

Today's Topics: Nature

Overview and Things to Know:

Studies show that spending time in nature leads to better academic performance, as well as better physical and mental well-being.

Time outside helps kids practice basic science skills like observation and making predictions. You can nurture curiosity by allowing kids to dig in the dirt and get eye-level with bugs, and taking them to the library to check out books on outdoor critters or plants that they find interesting. You can add tools to help kids explore, like shovels, magnifying glasses, pencils and paper, and cameras. Support their interests by asking open-ended questions like "What did you discover?" and "How does it feel?"

Nature doesn't have to be expensive or far away. Simply spending time in your backyard if you have one, or in the local park, or taking a walk around your neighborhood can provide lots of opportunities for observing plants and animals, and plenty of sticks that can become magic wands or conducting batons.

Activities We Did:

- We listened to a nature song and moved our scarves along, connecting abstract and physical concepts.
- We observed nature, practicing noticing and describing.
- Stations that focused on different nature-related themes.
- We played with rubbing plates, working on fine motor skills, building familiarity with patterns, and providing practice for making rubbings with natural items like leaves.

Things to Try at Home:

- Take a nature walk at home: after, make some time for your child to reflect on the walk. Your child could draw pictures of it, write a story about it, or perhaps make a collage with some of the items they collected.
- Make a sun print: Put dark-colored construction paper next to a sunny window or outdoors in a protected location, and plan to tape down lightweight objects. Encourage your child to find flat natural objects and to arrange them on the paper. Leave the paper in the sun at least one hour before checking. This simple hands-on nature activity builds awareness of STEM concepts like UV rays and chemical change, as well as building practice with cause and effect, comparison, and waiting.

Songs to Listen to:

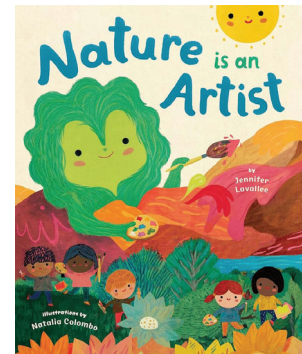
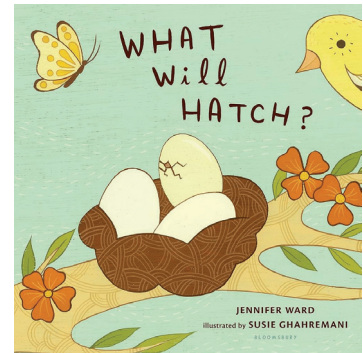
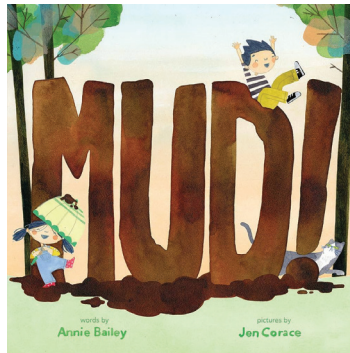
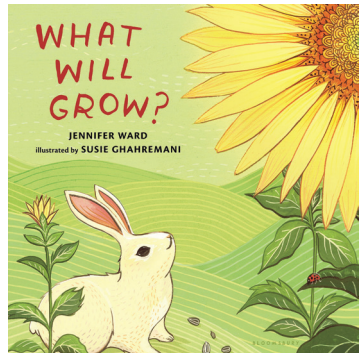
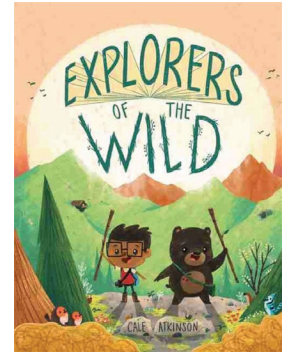
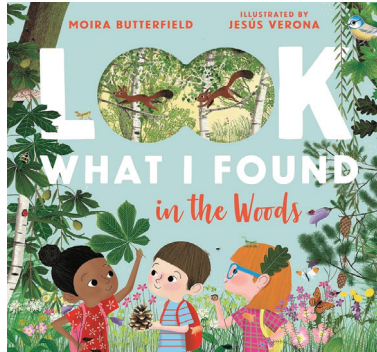
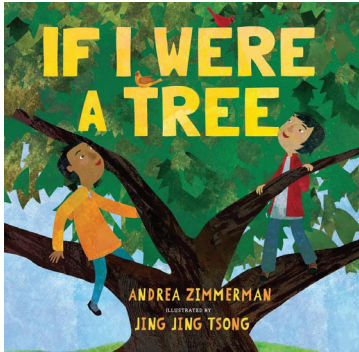
- Nature-Inspired Movement: I Am a Tree by Nancy Kopman; Gray Squirrel by Kathy Reid-Naiman; Walk Along the River by Laurie Berkner
- Nature-themed songs for building other skills: Over in the Meadow by Raffi; Octopus (Slippery Fish) by Charlotte Diamond; Green Grass Grows All Around by Pete Seeger

If You Want to Dive Deeper:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6401598/pdf/fpsyg-10-00305.pdf>

Books to Check Out

For the Pre-Kindergartners



For the Grownups

