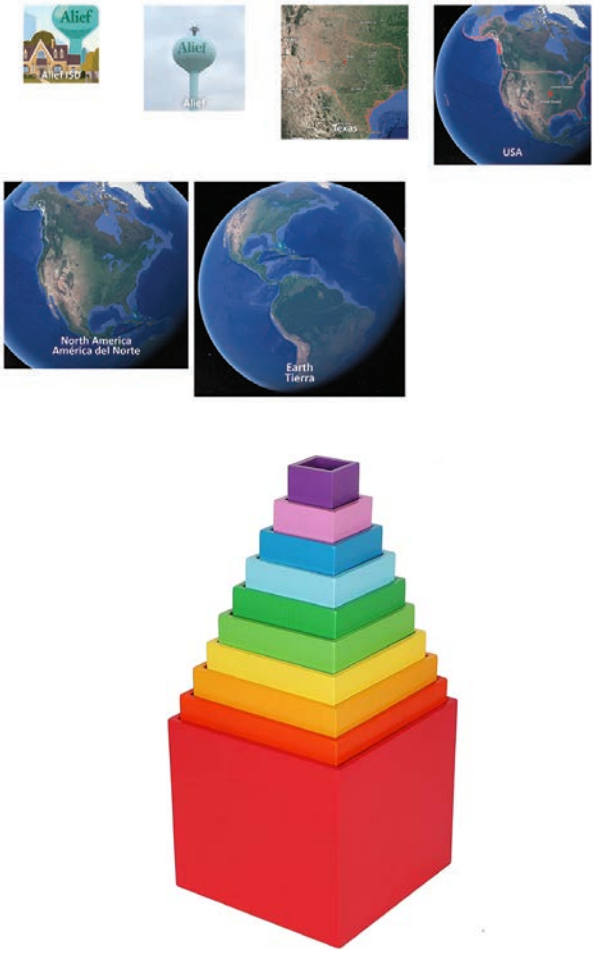
DOING THE ACTIVITY

Introduce the graduated photos on the sides of the nesting boxes. Encourage students to stack the boxes from largest to smallest, discussing the progression from planet-continent-country-state-city-school. Encourage students to practice nesting them inside each other (everything fits inside planet Earth).

TEACHING STRATEGY

Make maps accessible and fun. Collect various maps from your community, such as zoo, museum, park, and state maps. Make comparisons between maps and have discussions about how students relate to the maps.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Transportation Movement

OC.22

II.A.2 Child shows understanding by following three-step verbal directions.
VIII.B.1 Child participates in classroom music activities including playing instruments.
VIII.C.1 Child creates or recreates experiences through dramatic representations.

Students explore movement by moving their bodies to mimic different vehicles used for transportation. Using instruments, music, and gross motor movement cards, students move their bodies like a helicopter, airplane, train, and more!

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Tell students they are going to make movements like vehicles. Pass out the classroom management circles and remind them they will be doing their movements on the circle (personal bubble). Play music or ask several students to play music using the instruments. As you call out the vehicle, draw attention to the movement cards as a visual.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Play transportation-themed gross motor games like Airplane and Red Light, Green Light. To play Airplane, students listen for a fact that describes them. For example, the first letter of their name, any letter in their name, favorite food, number of siblings, etc. Once they hear a fact that describes them, they fly around the room or playground like an airplane. To play Red Light, Green Light, students move like a car when the "light" is green and stop when the "light" is red. Add a visual support (red light, green light) to encourage quiet movement.

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OUR COMMUNITY

Application Explorations
OC.23

I.B.1.b Child takes care of and manages classroom materials.
X.A.1 Child opens and navigates through digital learning applications and programs, when appropriate.

With the support of adults, young children can use technology applications actively to improve language skills and prepare for school readiness. Two applications to explore in Our Community include: Learning Professions and Jobs, and Stack the States.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

Introduce the applications Learning Professions and Jobs, and Stack the States, modeling the appropriate use. Provide time for students to explore the applications, asking probing questions to help students think critically about the content they are interacting with. Starter questions like, "What do you think if …" and "Can you compare this with …" provide students with opportunities to dig deeper.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Technology and media can support early learning and relationship building if used intentionally. Educators learn about the challenges and opportunities with integration of technology to best support their students. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the media age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally and linguistically appropriate?
- Is the media active, hands-on, and empowering?
- Is assistive technology available to children with special needs?

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OUR COMMUNITY

On the Job, Green Screen

OC.24

I.C.4 Child increasingly interacts with peers during cooperative play scenarios that share a common plan and goal.
VIII.C.1 Child creates or recreates stories, moods, or experiences through dramatic representations.
X.A.3 Child uses digital learning applications to contribute to class-made digital products that express own ideas, as appropriate.

Green screens are a great way to have your students explore digital storytelling and media creation. Download an application, record students assuming community helper roles, combine the recording with the application, and view students in imaginary roles. Application suggestions: Green Screen Live Video, WeVideo, and Do Ink.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

1. To use the green screen, download a green screen application on a device, such as Green Screen Live Video Record, WeVideo, or Do Ink. Practice using the application before introducing to the students.
2. Encourage students to tell stories about community helpers and their professions using the props from OC. 19. Students can start by answering educator-led prompts like, “Tell me about a firefighter,” and “Tell me how the mail gets to your mailbox.” Students can move toward self-created stories as they become more comfortable in front of the green screen. Film the students telling stories and include students in the review, reflection, and editing process.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Be sure to practice using the application before introducing to the students. With a strong understanding of the technology, the focus can shift to inspiring creativity.
- Rotate props to encourage storytelling from a variety of topics. Use background photos that lend to storytelling like scenery and themed items.

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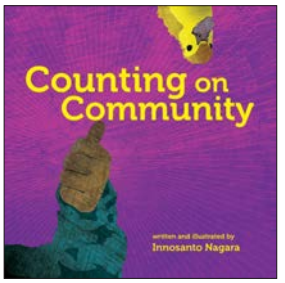


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NON-FICTION



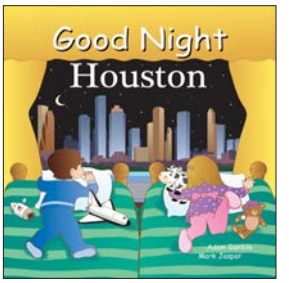
All Aboard Texas



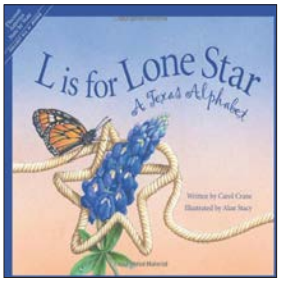
Counting on Community



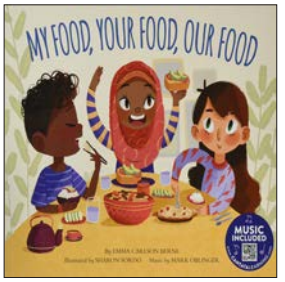
Delivering Your Mail



Good Night Houston



L is for Lone Star



My Food, Your Food, Our Food



Que Vivan los Bomberos!



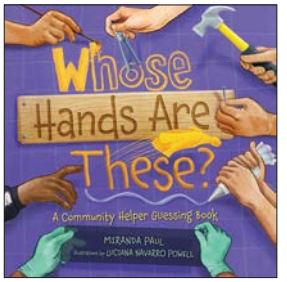
T is for Texas



Vehículos de Emergencia



Vehículos en la Ciudad



Whose Hands Are These? A Community Helper Guessing Book

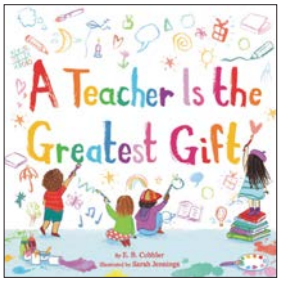
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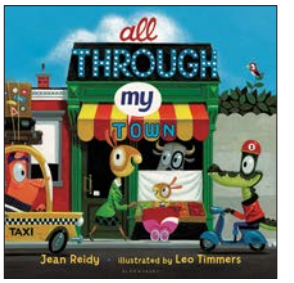
FICTION



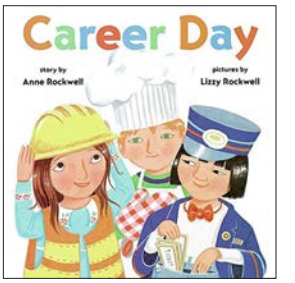
A Hat for Mrs. Goldman



A Teacher is The Greatest Gift



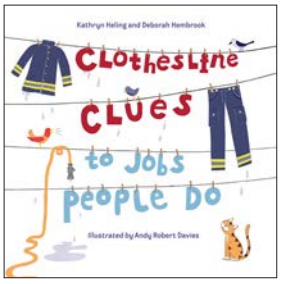
All Through My Town



Career Day



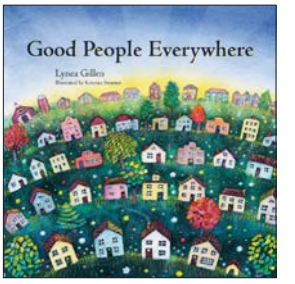
Check It Out!: Reading, Finding, Helping



Clothesline Clues to Jobs People Do



Di Algo!



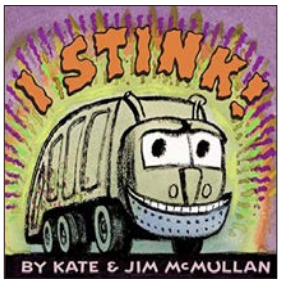
Good People Everywhere



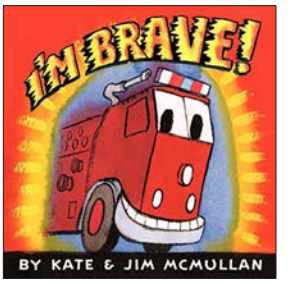
Hello, Friend Hola, Amigo



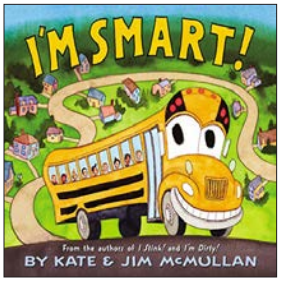
Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community



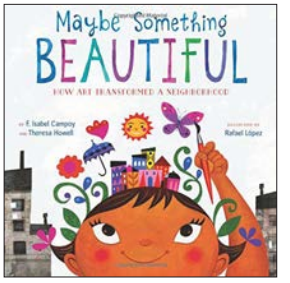
I Stink!



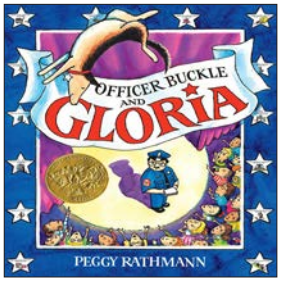
I'm Brave!



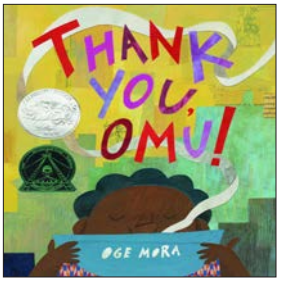
I'm Smart!



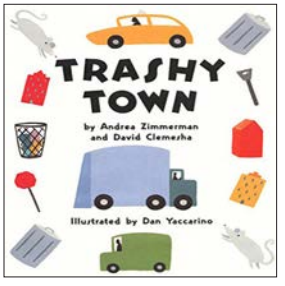
Maybe Something Beautiful



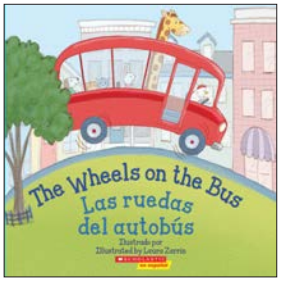
Officer Buckle and Gloria



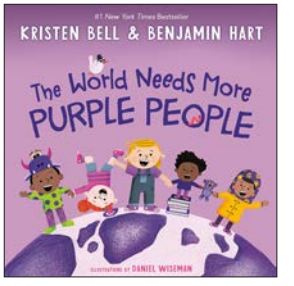
Thank You, Omu!



Trashy Town



The Wheels on the Bus Las Ruedas del Autobús



The World Needs More Purple People

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GENERAL SUPPLY KIT



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ASSESSMENT TOOLS



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OUR COMMUNITY

Activity Rubric Scale

Student:_____ Class:_____

Date:_____

Activity or Skill:_____

_____

4 **Achieved-** The student frequently demonstrates the ability to apply the knowledge or perform the skill accurately in several environments without support.

3 **Progressing-** The student demonstrates understanding or use of the knowledge or skill in one or more environments with some support.

2 **Emerging-** The student is beginning to show understanding or use of the knowledge or skill in one environment with extensive support. The student is unable to demonstrate the skill without assistance.

1 **Introduced-** The student has been exposed to the knowledge or skill as part of the educational curriculum but demonstrates no measurable understanding of the knowledge or skill at this time.

Notes:_____

_____

_____

_____

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OUR COMMUNITY

Anecdotal Note Observation Form

Student:_____ Date:_____ Time:_____

Objective for this observation:

List of others in the context:

Context:

Notes:

Preliminary thoughts regarding observation:

Educator's Signature:_____

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OUR COMMUNITY

General Observations

DATE	TIME	SKILL	OBSERVATIONS

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OUR COMMUNITY

Picture Portfolio

Student:_____

Date:_____

Learning Center:_____

(Include photo or sample of student's work)

Notes:_____

_____

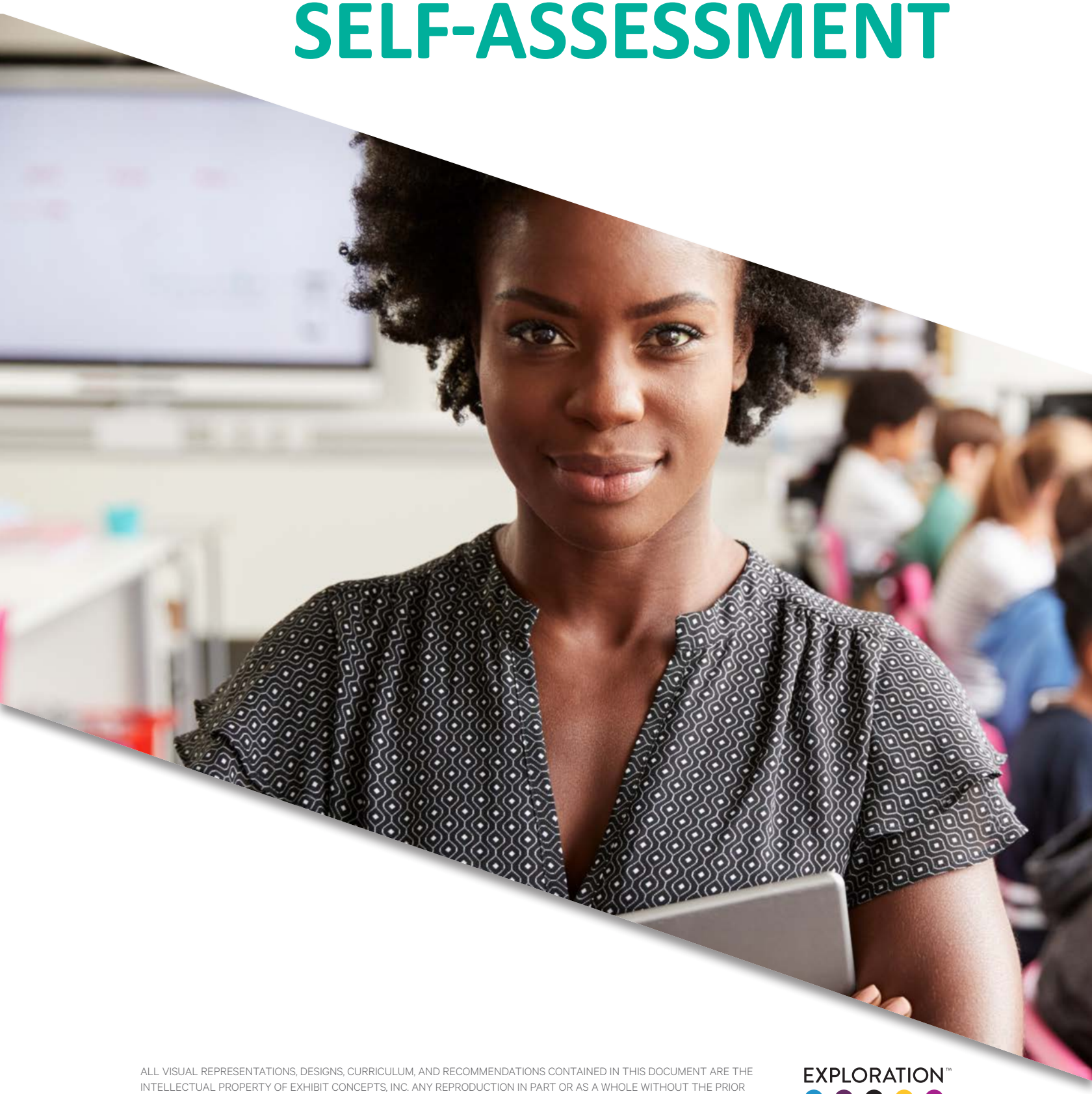
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TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT



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OUR COMMUNITY

Self-Assessment of Benchmarks of Experiential Education Implementation

Name:_____ School:_____ Date:_____

WHEN I PLAN...	LACKING	EMERGING	PRACTICING
I plan activities and experiences that follow the interests of my students.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I consider multiple learning modalities.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I consider new and novel items to engage students.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
WHEN I TEACH...	**LACKING**	**EMERGING**	**PRACTICING**
I give students choices.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I ask open-ended questions that help students think creatively and critically.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I observe my students.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I identify and respond to the existing knowledge and skills each student brings to an activity or experience.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I help students make connections between existing and new knowledge.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I use developmentally appropriate concepts and vocabulary to introduce new content.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
I individually reflect on how to continuously improve my instruction.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
IN MY CLASSROOM...	**LACKING**	**EMERGING**	**PRACTICING**
My students are active in the learning process by:			
• choosing items to engage with and participating in activities that interest them.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
• working through problems and activities in real-life situations.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
• collaborating with peers, as developmentally appropriate.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
• initiating their own investigations.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
• asking questions.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
• making observations.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
My students recognize and use developmentally appropriate vocabulary and concepts.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐
My students are intrinsically motivated.	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐

My definition of experiential education is:

I'd like to know more about the following in regard to experiential education:

My strengths:

Areas I'd like to improve upon:

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