



# Who Lives Here?

Thread: WHO LIVES HERE?









**W**ho Lives Here? introduces children to the people, plants, and animals of their place. By asking and exploring the question, “Who lives here?” children discover how our human, natural, and agricultural communities are interdependent. Children will develop a strong understanding and sense of community and place, as well as begin to grasp how they are interdependent—no matter where they live.

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

 **Community:** A group of living and nonliving things sharing a common purpose or space.

 **Interdependence:** All living things are connected. Every organism, system, and place depends on others.

## Enduring Understandings

-  There are different kinds of communities.
-  Each living thing is part of a community/multiple communities.
-  Each person shapes and is shaped by his or her community.
-  Community is an outcome of relationships.
-  Every living thing has a unique role, or niche, in its community.
-  What we do impacts the human/natural world around us.
-  We rely on living organisms and nonliving things in our human and natural worlds to be healthy, safe, and happy.
-  Members of a community depend on each other.

## Connecting beyond the Classroom

### Family Connections

Communicate with families by sending a letter home, creating a website, or hosting an open house that introduces the Thread, Essential Question, Big Ideas, and Enduring Understandings. Invite families to use this language at home with students to facilitate the transference of children’s learning. Ask families if anyone has any resources or expertise to share, such as a bird nest collection, knowledge about animals in the community, or a role as a community helper. Host an event where children can share their learning during the Thread, and offer families a chance to participate in the Facilitated Learning Experiences with their



Dear Families,

We are so excited to be embarking on an exploration of **Who Lives Here?**

We wanted to share our plans with you so that you might discuss what we are learning with your child. For this study, the question “Who Lives Here?” will guide us as we explore:

- The people, plants, and animals that live here
- Our human, natural, and agricultural communities, and how our communities are interdependent
- The various roles and functions that people, plants, and animals play in our communities

Our goal is to help your child develop a strong understanding and sense of **community** and place, as well as the **interdependence** of living things. They’ll understand the following:

- There are different kinds of communities.
- Each living thing is part of a community/multiple communities.
- Each person shapes and is shaped by his or her community.
- Community is an outcome of relationships.
- Every living thing has a unique role, or niche, in their community.
- What we do impacts the human/natural world around us.
- We rely on living organisms and nonliving things in our human and natural worlds to be healthy, safe, and happy.
- Members of a community depend on each other.

If you have any resources or expertise to share, such as a bird nest collection, knowledge about animals in the community, or a role as a community helper, please let us know so that we can find a way for you to come and share.

Thank you!

## WHAT’S the “BIG IDEA?”

**Community:** A group of living and nonliving things sharing a common purpose or space.

**Interdependence:** All living things are connected. Every organism, system, and place depends on others.

children. Or, have the children prepare an experience for their families, such as mapping their neighborhood and using the map to take their families on a tour of “Our Community.”

### Service-learning Opportunities

There are many ways that children can deepen their learning through service-learning and become community helpers themselves. By embedding learning in children’s attempts to meet community needs, students come away with better content understanding, more meaningful social and emotional skills, and an understanding of their ability to create change. Children can build homes for wild animals in their community, tend a community garden, or serve a meal to the community, all of which become rich opportunities for exploring things like what animals need to survive, what plants need to thrive, and what it takes to put together a meal. They can also cultivate social and emotional skills through developing friendships and teamwork with their peers. Help make these skills explicit to children. Based on your curriculum, brainstorm with children ways in which they can contribute to the community, and use their ideas to plan a project together.

### Community Connections

Service-learning opportunities provide one way to connect to the larger community. Meeting members of the community (see “Community Helpers: Who Helps,” p.116), learning about their roles and how they help the community, can deepen children’s understanding about how members of a community depend on one another. *Who Lives Here?* is also a prime opportunity to work with children to understand who they are as individuals, who their peers are, and to establish their own community in the classroom. Explicit teaching of social skills is important to help students understand and practice the behaviors and attitudes they need to be successful members of a community.

## Self-guided Opportunities

### Loose Parts

The Loose Parts for *Who Lives Here?* can include both natural and human-made materials, located both inside the classroom and outside. Blocks (rustic and manufactured) provide rich opportunities for exploration. Children can use cardboard boxes in a variety of sizes to create everything from animal homes to dramatic play. Animal skeletons, simulated scat (coffee beans to represent deer scat, cocoa puffs to represent rabbit scat), real birds’ nests, plants, logs, stumps, leaves, clay, and other treasures from nature also



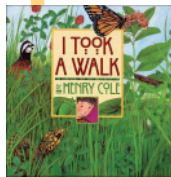
Camper create a castle from loose parts: tree stumps and sticks.

lend themselves to free play. Encourage children to add to the Loose Parts collection as they discover treasures on their adventures.

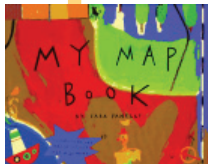
### **Dramatic Play**

Props for dramatic play for *Who Lives Here?* should include both human and natural artifacts. Include home-keeping sets, like a play kitchen, as well as sets that represent community locations (fire station, post office, bakery, restaurant, etc.). Props that allow for role-playing of animals in their homes could include a log with holes, toilet paper rolls covered in socks to represent a life-sized mouse home, shoeboxes with different-sized holes to host a variety of animal friends. A child's wading pool can be filled with leaves, or a sheet (to represent snow). Animal puppets, rubber critters, and stuffed animals can also serve as great props for imaginative play. Encourage children to role-play members of the community: everything from squirrels, to flowers, to police officers. Help students talk through the narrative for their role-playing to allow them to develop deeper,

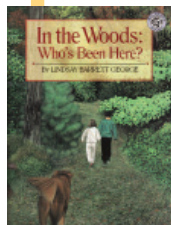
## Linda's Picks for WHO LIVES HERE?



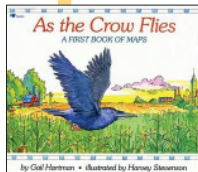
**I Took A Walk**  
by Henry Cole.  
Greenwillow Books, NY,  
NY, 1998.



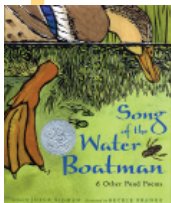
**My Map Book** by  
Sara Fanelli. Walker  
Children's Paperback,  
London, UK, 2007.



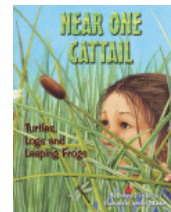
**In the Woods:  
Who's Been Here?**  
by Lindsay Barrett  
George. Mulberry  
Books, NY, NY 1998.



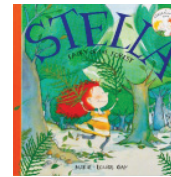
**As the Crow Flies: A  
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NY, NY. 1993.



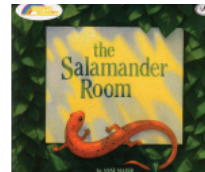
**Song of the Water  
Boatman and Other  
Pond Poems** by Joyce  
Sidman. Houghton  
Mifflin, Boston, MA 2005.



**Near One Cattail:  
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Dawn Publications,  
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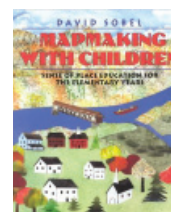
**Stella Fairy of the  
Forest** by Marie-Louise  
Gay. Groundwood  
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Canada 2010.



**The Salamander  
Room** by Anne Mazer.  
Dragonfly Books, NY,  
NY, 1991.



**The Very Best Bed** by  
Rebekah Raye. Tilbury  
House Publishers,  
Gardiner, ME, 2006.



**Mapmaking with  
Children** by David  
Sobel. Heinmann,  
Portsmouth, NH, 1998.

for  
educators



extended scenarios for imaginative play. Create a model of the community in the classroom (with blocks or boxes), or take the children out into the human and natural communities nearby to engage in role-playing.

### Outdoor Play

At any time when outdoors, encourage the children to ask questions and follow their curiosity. Provide tools; such as, magnifying glasses, binoculars (pretend or real), bug boxes, and nets to allow children to investigate “who lives here?” Offer journals as a quieter way for children to engage outdoors. Journaling is an excellent way to integrate literacy development into outdoor play through drawing and writing observations and narratives. Encourage physical movement that imitates the walking, running, waddling, flying, hopping, etc., of animals and people that live here.

### Art

Provide a variety of natural and recycled materials for students to work with; such as, twigs, leaves, pine needles, nuts, seeds, clay, maps, egg cartons, paste, paint, markers, cardboard boxes of all sizes. Encourage children to create props for role-playing in animal or people homes. Offer materials for students to make contributions to the Learning Wall, where they can independently record their observations and discoveries. As children show interest in art, help them expand their ideas—their creations can be both made of things that live here, as well as for those who live here.

### Numeracy

*Who Lives Here?* provides many opportunities for children to practice their numeracy skills. Children can count, sort, classify, graph, tally a variety of objects found in the community; such as, nuts, seeds, sticks, animal homes, and plants. During play, encourage the use of positional words to describe movement: under, through, around, over, etc. Encourage children to go on scavenger hunts for shapes. Practice estimating by guessing what size of holes different animals need to enter their homes. Search for numbers during neighborhood walks: house numbers, signs, license plates, anywhere!

### Explore Table

Set up a place in the classroom where children can investigate anything that captures their curiosity. Include artifacts such as twigs, rocks, soil, plant specimens, owl pellets, and nests. Children can use identification guides and books to build literacy skills. Magnifying glasses and boxes allow closer inspection. Encourage children to contribute items to the Explore Table. Students can use soil or water at the Explore Table.



Children can begin to learn numeracy skills by sorting a variety of objects. Here, they sorted firewood by size.



# Who Lives Here?

WHAT'S THE  
Big Idea?

Interdependence  
Community

## Facilitated Learning Experiences:

**KEY:** 🏠 Community • 🍎 Food & Farming • 🌿 Nature

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# Animal Homes



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Interdependence Community

## Enduring Understandings

- Animals need shelter to survive.
- Animal shelters differ depending on the animal and habitat.
- Animal homes may change depending on the season.



Child role playing an otter sliding in the snow

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate an understanding of what makes a good shelter for an animal.
- Children show interest and curiosity in looking for various animal homes in the wild.
- Children experiment with building animal shelters.
- Children engage in play as a means to understand various types of animal homes.

## Directions

1. Prior to the children's arrival, set up your classroom as an outdoor habitat. Bring in small tree saplings to attach to the walls, hang the empty birds nests and squirrel dreys in the trees. Create a fox den, mouse tunnels, and bear caves throughout the room.
2. Read the books *Who Lives Here?* by Maggie Silver or *In the Woods: Who's Been Here?* by Lindsay Barrett George. Then begin a discussion to determine what your students know about local wild animal homes.
3. Encourage children to role-play local wild animals using the animal homes and puppets set up in the classroom.
4. Go outside for an "animal home hunt." Children can use the "Animal Homes" sheet as a reference while looking for animal homes. Before setting out, establish a quiet signal to alert others to something interesting a child may find. A quiet owl "hoot" or clicking sound

## Materials

- ***In the Woods: Who's Been Here?*** by Lindsay Barrett George
- ***Who Lives Here?*** by Maggie Silver
- wild animal puppets or stuffed wild animals (find puppets at thrift shops, garage sales, or solicit donations from older children. You can purchase new puppets at: [folkmanis.com](http://folkmanis.com))
- "Animal Homes" sheet (Appendix, p.219)

Create simulated animal homes around your classroom:

- **fox den:** shoebox with 7" hole cut in, painted brown and covered in dead leaves
- **squirrel drey:** paper grocery bag curled up to form a small nest and covered with dead leaves
- recovered **birds nests**
- **mouse and vole holes:** toilet paper rolls covered in white socks
- **bear or coyote dens:** large boxes
- **child-sized nest for role-play:** small wading pool filled with dead leaves, twigs
- **child-sized mice and vole tunnels:** play tunnels

## Extensions

- Make a map of the area you explored and mark any homes or other sightings that were found.

*continued*

- Modify the indoor animal habitat to reflect what was found outdoors, or whatever student imaginations can create. Have plenty of materials ready so they can create animal homes.
- Hand out a different Animal Home card to each child. Have them keep their “owl eyes” open as they search for their homes. When a child finds her home, let the other children know.
- Following animal role-play, write class stories about the “animals” that “live” in your classroom.
- Have your students make animal homes in whatever habitat you are exploring.
- Make individual binoculars by stapling two toilet paper rolls together, adding yarn for a necklace and having children decorate the tubes. These do not magnify objects but they will help children to focus as they search for animal homes.
- Create a water habitat by using a wading pool with paper lily pads, cattails, plastic frogs, and dragonfly puppets. No need for water, just imagination!
- Transform your classroom into a winter habitat. See “Signs in the Snow,” p.106.



can be used to quiet everyone and alert them to the find. As the class hikes through the schoolyard, stand of trees, meadow, or woods, look for any possible animal homes and signs that animals have been there, including footprints, scat (fecal waste), and evidence of food being eaten.

5. When you return to the classroom, discuss what you discovered. Use the discussion questions below to process the experience with children. Children can also record through words or drawings what they found.

## Discussion Questions

- Why aren't all animal homes the same?
- How would you build a home in the wild?

Read these books to explore a variety of habitats and the animals that make their homes in these habitats:

- ***What's Under the Log?*** by Anne Hunter
- ***Around the Pond: Who's Been Here?*** by Lindsay Barrett George
- ***In the Tall, Tall Grass*** by Denise Fleming

# Animal Charades

WHO LIVES HERE?

EVERY SEASON



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

Interdependence Community

### Enduring Understandings

- All animals have certain characteristics, such as how they walk, what they eat, and how they behave.
- Humans and animals are each unique.
- Observing and learning about animal characteristics can help us better understand them, and how we are all part of a community.



### Objectives

- Children demonstrate how animals walk and act.
- Children show interest and curiosity about learning various animal characteristics.
- Children role-play being a variety of animals both tame and wild.
- Children discover commonalities between animals as they observe, learn about, and role-play being animals.

### Directions

Indoor or outdoors, encourage children to pick a favorite animal, wild or tame. Ask them to think about what they have observed, read, or learned about that animal and its characteristics. Once they are in “character” let the play begin! Encourage these animal charades at free choice time or recess.

### Discussion Questions

- How did the animals interact? How is this interaction like real animal interactions? How is it different?
- Tell the “story” of what happened to the animal you were portraying.
- What surprised you about how an animal acted?

### Materials

None

### Extensions

- *In the Woods: Who's Been Here?* by Lindsay Barrett George
- *In the Snow: Who's Been Here?* by Lindsay Barrett George
- Record children's animal story in pictures and words.
- Record animal charades in action with a video camera. Share the recording with the class to discuss animal characteristics and behaviors.
- Have children role-play animal actions based on what they have seen in the wild.





# Handful of Sounds

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Community

### Materials

None

### Extension

You can adapt this walking activity to be a quiet, seated one. Have children find a spot in the woods, field, or school yard. Once they find a spot, have them sit quietly with a clipboard or sheet of paper. As they hear a sound, have them draw a mark or picture of what they heard. After an appropriate time, call the group together to share what they heard.

### Enduring Understanding

- Communities are made up of the people, animals, and plants that live in them.

### Objectives

- Children demonstrate an awareness of the living things around them.
- Children show interest and curiosity in discovering the sounds of living things.
- Children cultivate the ability to use their sense of hearing as an observation skill.

### Directions

1. While walking outdoors, ask, “Who might live here?” Explain that we can use our ears to try to answer this question.
2. Have all the children raise a hand with their fists closed, and be as silent as they can.
3. The children walk single file from a starting point to an ending spot. Each time a child hears a different sound, the child should raise one finger. Continue to listen for sounds until all the children’s fingers are up.
4. At the end of the quiet time (usually only a few minutes), have the children share the variety of sounds they heard and guess who made each sound.
5. Process the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Discussion Questions

- Who lives here?
- How do we know who lives here?
- Who else might live here?
- Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ lives here?
- Who and what are the members of this community?
- What sounds were from the natural world?  
The built world?



# Docu-Walk: Our School Neighborhood

WHO LIVES HERE?

EVERY SEASON



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Interdependence Community

## Enduring Understandings

- A neighborhood is a geographic place in a town or city made up of people and buildings, streets and parks, and animals, tame and wild.
- Neighborhoods have differences and similarities.
- The living things in a neighborhood form a community.
- Members of a community depend on each other.

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate an awareness of who and what is in their school neighborhood.
- Children cultivate a sense of direction.
- Children show interest and curiosity in interesting aspects of the school neighborhood and how to place these spots on a map.
- Children discover that maps can help you locate places in the neighborhood.
- Children using blocks, sticks, and other materials create and play with neighborhoods.

## Directions

It can be helpful for children to develop their “owl eyes” (see *What’s Happening?* p.131) prior to beginning “Docu-Walks.” Also consider doing the “Where Do I Live?” (p.101) prior to this experience.

1. Invite the class to come on a school neighborhood walk. Before going on the walk, ask them what they expect to see. Record their responses. Talk about which of these objects or people they may actually see. Build on their previous walks to confirm if it is likely they will see these things.
2. Invite the children to look at the map of the school neighborhood. Ask what they notice about the map: except for the school and street, the map is empty. Their job as they walk and observe will be to find interesting buildings or objects to put on their school neighborhood map. When they see something interesting, one of the teachers will take a photo of it (if students are adept at taking pictures, give them this task).

## Materials

- digital camera(s)
- a large, handmade map of the school neighborhood that includes only streets and a picture of the school glued to the appropriate location
- blocks, cars, trucks, people, and animal toys
- paper and art supplies for making neighborhood building, cars, trucks, plants, and animals

Typically, a **neighborhood** refers to a defined geographic location within a city or town, where residents live and often have access to goods and services. A **community** refers to a group of people with something in common, which may be the neighborhood they share, or other characteristics, such a cultural heritage, shared language, or self-identification as part of a group. In the natural world, we refer to communities as groups of living things that share a physical space and are connected to one another through a series of interdependent relationships.





Place photos of what you've seen in the right location on your neighborhood map.

### Extensions

- Repeat the walk, taking different routes each time.
- Hike through your school neighborhood throughout the year documenting seasonal changes.
- Invite children to add their homes to the school neighborhood map.
- Add changes to the map throughout the year; leafless trees, snow in the winter, flowers in the spring, buildings being built or torn down, etc.
- Write directions to different locations on the map.
- As you tour your neighborhood, play "Owl Eyes" (see *What's Happening?* p.131) or "Color Search" (see *Who Are We?* p.57).
- **My Map Book** by Sara Fanelli
- **As the Crow Flies: A First Book Of Maps** by Gail Hartman
- For teachers: **Mapmaking with Children** by David Sobel

3. As you prepare for the walk, ask the class to talk about what it will look like to safely go for this walk. Depending on the age of your students, it is best to have taken short walks around your school prior to this activity. Build children's capacity by extending the length of your group walks, and clearly establish what it looks and feels like to safely walk in the school neighborhood. (See p.26 to read about how one childcare center builds children's capacity for outings.)
4. Start the walk, taking pictures as you go. Stop as needed to look and discuss what you encounter.
5. On returning to the classroom, gather the children to look at the list generated before the walk. Did the class see what they expected? Add anything they saw that wasn't on the list.
6. Continue to process the experience using the discussion questions.
7. In the following days, make three prints of each of the photos that were taken and laminate them. Play a matching game with pairs of prints by placing them face up or face down (like Concentration) and have students find the matches. With the third photo, gather around the school neighborhood map to have students place the photo on the correct location. Label the photo.

### Discussion Questions

- What is our neighborhood made of?
- What is a map?
- How is our map related to our neighborhood?



Use duplicates of your community photos to play a matching game.

# Docu-Walk: Who Lives Here?

WHO LIVES HERE?

EVERY SEASON



WHAT'S THE  
Big Idea?

Interdependence  
Community

## Enduring Understandings

- A neighborhood is a geographic place in a town or city made up of people and buildings, streets and parks, and both tame and wild animals.
- Neighborhoods have differences and similarities.
- The living things in a neighborhood form a community.
- Members of a community depend on each other.

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate an awareness of who is in their school and neighborhood community.
- Children show interest and curiosity in the people and animals that make up their neighborhood community.
- Children discover how the people in their community work together to make it a safe and good/healthy/happy place in which to live.

## Directions

As a regular part of your year-long curriculum, neighborhood walks will enable your students to meet and learn about the responsibilities of many of their school and neighborhood community helpers. It can be helpful for children to develop their “owl eyes” (see “Owl Eyes,” in *What’s Happening?* p.131) prior to beginning docu-walks.

1. Look at the map of your community with children. Ask them to think of places in the community. Can they find these places on the map? Tell the children you are going on a walk to explore the people, places, and animals that make up your community.
2. Venture out on your walk. Reinforce good safety practices as children visit various locations in their neighborhood community. If possible, walk to the local fire and police stations. Meet with these community helpers

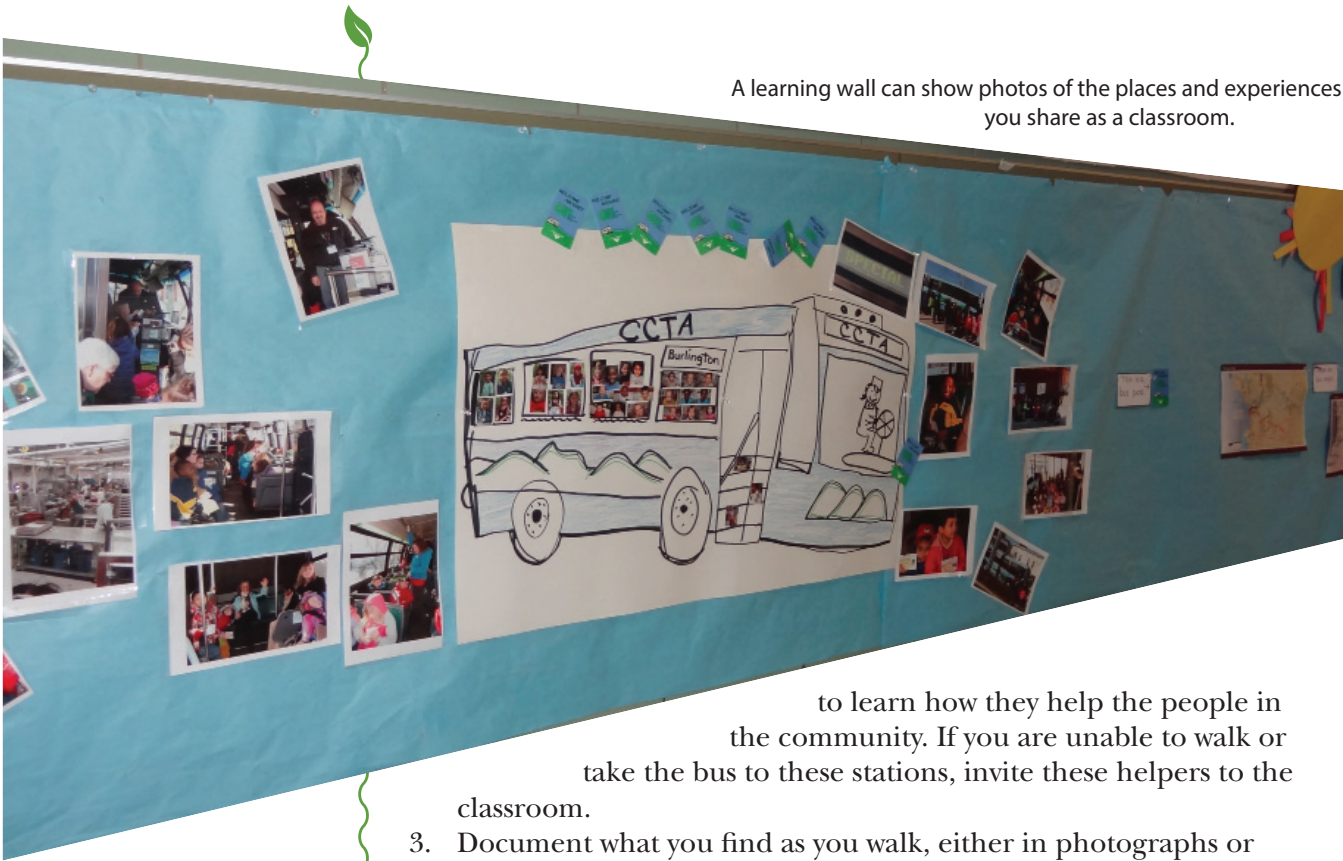
## Materials

- digital camera(s)
- a large, handmade map of the school and neighborhood community that includes only streets and a picture of the school glued to the appropriate location



Students meet with a local bus service driver.

A learning wall can show photos of the places and experiences you share as a classroom.



to learn how they help the people in the community. If you are unable to walk or take the bus to these stations, invite these helpers to the classroom.

### Extensions

- Create a class book about these helpers, with students contributing stories and pictures they create after the visits.
- Keep a record of any wild animals the children see on their walks. Do these animals appear all year or only in certain seasons? Create birdfeeders for your local birds.

3. Document what you find as you walk, either in photographs or journals.
4. When you return to the classroom, add pictures taken or drawn by the children to your learning wall. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Discussion Questions

- Who makes up our human and natural community?
- How do these human community members help make our community a better place to live?
- What animals stay visible in your community all year? Why do these animals live in your community?



# Insect Walk

WHO LIVES HERE?

FALL



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Community

### Enduring Understandings

- Communities are made up of the people, animals, and plants that live in them.
- Every living thing has a special role in its community.

### Objectives

- Children cultivate their observation skills through noticing the insects that live in their community.
- Children show interest and curiosity in discovering different insects.
- Children learn that insects adapt to the coming cold weather in different ways.

### Directions

1. As the last days of summer wane, ask the children about insects they have noticed? Do they know the name of any insects? Where do they usually see insects? What are the insects doing?
2. Many classrooms focus on the monarch butterfly in fall but many insects are going through adaptations as fall approaches. Besides migrating, some insects cluster together to keep warm (honey bees), spend the winter below the frost line (ants and termites) or as a chrysalis (black swallowtail).
3. Tell the children that they will be going on an outdoor Insect Walk, and their job is to use their “owl eyes” to find insects that live in your community. Distribute hand lenses if you have them.
4. Take the children on a walk either in the neighborhood or natural setting. As they discover insects, stop the group and engage students with some of the discussion questions. Bring an old white sheet and lay it on the ground at several different stops along the walk. Leave it there for several minutes as the children look for insects elsewhere. Have them come back to the sheet to observe who drops by for a visit!
5. When the walk is completed, process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions. The discussion may lead to further research to discover how various insects adapt to the change in the season.

### Discussion Questions

- What insects live here? What are they doing?
- What do you notice about their bodies?
- What do you think they use these body parts for?
- How might these insects help out in our community?
- What are you wondering now?

### Materials

- white sheet or dropcloth
- hand lenses, *optional*

## Insect Song!

Sung to the tune of  
“Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”

Head, thorax, abdomen, abdomen  
Head, thorax, abdomen, abdomen  
Six legs, wings, antennae!

*Or you can add:*  
Six legs, wings, exoskeleton!

*Or...*  
Six legs, wings, and  
compound eyes!



### Extensions

- **Helpin’ Bugs** by Rosemary Lonborg
- Have children draw the insects they discovered and add their drawings to the learning wall.
- If your learning wall includes a map of the area you walked, place the students’ illustrations at the location they observed the insects.
- Following a format similar to “Dress up a Sheep” (p.104), use your imagination to have the children “Dress up an Insect.”
- Place plastic insects around the classroom to have children practice finding them.



# Community Helpers: Our Classroom Community

## Materials

- “Community Songs” (Appendix, p.220)
- crayons
- markers
- scissors
- cut-out person (child silhouette cut from paper), one per student

## Extensions

- Put cut-out hands in an envelope. Each time a student helps or notices another student helping, write the student’s name on the hand. Make a wall of helping hands for students to see how community members contribute to the community.
- Have students share with their parents who and what makes up their community. Have them share with their families one way they help their classroom.

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Interdependence Community

## Enduring Understandings

- Communities are groups of living and nonliving things sharing a common purpose or space.
- There are different kinds of communities.
- We are all members of a community.
- Our classroom is one community we are all a part of.
- We can be members of more than one community.
- We all contribute to our community.

## Objectives

- Children cultivate understanding that a community is a group of people who work, learn, and play together
- Children discover how they are a part of their classroom community.

## Directions

1. Ask students to share their ideas about what a community is. Explain that a community is a group of living and nonliving things sharing a common purpose or space.
2. Sing “Community Songs” with students (see Appendix, p.220).
3. Ask children how their classroom is a community. Ask them who makes up their classroom community. Explain that members of a community help make their community a good place to work, live, and play in. Ask children to describe ways they contribute to their community.
4. Demonstrate how to make a cut-out person by cutting out the person shape and then coloring it to look like yourself. Explain that the children are going to make a cut-out person of themselves.

5. Distribute the art materials and help the children personalize their cut-out people. Once everyone has finished, have them share their person and how they are a part of the classroom community. Ask them, “How do you help our classroom community learn, live, and play together?”
6. Hang all the cut-outs on a bulletin board titled, “Our Classroom Community is made up of Helpers!”
7. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

## Discussion Questions

- What communities are you a part of?
- How do members of a community help each other?
- How do people in our classroom community help each other?
- How are you a part of this community?



# Where Do I Live?

WHO LIVES HERE?



FALL

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

Interdependence Community

### Enduring Understandings

- Homes are where we live.
- There are many different kinds of homes.
- People live in different kinds of homes than animals.
- Every living thing needs a home; each home is unique.

### Objectives

- Children demonstrate an awareness of their own home and the shapes that make up homes.
- Children show interest and curiosity in where their classmates live.
- Children discover that not all homes are the same.
- Children build houses out of blocks and boxes and play “house.”

### Directions

1. Read *Maisy's House and Garden* by Lucy Cousins.
2. Show the children pictures of a variety of homes. Ask them to identify the ones they recognize. Do any look like their own homes? Why or why not?
3. Talk about the shapes found in people homes: squares, triangles, rectangles. Have children point out some of those shapes in the pictures.
4. Have children create their own home using paper, markers, shapes, and crayons.
5. On another piece of paper, have each child glue a picture of him or herself on the lower half of a page. Tape the house picture on top of the child's picture. Now, cut along the outline of the door of the house, leaving one side still attached. Fold the door back along this attached side, and reveal who lives here!
6. Display the students' homes in the classroom.

### Discussion Questions

- What is the same about our homes?
- What is different?
- How are people homes different than animal homes? How are they the same?

### Materials

- *Maisy's House & Garden* by Lucy Cousins
- pictures, photos, or examples of a variety of homes (dog house, apartment building, single family home, bird's nest, and duplex home, etc.)
- small photo of each child
- paper
- scissors
- markers
- glue
- shapes pre-cut out of construction paper: squares, rectangles, triangles
- blocks
- large boxes of many sizes to build 3-D homes

Note:

## No Place Like Home

Be mindful of the living situations your students and their families or friends may be in. For children in transition, or living without homes, the idea of home can mean something very different than it does to those children with secure and safe housing. Consider the language you use and the images represented in your classroom and how they might relate to the lives of your students, and include as many types of housing (including shelters and shared housing) where you are able.

### Extensions

- Draw a map of the school neighborhood and have students place their homes in the correct spot.
- Send supplies home with students so their families can help create their homes.
- Create 3-D homes using cardboard boxes.
- Create lift-the-flap animal homes.



# Active in Winter!

## Animals on the Move

### Materials

- *Mammal Tracks and Scat: Life-Size Tracking Guide* by Lynn Levine and Martha Mitchell
- *Big Tracks, Little Tracks: Following Animal Prints* by Millicent Selsam
- "Track Patterns" (Appendix, p.221)
- "Animal Track Templates" (Appendix, p.224)

WHAT'S THE  
**Big Idea?**  
Interdependence  
Community

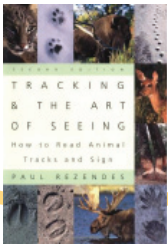
### Enduring Understandings

- All animals are unique, but there are similarities in some of their behaviors.
- Animals move in different ways.
- Animals that are active in winter are actively looking for food.

### Objectives

- Children demonstrate an understanding of animal signs they find in their school and back yards.
- Children explore the different ways animals move.
- Children practice their gross motor skills as they role play different animal gaits.

Great Teacher  
Resource!



**Tracking and the Art of Seeing** by Paul Rezendes. Collins Reference, New York, NY, 1999

### Directions

1. Read *Big Tracks, Little Tracks: Following Animal Prints* by Millicent Selsam. Discuss the book with children.
2. Show the children the animal "Track Patterns" handout. Ask the children to notice the pattern of the footprints and share what they see. Explain that a deer, dog, or cat leave a straight walker pattern, while the rabbit, squirrel, or chipmunk leave a hopper pattern. Some of the slower, fatter animals, such as the skunk, raccoon, or porcupine leave a waddler track. As you describe each gait, show the "Track Patterns" again to illustrate the gait for children. You could also lay down





practicing the “hopper” walk!

several track cards of an individual animal to illustrate the gait (ie. place deer tracks in a straight line.) Use the “Animal Track Templates” to make these track cards.

3. Give students the opportunity to try these gaits, reassuring them that humans are experts at walking on two legs and these gaits will be challenging for most of them. First, ask students to get on all fours and try to walk like a straight walker: in a straight line with one “foot” in front of the other. It’s not easy for humans, but our four-legged friends—a cat or dog—do it easily!

4. Next, have children try the hopper walk by bringing both hands in between their knees and bringing their legs forward. Rather than hopping up, they hop forward with their legs sliding in front of their hands. This is easier said than done!

5. The waddler walk is slow and easy. Waddler animals have defenses other than speed. The skunk has its spray, the porcupine has quills, and raccoons can be very aggressive. Have children get on their hands and knees. Starting with their right side, move both right hand and leg forward at the same time. Now do the same thing using their left side. Continue shifting back and forth moving one side forward at a time.
6. Encourage children to use their knowledge of the patterns in which animals move to help them identify what animals are active in winter. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

## Discussion Questions

- What was similar about the ways the animals moved? What was different?
- Which was the hardest gait for you to imitate? Easiest?
- Can you think of any other animals that waddle? Walk straight? Bound? Hop?
- Can you think of any ways that animals move that we haven’t talked about today? (Slither, swim)

## Extensions

- “Print Partners”: Make two or three copies of each animal print, using the “Animal Track Templates,” so that everyone in your class has one. Cut out each print without the animal label. Pass out a print to each student. They must find the other children who have the same print pattern(s). Once they have found their print partner, give each group a copy of the “Track Pattern” handout so they can try to identify their prints.
- “Track Stories:” Children create a bulletin board with animal tracks and homes they have spotted around their school and home.
- Make enough cards of each animal’s track to help create animal “stories” in your classroom.





# Dress up a Sheep

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Community

### Materials

Gather the following materials into a large bag:

- **udder:** butter or cottage cheese container with 2 baby bottle nipples for the teats
- **horns & ears:** headband with cardboard ears and horns attached
- **hooves:** 4 socks with hoof prints on the bottom
- **stomachs:** four under-inflated balloons tied together
- **tail stub:** cardboard with cotton balls glued on to it

*continued*

### Enduring Understandings

- Communities are made up of the people, animals, and plants that live in them.
- Many domestic animals provide food or fibers for humans.
- Sheep are one type of domestic animal raised by humans.

### Objectives

- Children show interest and curiosity in learning the parts of a sheep by dressing up one of their classmates.
- Children consider the similarities and difference between human bodies and sheep bodies.
- Children develop an awareness of the relationship between sheep and humans.

### Directions

1. Ask students to imagine a farm community. What animals might they find there? Explain to the children that they are going to dress up

## Vocabulary (Bah, Ram, Ewe)

**Udder:** a female sheep has an udder that produces milk after she has had her first lambs. The udder has two teats from which the lambs nurse.

**Teats:** Any of the projections from the udder through which milk is discharged.

**Tail:** All sheep are born with tails, but most farmers “dock” or remove them when the lambs are about one week old.

**Horns & ears:** Both male and female sheep are born with horns (unless they are a polled breed), and the farmer has the veterinarian remove them—many farmers do this themselves (called dehorning). Sheep have ears to help them hear.

**Hooves:** A sheep has four legs with hooves on the bottom. Each hoof has two toes.

**Stomachs:** Unlike humans, a sheep is a ruminant, which means it has four parts to its stomach to help it digest its food.

**Fleece:** A sheep grows thick fur called fleece on its body. Farmers can shear off the fleece and turn it into wool yarn or felt. This is usually done in the spring. The sheep’s fleece grows thicker in fall to provide warmth in winter.



one of their classmates as a sheep. Ask them to try to imagine what a sheep looks like and what special parts it has. What makes a sheep different from other animals?

2. Pick a volunteer from the class to be dressed up. Have the child stand somewhere everyone can see.
3. Ask the children to suggest how to make the volunteer look more like a sheep. As they come up with ideas, pull the appropriate prop from your bag, and dress up the volunteer. Alternatively, if the children are not sure of a sheep's anatomy, have a child pull a prop from your bag and guess what it might be, then dress up the volunteer.
4. After you have dressed up the volunteer with all the sheep props, ask the children what they could add to make the volunteer look even more like a sheep (e.g., eyes on each side of their head, teeth, etc). Discuss how different we are from sheep. How are we similar?
5. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

## Discussion Questions

- How are our bodies similar to a sheep's body? How are they different?
- Where do sheep live?
- Why do farmers keep sheep?
- Who else lives in a community with sheep?
- What role do sheep play in our community?

## Materials *continued*

- **fleece:** Sheepskin or a wool sweater (Check online for sources for buying sheep fleece, e.g., [www.pitchfork.org](http://www.pitchfork.org) sells raw, dirty fleece; [www.zwool.com](http://www.zwool.com) sells clean roving for spinning or felting batt for felting projects.)

## Extensions

- **Emma's Lamb** by Kim Lewis
- **Feeding the Sheep** by Leda Schubert
- Sing sheep songs, "Mary Had a Little Lamb," or "Baa, Baa Black Sheep."
- Combine this activity with "Farm Barnyard," p.111.
- Visit a sheep farm or have a sheep farmer visit your class.







# Signs in the Snow

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Interdependence Community

## Materials

- See "Animal Homes" (p.91) for instructions in setting up various wild animal homes in your classroom
- ***In the Snow: Who's Been Here?*** by Lindsay Barrett George
- pretend snow (old white sheets, cotton batting, or cotton)
- discarded artificial or real evergreen trees (*see tip*)
- sets of animal track cards (Appendix, p.222)
- "Animal Homes" sheet (Appendix, p.219) cut into cards
- fake animal scat (fecal waste)
  - **deer:** coffee beans
  - **rabbit:** cocoa puffs
  - you can also purchase *Repliscat* from:
    - [www.trackandscat.com](http://www.trackandscat.com)
    - [www.acornnaturalist.com](http://www.acornnaturalist.com)
- pine cones, acorns, butternuts, downed hollow logs, tree browse (examples of branches or limbs that have been eaten, browsed, by animals)

## Enduring Understandings

- Every living thing has a unique role, or niche, in its community.
- Animals live in a place because they can find food, water and shelter.
  - Predator animals hunt other animals for food. This animal food is called prey.
  - We can use clues left by animals to discover who lives here and what they have been doing and eating.

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate an understanding of the signs animals leave behind.
- Children show interest and curiosity in reading animal signs.
- Children practice solving mysteries by reading animal signs.
- Children create their own animal stories using props.
- Children demonstrate an understanding that animals adapt to winter by building shelter and eating what is available.

## Directions

### PART 1: In the Classroom

1. Set up your classroom with a few "track stories"—mysteries for children to solve that include an animal home, its food browse, footprints, and scat. For example, scattered nuts and pine cones below a hole in a pine tree with small hopper tracks on the ground would represent the home of a red squirrel. You can replicate the general wintry outdoors with real or artificial evergreen trees, and cotton batting or white sheets to represent snow.
2. Allow the children to walk around observing the "stories." Encourage them to figure out who lives here by reading the clues in the story.
3. Have the children share their findings. What "stories" did the animals leave behind? What clues made it possible for them to know this?
4. Read the book, *In the Snow: Who's Been Here?* Ask the children if they would like to revise their animal story after hearing the story.
5. Show the animal and footprint card sets to the class. Divide the children into small groups and have them create their own track stories using prints, homes, food, and scat.
6. Once the children's track stories are set, groups ask others to "read" their story. At this time, it's not necessary for the stories to be accurate. Instead, allow the students to think about what signs the animals leave for us to "read." As children's tracking skills increase, they can edit their stories to make them more accurate. Stories can be photographed or written down to share at a later time.

**TIP!**

Plan to do "Signs in the Snow" after your winter break. Ask families to donate their Christmas trees in January and recycle these old trees to create your winter landscape.

## PART 2: Track Stories Outside

7. After practicing “reading” track stories indoors, take the class outside to explore tracks that may be in the schoolyard. Look for signs of both domestic and wild animals. Even if there is no snow, children can find tracks in the mud or frozen in ice. Scat and browse are always there if our “owl eyes” are working.
8. Once you have located tracks, draw a circle around the print in the snow to help preserve the print for others to see.
9. Look for signs of food that the animal may have been eating: buds eaten off the tips of branches (nibbled buds high on the plant may have been deer, lower munches might be rabbits), empty nut shells, holes dug in the snow.
10. Look for signs of scat. The fecal waste of wild animals tells much about their life. Fox will often leave their scat upon a rock, very deliberately letting all know this is their territory. Rabbit scat looks much like the cereal, cocoa puffs, but if it is lighter brown in color, the rabbit may have eaten the original scat to get the very last of the nutrients from it. Deer scat resembles coffee beans.
11. Notice any other clues left behind. Sometimes, an animal will leave behind some fur. It takes real “owl eyes” to find strands of fur! Animal homes are sometimes more visible in the winter. Look for holes in snow. Notice their size. Try to determine what animal may inhabit this hole. Every time you go out with your students you are guaranteed to find something new, it’s all in the eyes of the beholder.

## Discussion Questions

- What kinds of clues do animals leave behind?
- How do the clues help us know who lives here?
- What did you need to do to read the animal stories?



When you find a track outdoors, draw a circle around it to help preserve the track for all to see.



Set up “track stories” indoors with an animal’s tracks, scat, food, and home.

## Extensions

- After a group shares its story, have everyone else turn away as the group removes one part of the story. The class looks back and uses their “owl eyes” to determine what has changed.
- Set up small pop-up tents and plastic tunnels covered with white sheets to represent snow-covered animal homes for children to role play being animals in winter. Use a small plastic slide as an otter slide so students can slide into an ice-covered pretend pond.
- “A Winter’s Meal,” (p.108)
- “Active in Winter,” (p.102)
- **Who Lives in the Snow?** by Jennifer Berry Jones
- **Animals In Winter** by Henrietta Bancroft
- For teachers: **Tracking and the Art of Seeing** by Paul Rezendes

# A Winter's Meal

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Interdependence Community

#### Materials

- *Animals In Winter* by Henrietta Bancroft
  - apron and chef's hat
  - large soup pot
  - wooden spoon
  - trays, one for each small group of children
  - samples of plants, animals, and insects found in your area throughout the year (samples can be real, artificial, or images). This could include flowers, leaves, twigs, berries, green grass, insects (rubber or plastic), rubber mice, bark, acorns, butternuts, etc. Make sure to include items that would be found in your natural habitat.
  - a photo, puppet, or stuffed animal representing:
    - rabbit
    - chipmunk
    - songbird
    - woodchuck
- You can also use the "Winter Animal Cards (Appendix, p.225).

#### Enduring Understandings

- All things change, and can adapt to change.
- Animals react to the change in season in different ways: some are active, some are dormant, some migrate, and others hibernate.

#### Objectives

- Children role-play animals in winter.
- Children show interest and curiosity in how local animals adapt to the winter.
- Children demonstrate an understanding of why and how animals adapt to winter.

#### Directions

**SET-UP:** Prepare trays with a variety of the samples of plants, insects, and animals distributed amongst them. Set up your cooking workspace with a soup pot and a wooden spoon. Place your animal puppets, photos, or cards around the room. (Place the woodchuck—a hibernator—in a quiet, dark, out-of-the-way place, where it cannot be easily found.)

1. Read *Animals In Winter* by Henrietta Bancroft. Discuss the book with your students.
2. Dress yourself up as chef and gather students around your cooking workspace. Explain that as the chef, your job is to cook for the animals who are active in winter. Really ham it up! (One of our educators likes to become "Fifi the French Chef"—complete with accent.) Tell the children that you need their help to determine what foods are available outside at this time of year for wild animals to eat.



With your students, sort a tray of animal food into two piles: what's found outside in winter, and what's not.



3. Divide the class into smaller groups and give each group a tray. Each group divides the objects on their tray into two piles:
  - Found outside in winter
  - Not found outside in winter.
4. After the groups have divided the the objects, ask for volunteers to bring the “food” to your pot. As each group presents their selections, ask the rest of the children to confirm whether or not each item can be found outside in winter. If the answer is yes, it goes into your soup pot. Once all the possible options have been placed in the pot and are “simmering,” tell the children that it’s time to call out to the wild animals, “Soup is on! Come and get it!” But only animals who enjoy the foods in the soup can visit your kitchen. Tell the children that these animals are placed around the room.
5. Ask one child to find an animal and approach the soup pot. Identify the animal and invite the child to assume the role of the animal. (Give the child hints if needed).
6. Depending on which animal the child chooses, follow the “active,” “migrating” or “dormant” scenario below. Repeat steps 5 and 6 with different children for each scenario.

- If the child chooses the **active** rabbit, have the child hop around looking for food to keep her energy up. Ask, “Can rabbit eat from our soup?” Explain that winter can be hard for herbivores (plant-eating animals), like the rabbit, since there is no green grass, dandelions or garden vegetables growing. Explain that the rabbit has adapted to winter by eating the stems and buds of woody plants like blackberry, raspberry, maple, oak and sumac plants. Ask the children if any of these buds or stems are in the soup. Invite rabbit to eat from the soup pot and then transform back into a child.
- If the child chooses a **migrating** songbird, have her fly into the soup kitchen, very anxiously looking for berries and insects to eat. Ask the children if there are any fresh, juicy berries or insects in the soup pot. Since there are not, suggest that the bird get moving and fly to a place that is warmer and where juicy berries are growing and insects are alive. Explain that some animals migrate to warmer areas in the winter.
- If the child chooses a **dormant** chipmunk, have the child act somewhat sleepy, trying to decide if it should crawl from its burrow in the ground to come to the soup kitchen. Explain that as an omnivore (an animal who eats both plants and animals),

## Active in Winter?

Animals use various strategies to cope with winter’s challenges: cold temperatures and food scarcity.

- **Active:** An animal can find enough food to support staying active and warm. (*bobcat, coyote, deer, fox, rabbit, squirrel*)
- **Dormant\*:** An animal minimizes activity. It slows its breathing and heart rate to conserve energy for extended periods. (*black bear, chipmunk, raccoon, skunk*)
- **Hibernating\*:** An animal minimizes activity. It slows its breathing and heart rate, *and* lowers its body temperature to conserve energy for extended periods. (*bat, jumping mouse, woodchuck*)
- **Migrating:** A complete population of animals travels to another area for more reliable food supply, temperatures, or breeding purposes. (*many birds: warblers, loons, )*

*\*Most animals that are dormant or that hibernate will periodically roust themselves to forage for the limited food that is available. This uses a LOT of energy, and is risky for the animal.*

## Extensions

- Create a class list of animals that you see when outside for recess or on neighborhood walks. Try to discover what food these animals eat and how they can survive.
- Keep a class calendar in the winter months where you record “special” animal or bird sightings.

the chipmunk’s diet consists of grains, nuts, seeds, insects, and salamanders. The chipmunk has stored nuts and seeds to eat over the winter in its burrow. Explain that some animals are dormant, or very sleepy in the winter—they roust themselves only occasionally to get food. Tell the children that it’s a beautiful day, and the chipmunk is outside. Ask if your soup has any nuts and seeds in it. Invite the chipmunk to try some of your delicious soup before it scurries back to its burrow to sleep for most of the winter, waking occasionally to eat its stored food or run out into the cold sunshine.

7. Let the children know that there is still one more animal in the room. Can anyone find it? Choose a child to go find this last animal. Explain that this animal, a **hibernating** groundhog, is in a deep sleep for the winter and will not be moving. Tell the children you notice it is hardly breathing, its heartbeat is very slow and it feels quite cold. Encourage the children to ask why? Tell the children to think about what a groundhog eats. If they do not know, explain that you have seen this groundhog eating green grass and stealing fresh vegetables from your garden. Ask the children if these food are in your soup pot. Ask, “Are green grass, fresh vegetable outside in the winter?” No, of course not. Explain that since his or her food is not available, this groundhog adapts by sleeping through the winter, and wakes up in the spring when her food becomes available again.
8. Use the animal cards to review the ways animals adapt to winter. Show some animals that haven’t been discussed yet and ask the children whether they think this animal hibernates, migrates, is dormant, or is active in the winter. Use the box on the previous page to help you. As you describe each behavior, ask the children to act out that behavior.

## Discussion Questions

- What’s happening with animals in winter in our community?
- What different kinds of behaviors do they have? Do you know of any other animals that have similar behaviors? Remind the children that these behaviors are adaptations. Ask, “Can you think of ways these animals might behave in the summer?”



# Farm Barnyard

WHO LIVES HERE?

SPRING



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Interdependence Community

## Enduring Understandings

- There are different kinds of communities.
- A farm is one kind of community.
- Some farms have only one type of animal, such as a dairy farm with just milk cows; other farms have a variety of animals.
- Farmers raise animals for their food and fiber.

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate an understanding of the animals that live on farms.
- Children show interest and curiosity regarding farm animals' life cycle and families.
- Children play "farmer" using various props such as farm animal puppets, plastic figures, or toy tractors.

## Directions

1. Gather the children in a circle and ask, "Who lives on the farm?" As children offer their answers, show a small plastic farm animal or display a picture or felt version of the various animals.
2. Ask the children "What happens on a farm?" Have the children set up a farm scene as they discuss what they know about these animals.
3. Read *Farmyard Banter* or *Animal Sounds*. Discuss the sounds and motions the various farm animals make.
4. After the story, hand each child a picture of a farm animal to wear around their neck. Have the students wear their picture face down so no one can see it. Explain that there is more than one picture of each animal.
5. When the teacher calls out "Farm Barnyard,"



## Note:

If you are not familiar with farm animals or where to find local farms and resources, check these agricultural connections:

- **Farm-based Education Network**  
[www.farmbasededucation.org](http://www.farmbasededucation.org)
- **Farm to Preschool:** [www.farmtopreschool.org](http://www.farmtopreschool.org)
- **Ag in the Classroom** (*state and national levels*)  
[www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org)
- **Cooperative Extension Service** (*State and national program under USDA; the 4-H section often includes education ideas & resources*):  
[www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/)

## Materials

- ***Farmyard Banter*** by Denise Fleming, or ***Animal Sounds*** illustrated by Aurelius Battaglia
- wooden barn, plastic farm animals and toy tractors
- felt board with felt farm animals, felt barns
- "Farmyard Animal Cards" (Appendix, p.229). Laminate several cards of each adult animal, and add strings to hang around children's necks, one per child
- samples of animal products:
  - **dairy cows:** empty dairy product containers (milk, yogurt, cheese)
  - **beef cows:** leather belts, shoes, steak dog toy, can of beef stew
  - **sheep:** wool sweater, mittens, hand lotion (lanolin from wool)
  - **goats:** empty goat cheese containers

*continued*

- **pigs:** empty bacon package, ham containers, football, bristle paint brush
- **chickens:** egg cartons, chicken noodle soup can, toy rubber chicken leg
- **turkey:** turkey meat products, feathers
- **rabbits:** angora sweater or mittens, rabbit meat package
- **ducks or geese:** feather pillows, down jacket

### Extensions

- **Farm Animals** by Gallinard Jeunesse and Sylviane Perols
- **On the Farm** by Alastair Smith
- Try to match adult animal cards to the corresponding baby animal cards. (Appendix, p.231)
- Play "Motion, Music, & Mannerisms: A Farm Animal Scavenger Hunt" (Appendix, p.232)



each child makes the sound and motion of their animal picture. They move around trying to find animals that match theirs.

6. Once they have found their animals, the group should choose their animal product(s) from a collection of animal products. For example, the chickens would pick out the empty egg carton or an empty box of chicken tenders.
7. Once each group has selected a product, have them share it with everyone. Other groups should guess what animal makes those products.

### Discussion Questions

- What animals live on farms?
- What are farms for?
- How can a mother farm animal find her baby if all the babies look alike to us?
- How do farmers care for their animals?
- What products do humans get from farm animals?



# Pond Critters

WHO LIVES HERE?



SPRING

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

Interdependence  
Community

### Enduring Understandings

- The pond habitat is a community where many insects, mammals, amphibians and reptiles live.
- Many of these creatures depend on each other as a food source.

### Objectives

- Children show interest and curiosity in the great variety of creatures that live in a pond.
- Children discover that these creatures often need to eat one another to survive.
- Children experiment with creating some of these creatures from craft materials.
- Children play in their constructed pond or wetland.

### Directions

1. In your ongoing discussions about community, introduce the pond or wetland habitat by reading *In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming.
2. Tell children they will become “Pond Explorers” as they look for the community of critters who live in a pond. Discuss and chart, if you wish, which pond critters the children have seen, and which critters they hope to see. Discuss what safe and respectful behavior will look like at the pond. Remind students that they are there to observe and record what lives in the pond habitat. Plants and animals stay in the pond.
3. Travel to the pond you will explore. When approaching a pond or wetland, take time to stop, look, and listen. Children will be anxious to start dipping but have them observe first and discuss how this is a wild spot and you may find animals but maybe not!
4. Remind children that most of the critters they will be dipping for are very tiny. Have them look at their thumbnail for comparison: many of the critters living in this habitat are that small or smaller! It can be helpful to remind children that they might not catch anything. To increase the chances, carefully submerge the net or strainer into the water, bring it out and look closely. Is anything moving? Look again.

### Materials

- pond or wetland to explore, transportation if needed
- *In the Small, Small Pond* by Denise Fleming
- plastic wash tubs
- metal food strainers
- aquatic nets
- magnifying boxes
- clipboards, paper
- writing tools
- guides to identify pond critters, such as *Water Insects* by Sylvia Johnson. See also “Water Critter Chart” (Appendix, p.233)





## Frog Catching!

Catching frogs is slick business.

Use the soft aquatic nets, not the metal strainers as these can harm the frog's skin. Move the net quickly over the frog,

pull the net towards you, and clasp the net, closing off the opening so the frog will not escape. Place the frog in the plastic bins filled with water, knowing that it will escape and head back to the water. That's a good thing. To hold a frog, grab it firmly behind its back legs and rub its belly to calm it. Of course, once you start catching frogs, children forget about the interesting little macroinvertebrates and are totally focused on frogs. You may want to establish a time limit or a frog catching day. Once a frog has been caught, it is in shock, so when it is released it will move slowly. Our rule is, once a frog has been released, it is "home free" and cannot be caught again that day.

5. If there is movement in the net or strainer, take it to one of the plastic tubs that have been filled with pondwater and drag the net or strainer backwards through the water, releasing any macroinvertebrates or insects caught. Once the critters are in the collection bin, they are in a safe zone. Encourage your young naturalists to continue collecting and assure them they'll get to investigate their catch when everyone is done dipping.

6. After dipping for an appropriate amount of time (gauged by children's engagement and your time constraints), gather everyone around the plastic collection bins. Separate individual critters into magnifying boxes or yogurt containers. Try to get just one type in each container. Pass containers around and have students record their findings on their clipboards or science journals.

7. Have field guides or other resources available to help children identify their critters and adaptations these critters have to survive in a wet habitat.

8. Return all critters to the pond or water before leaving. Wash out

containers to remove any small critters like scuds or leeches.

9. Back in the classroom, add findings to a classroom map or science journal of wild sightings. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Discussion Questions

- What pond critters did you see? (Add these to the chart from the earlier discussion.)
- What did the critters do?
- Are the pond critters a community? Why or why not?





## Extensions

- If possible, take trips to the pond throughout the seasons to help children see the full picture of this habitat.
- If you are unable to take your class to a pond, find a pond where you are permitted to dip for critters. Place them in a bucket of pond water, NOT tap water, and bring them into your classroom to put into your water table. Allow a few children at a time to observe the critters. Return critters to the same pond in a few days.
- Set up a simulated pond or wetland in your classroom:
  - **water:** blue tarp
  - **lily pads:** green paper cut-outs
  - **duckweed:** scatter hole-punched circles from green paper.
  - **cattails:** long cardboard tubes, painted brown, with thin, green, paper leaves and a furry brown material for cattail head
  - **inhabitants:** frog, duck, and dragonfly puppets or paper cutouts
  - Children can draw pictures of what they have seen at the pond to add to their classroom pond.
- See "Water Babies Match Up" in *What's Happening*, (p.168).
- **Near One Cattail: Turtles, Logs and Leaping Frogs** by Anthony D. Fredericks
- **What's In the Pond** by Anne Hunter



# Community Helpers: Who Helps?

## Materials

### SESSION 1:

- **Community Helpers from A to Z** by Bobbie Kalman

### SESSIONS 2+:

- neighborhood map
- list of questions generated by children in Session 1

WHAT'S THE  
**Big Idea?**  
Community

## Enduring Understandings

- Each person is part of a community.
- People have different roles in their communities.
- Members of a community depend on each other.
- We can all be community helpers.

## Objectives

- Children demonstrate awareness of different roles in a community.
- Children show interest and curiosity by generating a list of questions they would ask community helpers about their role in the community.
- Children engage in the community through visits to community helpers.

## Directions

This facilitated learning experience can take place over several days or weeks, depending on the time you have available.

### SESSION 1:

1. Ask students what it means to help. Follow this by asking what it might mean to be a community helper. Ask who are the helpers in your community? In your school? In your classroom?

2. Read *Community Helpers from A to Z*. Discuss the text with the children. Ask if they would be interested in meeting some of the helpers in their community.

3. Tell children that they will be getting a chance to meet some community helpers.

4. Identify and explain some community helpers that the children will meet (postal worker, firefighter, baker, police officer, etc.). For each helper, ask children what questions they might like to ask the helper. Guide the children to generate questions that get at how these community members help the community and the importance of their roles. Make sure to include a question that asks the helper for ideas on how the children can be helpers themselves. Record the children's questions on chart paper.

5. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.





Students meet the police officers who serve the local community.

## SESSIONS 2+:

Repeat this session for each community helper you plan to visit.

6. Before beginning, arrange for children to visit a community helper, or alternatively, invite a community helper to visit children in the classroom.
7. Tell children that they will be going on a visit (or be visited by) a community helper.
8. Revisit the list of questions children generated for that community helper. Review safety and behavior expectations. Use this opportunity to discuss how children are also members of the community and can help by working together, listening, etc.
9. If walking to visit the community helper, engage the children as you walk by singing “Community Songs” (see Appendix, p.220), and greeting other community members you encounter.
10. When meeting with the community helper, have students ask their prepared questions. Tour the site and encourage new questions.
11. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

## Discussion Questions

- What is a community helper?
- Who are community helpers?
- Are all community helpers the same? How are they different?
- How do they help the community?
- Why are community helpers important?
- Are you a community helper? How?

## Extensions

- Have students pretend to be community helpers and practice their interview skills by interviewing each other.
- Play “Who Am I?” Have a child role-play a community helper and have the other children try to guess which helper they are.
- Using a map of the neighborhood, have children locate and mark the location where the various community helpers work.
- Prior to walking out into the community, have children locate their school and the site of the community visit. Count the blocks, note the street names. As you walk, count features, such as crosswalks or stoplights. Explain how these features also help keep people safe in the community. (See “Docu-Walk: Our School Neighborhood,” p.95.)
- Set up the housekeeping corner as the police station, the bank, and the grocery store so children can role-play community helpers they have met at sites they visited.





# Dress up a Cow

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Interdependence

### Materials

- **How Now, Brown Cow?** by Alice Schertle

Gather the following materials into a large bag. Each item represents a part of a cow.

- **udder:** cool whip container with baby bottle nipples for the teats with a string for tying around the waist
- **tail:** fly swatter with string for tying around waist
- **horns and ears:** headband with cardboard ears and horns attached
- **hooves:** 4 socks with hoof prints on the bottom
- **tongue:** sandpaper cut to the size of a real cow's tongue, with a clip to attach somewhere around their neck area
- **stomachs:** laminated picture of a cow's stomach, see Appendix p.236, with a string for tying around the waist.

### Enduring Understandings

- All animals have certain characteristics such as how they look, what they eat and how they behave.
- Observing and learning about animal characteristics can help us better understand them, and how we are all part of a community and interdependent.
- Dairy cows have unique body parts.

### Objectives

- Children demonstrate an understanding of why farmers raise milk cows.
- Children show interest and curiosity in the body parts of a cow.

### Directions

1. Read a few poems from *How Now, Brown Cow?* by Alice Schertle to give your students an idea of the many types of cows. Explain to the students that they are going to dress up one of their classmates or an adult helper as a cow. Ask them to try to imagine what a cow looks like and what special parts it has. Show them a few pictures of cows so that even if they have never seen one, they can participate. What makes a cow unique?
2. Pick a volunteer from the class to be dressed up. Let them know that they are going to look silly and the others may laugh at them. Are they okay with that? Have him or her stand where everyone can see.
3. Ask the students to suggest how to make the volunteer look more like a cow. As they come up with ideas, pull the appropriate prop that you have made from your bag, and dress up the volunteer with the prop.
4. After you have dressed up the volunteer with all the cow props you have, ask the







A cow's tongue feels like sandpaper!

students what they could add to make the student look even more like a cow (e.g., fur, eyes on each side of their head, big wet nose, teeth).

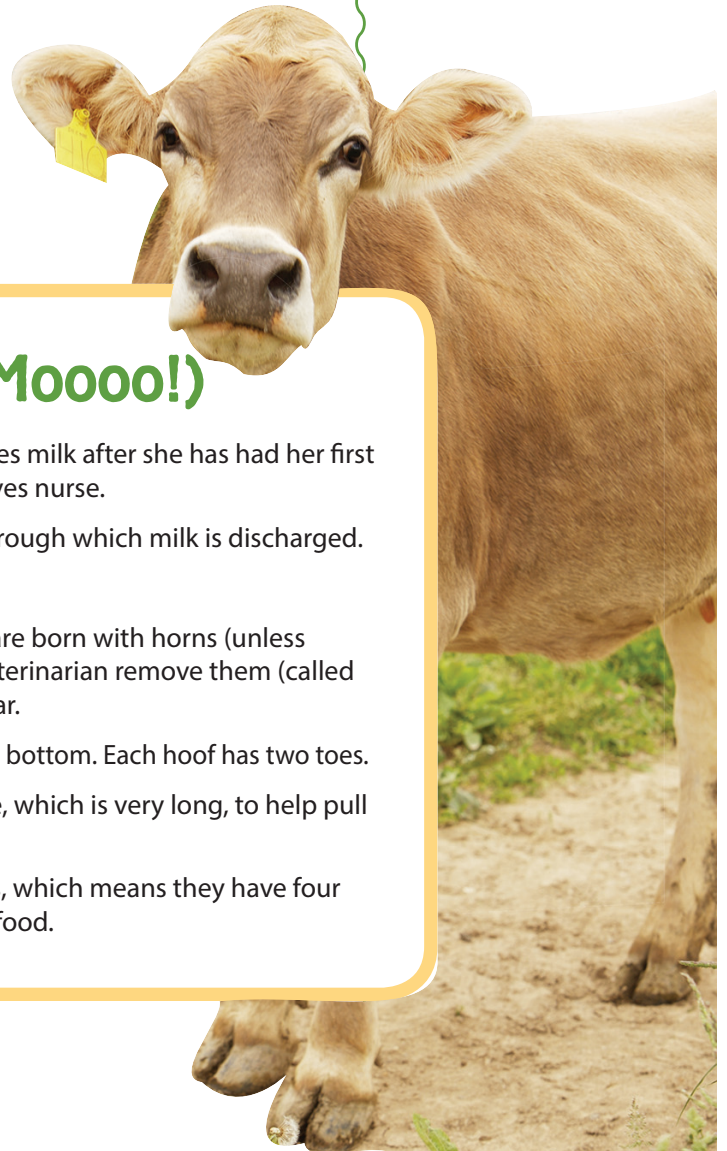
5. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Discussion Questions

- Discuss how are we different from cows. How are we similar?
- What other animals are similar to cows?

### Extensions

- Have several bags of Dress up a Cow props so that children can use them during free choice time. Include farmer-type clothes, heavy boots, long pants, hat, flannel shirt, so others may dress up as farmers to tend the cows.



## Vocabulary (Click Clack, Mooooo!)

**Udder:** A female cow has an udder that produces milk after she has had her first calf. The udder has four teats from which the calves nurse.

**Teats:** Any of the projections from the udder through which milk is discharged.

**Tail:** Cows use their tails as fly swatters.

**Horns and ears:** Both male and female cows are born with horns (unless they are a polled breed), and the farmer has a veterinarian remove them (called dehorning). Cows have big ears to help them hear.

**Hooves:** Cows have four legs with hooves on the bottom. Each hoof has two toes.

**Tongue:** Cows use their sandpaper-like tongue, which is very long, to help pull in the grass and hay that they eat.

**Stomachs:** Unlike humans, cows are ruminants, which means they have four parts to their stomach to help them digest their food.



# Fairy Homes

## WHAT'S THE Big Idea? Community

### Materials

- **Fairy Houses**  
by Tracy L. Kane
- access to outside space and natural materials such as old logs, leaves, sticks, stones, bark, feathers, nut shells

### Enduring Understanding

- Even make-believe characters can live in a community.

### Objectives

- Children develop their imagination as they create a fanciful world of fairies.
- Children experiment with natural materials to create fairy houses.
- Children play with fairy homes they made.



### Directions

1. Read *Fairy Houses* and discuss what and how they were made. Inevitably, someone will say they don't believe in fairies. This is a good opportunity to talk about imagination, the fantasy world, and people's right to believe or not. If a child doesn't want to build a fairy home, she or he could build a human shelter, or a home for another forest critter, like squirrels or chipmunks.
2. Go to an outdoor setting, even a school playground with no trees, and look for any natural materials that would be appropriate for building. If there are no such materials, ask parents to help contribute or go for a weekend hike to collect

materials where it is allowed. Encourage children to use materials that are already down and not pick live plants. Talk about respecting the land and each other's houses.

3. Create fairy homes. Often, children want to leave notes or signs for the fairies, so bring along paper and writing tools to help with this.
4. Revisit the fairy homes to see what has changed and add to the fairy neighborhood. Prepare students for the fact that fairy homes can sometimes be damaged by natural or human forces, but remind them that they can always be rebuilt.
5. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Extensions

- Build fairy homes throughout the seasons.
- Engage in the imaginative narrative of the fairy houses with the children. For example, find evidence of "fairy writing" in insect-chewed wood and translate it for children. (*One summer, the fairies in our forests sent the children messages of greeting and thanks for respecting the forest.*)

### Discussion Questions

- Describe your fairy home.
- What natural materials did you use to build your fairy home?
- What does it feel like to use your imagination to create fairy homes?
- Are the fairies a community? Why or why not?

# Sweet as a Bee

WHO LIVES HERE?

SUMMER



## WHAT'S THE Big Idea?

### Community Interdependence

## Enduring Understandings

- All living things are part of communities.
- Honey bees are social insects and have very specific jobs in their bee community.
- Honey bees depend on each other to survive.
- In a bee community, there are a queen bee, drones, and worker bees.

## Objectives

- Children show interest and curiosity in an insect they might have considered “bad.”
- Children demonstrate the jobs that honey bees in a hive do.
- Children cultivate an understanding of how honey bees help humans through pollination and producing honey and beeswax.
- Children role-play as honey bees.

## Directions

1. Start a discussion about honey bees. How many children see honey bees as a threat? Everyone will want to share bee sting stories. Inquire if anyone thinks bees might be helpful? Talk about those responses.
2. Read *Are You A Bee?* by Judy Allen and revisit the question, “Are honey bees helpful?”

## Vocabulary (Buzz... Buzz...)

**Queen:** Head of the hive who is busy laying up to 15,000 eggs a day.

**Drones:** Male honey bees whose only job is to mate with the queen bee when she leaves the hive to start a new one. In the interim, the drones hang around in the hive, being waited on by the female worker bees.

**Nurses:** Honey bees who make food, called *brood food*, for the young larvae or baby bees.

**Guards:** Honey bees who hang out at the entrance of the hive to smell every insect coming in the hive. If the smell or *pheromone* is not the correct smell, the guard bees protect the hive and drive the wrong-smelling insect out of the hive.

## Materials

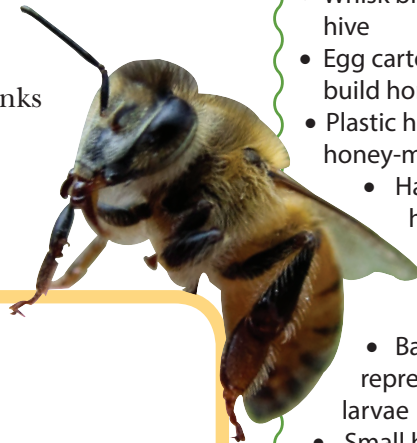
- ***Are You A Bee?*** by Judy Allen

Props for honey bees:

- **queen:** paper crown
- **drones:** several bow ties or neckties
- **larvae:** old white socks, stuffed (The larvae look like small, fat white worms.)

Assortment of the following props for all the **worker bees:**

- **nurses:** several white, paper nurse caps
- **guards:** two or three heavy cardboard cones with string to tie around the waist
- Whisk broom to clean the hive
- Egg cartons with which to build honeycombs
- Plastic honey jars for honey-making bees
  - Hand fans to cool the hive
  - Trays for the bees who wait on the queen
  - Baby bottles to represent feeding the larvae
- Small baskets for the worker bees who leave the hive in search of pollen and nectar





## Bee Song!

Sung to the tune of  
"Do Your Ears Hang Low?"

I'm a honey bee,  
Pollen baskets on my knees  
And a stinger on my tail  
So you're afraid of me.  
But I'd rather gather nectar,  
I'm an excellent collector,  
I'm a honey bee.

### Extensions

- ***Busy, Buzzy Bee*** by Karen Wallace
- ***The Beeman*** by Laurie Krebs
- If possible, get materials to build bee hives from beekeepers or beekeeping supply stores, such as: <http://beekeeping.glorybee.com>. Allow children to put on beekeeper equipment and put together supers and frames.
- Invite a beekeeper to your classroom to explain her job.
- Have bee costumes for children to wear during dramatic play:
  - **wings:** cardboard or cloth
  - **compound eyes:** sunglasses
  - **thorax:** cardboard with string to loop over head with six legs attached with velcro,
  - **stinger:** a cardboard cone tied around the waist sticking out over child's buttocks.

3. Discuss the various roles a bee plays in its short lifetime. Show the children the props and ask if anyone would like to play bees and beekeeper.
4. Distribute props. Step back and let the beehive get humming! Encourage "bees" to switch roles as bees don't stay in the same job for long. There can only be one queen and that can "bee" tricky to navigate. Have your students determine a way to share the responsibilities in the hive.
5. Process and reflect on the experience with the children by engaging in a conversation guided by the discussion questions.

### Discussion Questions

- What was one of your jobs as a bee that you enjoyed?
- How are bees like humans?
- How are bees a community?

