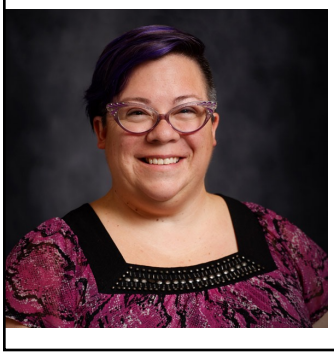
Beth Hill
Outreach & Education Manager
ND Forest Service
Project Learning Tree &
Project WILD
State Coordinator

HELLO!



Michelle Cauley
UAS & Natural Resources Professor
Dakota College at Bottineau
Project Learning Tree
Facilitator

PROJECT LEARNING TREE® NORTH DAKOTA

1

2

Embrace the chaos…

…to build meaningful and educational experiences outdoors.

3

Trees & Me: Activities for Exploring Nature with Young Children

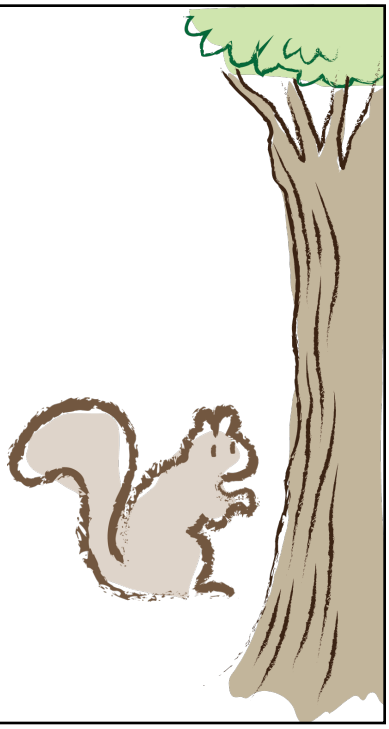
11

PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

4

ACTIVITY THEMES

1	Shape of Things	SENSES
2	Sounds Around	
3	Tree Textures	
4	Follow Your Nose	
5	Fall for Trees	SEASONS
6	Evergreens in Winter	
7	Best Buds	
8	My Tree and Me	
9	Parts to Play	TREES
10	Home Tweet Home	
11	Community Explorers	
12	Three Cheers for Trees	



5

KEY FEATURES

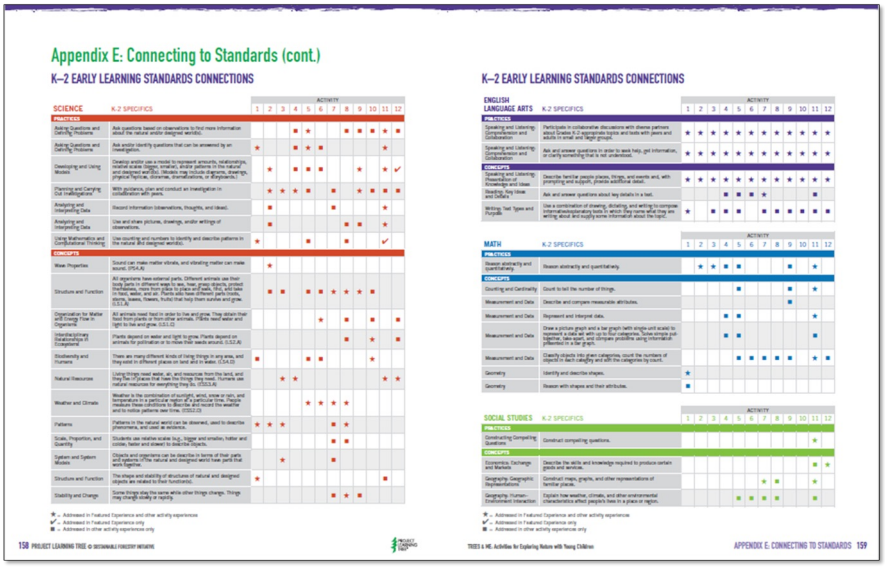
PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

6

CONNECTING PLT'S TREES & ME TO EARLY LEARNING BENCHMARKS

7

EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS


Appendix E: Connecting to Standards (cont.)

K–2 EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

K–2 EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

APPENDIX E

Science
English Language Arts
Math
Social Studies

ONLINE

www.plt.org/alignment-to-standards

NAEYC
NAAEE
Head Start Framework

PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

8

BRINGING THE OUTDOORS INSIDE

9

TIPS FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING

Take It Outside!

APPENDIX G: Tips for Outdoor Learning

The outdoors—whether it's a play yard, a parking lot, a local park, or a natural area—provides a diverse and interesting "classroom" for learning. These places foster a sense of wonder, expand imagination, and deepen connections to the natural world. Both structured and unstructured time outside promote not only academic learning, but also mental, social, and physical health.

If you are new to outdoor learning, you may be worried about managing the group or about handling logistics. It helps to think of the outdoors as simply an extension of indoor teaching places. It doesn't have to be any more complicated than that! Of course, the farther afield you go, the more planning and forethought will be required.

What to Do

When you are planning outdoor activities, look for this icon, which identifies experiences in this guide that are particularly well suited to outdoor learning. In these explorations, children play, make observations, and conduct investigations outdoors.

Don't worry if the only outdoor space you have is a playground area or a city block. PLT activities are designed to be flexible. All activities suggest ways to get students outside and actively learning. The Take It Outside! boxes offer ideas for extending each activity's theme to the outdoors.

Tools for Exploring

Have handy some or all of the following tools to enhance children's outdoor explorations:

- Magnifying lenses, pocket microscopes, binoculars, bug boxes, or magnifying stands
- Notebooks, clipboards, or scratch paper for notes
- Child-size garden tools and gloves
- Flashlights
- Measuring tapes, thermometers, sundials, and windsocks
- Plastic food containers with holes in the lids for briefly holding small animals
- Field guides to local plants and animals
- Camera or video/audio recorder
- Pencils or crayons

Appendix G: Tips for Outdoor Learning (cont.)

Keeping It Safe

The benefits of outdoor learning greatly outweigh any presumed risks. Remember to:

Scout outdoor areas ahead of time.

- Check for any hazards like metal, broken glass, or litter.
- Be aware of traffic patterns and busy intersections.
- Know the locations of public restrooms, drinking fountains, and picnic areas.
- Learn how to identify and avoid potentially harmful local plants (such as poison ivy or poison oak) or small animals (such as centipedes or scorpions).

Be prepared.

- Know how to respond to allergies (e.g., bee stings, pollen) that your children might have.
- Bring an extra set of children's clothing, gloves, and a hat, just in case.
- Bring a backpack with a first-aid kit, emergency contact information for each child, water, snacks, and a fully charged mobile phone.

Dress for success.

- Make sure children are appropriately dressed for the weather.
- Protect everyone from ultraviolet (UV) rays with sunglasses, hats, and sunscreen. Check www.epa.gov/sunsafety for the UV index for your zip code.
- Model appropriate clothing yourself!

Teach safe behaviors.

- Remind children that classroom rules apply outdoors too! They still need to listen, take turns, and be kind.
- Teach children to "sit and stay put" if they become separated from the group. Role-play what to do if they get lost.
- Use a buddy system. When you call out "buddy check," have children find their buddies and hold up their hands. Conduct buddy checks and head counts every time you change locations or transition to a new activity.
- Make sure children know the boundaries of the learning space before they head off to explore. Mark boundaries visually when possible.
- Establish a signal—such as clapping, whistling, or using a birdcall—to call the children together.
- Teach them to be cautious when picking up litter. They should not handle any potentially hazardous items.

Exploring the Neighborhood

Neighborhood excursions are casual strolls that you and the children take regularly. Their purpose is to give children opportunities to observe and explore nature in their neighborhood.

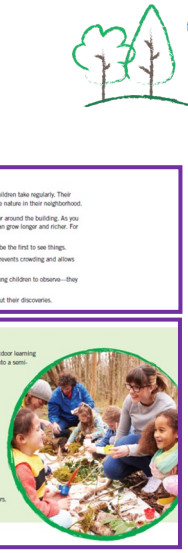
Your first excursion could be a practice trip down the hallway or around the building. As you and the children become more comfortable, your excursions can grow longer and richer. For successful explorations:

- Rotate the line leader to give each child the opportunity to be the first to see things.
- Circle up the group to look at something interesting. This prevents crowding and allows everyone to participate.
- Emphasize both plants and animals. Plants are easy for young children to observe—they stay still!
- Allot plenty of time for the children to observe and talk about their discoveries.

Set Up an Outdoor Learning Space

For longer-term explorations outdoors, consider creating an outdoor learning space. A few simple modifications can transform a play area into a semi-permanent "outdoor classroom." To get started:

- Organize equipment and ensure that it is accessible to the children. Bins or a storage container can hold play equipment and tools for exploring.
- Provide child-size tables for workspace and snacks, and make sure there are benches or chairs for seating.
- Establish hand-washing and diaper-changing areas.
- Set up receptacles for dirty cups, trash, recycling, and compost.
- Store a basic first-aid kit outside.
- Use a wheelbarrow or cart for moving things between indoor and outdoor learning spaces.
- Set aside an indoor area to prepare children for going outdoors.
- Add nature-inspired art or decorations created outdoors.

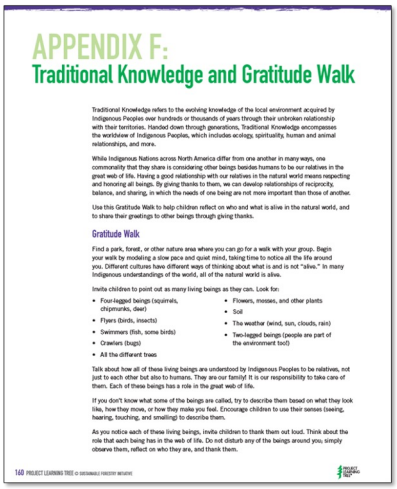


10

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND GRATITUDE WALK!

HOW MANY LIVING THINGS CAN YOU POINT OUT?

THANK EACH OUT LOUD AS A PART OF THE WEB OF LIFE



APPENDIX F:
Traditional Knowledge and Gratitude Walk

Traditional Knowledge refers to the evolving knowledge of the local environment acquired by Indigenous Peoples over hundreds or thousands of years through their unbroken relationship with their territories. Handed down through generations, Traditional Knowledge encompasses the worldview of Indigenous Peoples, which includes ecology, spirituality, human and animal relationships, and more.

While Indigenous Nations across North America differ from one another in many ways, one commonality that they share is considering other beings besides humans to be our relatives in the great web of life. Having a good relationship with our relatives in the natural world means respecting and honoring all beings. By giving thanks to them, we can develop relationships of reciprocity, balance, and sharing, in which the needs of one being are not more important than those of another.

Use this Gratitude Walk to help children reflect on who and what is alive in the natural world, and to share their greetings to other beings through giving thanks.

Gratitude Walk

Find a park, forest, or other nature area where you can go for a walk with your group. Begin your walk by modeling a slow pace and quiet mind, taking time to notice all the life around you. Different cultures have different ways of thinking about what is and is not "alive." In many Indigenous understandings of the world, all of the natural world is alive.

Invite children to point out as many living beings as they can. Look for:

- Four-legged beings (squirrels, chipmunks, deer)
- Flyers (birds, insects)
- Swimmers (fish, some birds)
- Crawlers (bugs)
- All the different trees
- Flowers, mosses, and other plants
- Soil
- The weather (wind, sun, clouds, rain)
- Two-legged beings (people are part of the environment too!)

Talk about how all of these living beings are understood by Indigenous Peoples to be relatives, not just to each other but also to humans. They are our family! It is our responsibility to take care of them. Each of these beings has a role in the great web of life.

If you don't know what some of the beings are called, try to describe them based on what they look like, how they move, or how they make you feel. Encourage children to use their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, and smelling) to describe them.

As you notice each of these living beings, invite children to thank them out loud. Think about the role that each being has in the web of life. Do not disturb any of the beings around you; simply observe them, reflect on who they are, and thank them.

160 PROJECT LEARNING TREE © SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

THEY ARE OUR FAMILY

USE SENSES TO DESCRIBE WHAT YOU CAN'T NAME

PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

11

It's Time for a BREAK and ENJOYING SNACKS TOGETHER!

Enjoying Snacks Together

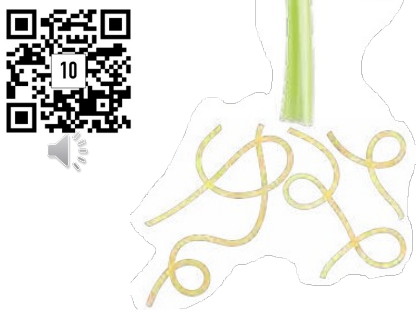
BUILD A TREE

Recipe: 1 large pretzel stick, celery stick, or carrot (for the trunk); 4 small pretzel sticks, celery sticks, or julienne strips of carrot (for the branches); small pieces of broccoli, cucumbers, green pasta, lettuce, peppers, shredded carrots, or spinach (for the leaves); string cheese or cooked spaghetti (for the roots); raisins or sunflower seeds (for the seeds) soy or sunflower butter to stick the pieces together (optional)

Make a buffet table of tree parts. Put each part on a separate plate. Label the plates with the name of the tree part and a number indicating how many of each part each child should take.

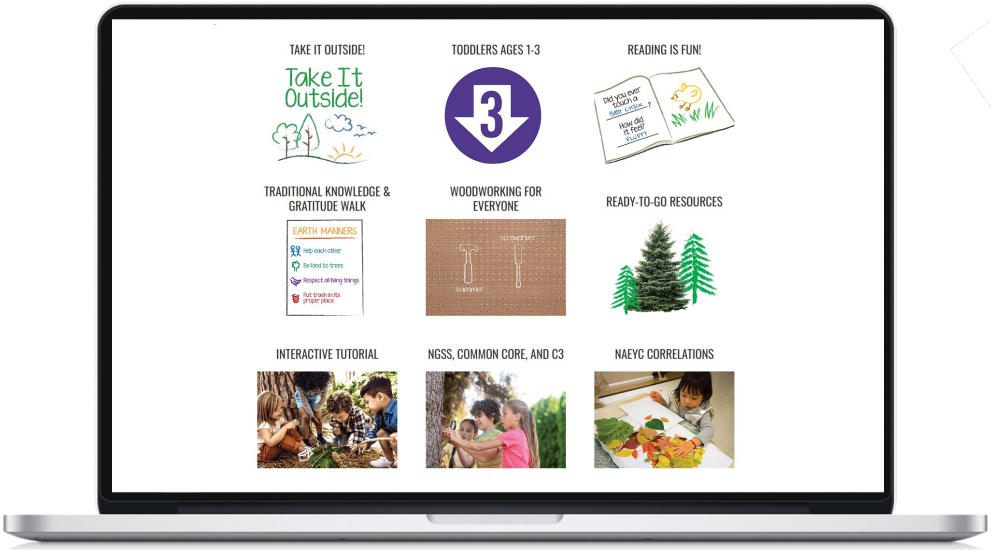
Invite the children to put the right number of tree parts on their plates, to build a tree, and to eat it. As they eat, discuss the different parts of the tree. Ask, "How does the _____ help the tree? What is your favorite tree part? Why? Do you think these foods will help you grow big and tall? What does a tree need to grow big and tall?"

SAFETY! Be aware of any food allergies, dietary needs, or choking hazards for the children in your group.



12

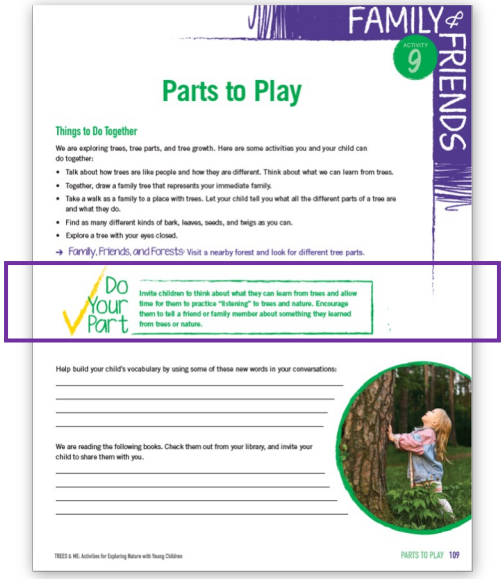
ONLINE TOOLS AND RESOURCES



PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

13

FAMILY AND FRIENDS



FAMILY & FRIENDS

Activity 9

Parts to Play

Things to Do Together

We are exploring trees, tree parts, and tree growth. Here are some activities you and your child can do together:

- Talk about how trees are like people and how they are different. Think about what we can learn from trees.
- Together, draw a family tree that represents your immediate family.
- Take a walk as a family to a place with trees. Let your child tell you what all the different parts of a tree are and what they do.
- Find as many different kinds of bark, leaves, seeds, and twigs as you can.
- Explore a tree with your eyes closed.

→ Family, Friends, and Forests: Visit a nearby forest and look for different tree parts.

Do Your Part

Invite children to think about what they can learn from trees and allow time for them to practice "listening" to trees and nature. Encourage them to tell a friend or family member about something they learned from trees or nature.

Help build your child's vocabulary by using some of these new words in your conversations:

We are reading the following books. Check them out from your library, and invite your child to share them with you.

TREES & ME: Activities for Exploring Nature with Young Children

PARTS TO PLAY 109

14

READING IS FUN!

READING IS FUN!

Bulla, Clyde Robert. *A Tree Is a Plant.* New York: HarperCollins, 2016. This Let's-Read-and-Find-Out book follows the growth of an apple tree from seed to maturity. It explains tree parts and functions in simple terms. Ages 4–7. ISBN: 0062382101.

Carle, Eric. *The Tiny Seed.* New York: Little Simon, 2005. In this classic story, follow a tiny seed on an adventure as it becomes a giant flower. Ages 2–5. ISBN: 068987149X.

Gibbons, Gail. *Tell Me, Tree: All About Trees for Kids.* Boston: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2002. This large-format guide discusses the parts of a tree and their functions, the growth of trees, and the different types of trees. Ages 4–8. ISBN: 0316309036.

Holub, Joan. *Seed School: Growing Up Amazing.* Seagrass Press, 2018. While some of the seed friends in this story seem to sprout and grow up in just one season, one odd-looking seed with a cap takes many years to become the strong oak he was destined to be. Ages 4–7. ISBN: 1633223744.

Milbourne, Anna. *Peep Inside a Tree.* London: Usborne, 2018. This board book follows the growth of a tiny acorn into a beautiful old oak tree. Look under leaves and between branches to discover all kinds of creatures living there. Ages 1–3. ISBN: 147493384X

Miller, Debbie S. *Are Trees Alive?* New York: Walker, 2002. An introduction to trees that compares parts of a tree with parts of the human body. The story features people and trees from all over the world. Ages 4–8. ISBN: 0802788017.

Muldrow, Diane. *We Planted a Tree.* New York: Dragonfly Books, 2016. Simple text reveals the benefits of planting a single tree, both to those who see it grow and to the world as a whole. Ages 3–7. ISBN: 0553539035.

15

WHAT NORTH DAKOTA PLT OFFERS

- **Educator Trainings** periodically throughout the year: **for-credit** and **non-credit**, **planned** and **by request**
  - *NOW approved through ND Growing Futures!*
  - All guide costs covered by North Dakota PLT
- **Facilitator Trainings** for university professors, administrators, teachers, nonformal educators, natural resource professionals, and other educators who want to help train others in PLT
- **Classroom Visits** to sample PLT activities with your kids

OVER
60%
OF TEACHERS ATTEND A PLT WORKSHOP
BECAUSE A COLLEAGUE RECOMMENDED IT

PROJECT LEARNING TREE®
An initiative of SFI

16

EXPLORE AN ACTIVITY IN SMALL GROUPS

- How would you use this activity in your setting?
- What do you like about this activity?
- What issues could you run into?
- What standards does this activity meet?

17

PROJECT LEARNING TREE® NORTH DAKOTA

WE APPRECIATE YOUR FEEDBACK!

WE WILL BE GIVING AWAY 5 "TREES & ME" GUIDES AT RANDOM TO THOSE WHO RESPOND TO THE SURVEY

18