



Preschoolers’
special
interests
add
SPARKLE
to
early literacy!

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When young children’s interests are engaged, learning comes naturally. Researchers who study early learning have found that an asset-based, interest-based approach is a highly beneficial way to provide literacy-rich learning opportunities for preschoolers.

F*arms* is one of a series of literacy-focused **LEARNING PROJECTS** developed by preschool teachers, just like you, who participated in **Project Sparkle**. The teachers learned to identify special interests of the children in their classes. Then they devised wonderful ways to transform their classrooms and school days with exciting resources and activities to help preschoolers freely explore the topic that had captured their imaginations. The teachers were challenged to make the most of creative and fun ways to build important language, pre-reading, and pre-writing skill development into each learning project resource and activity.

You’re invited to use this idea-packed guide as a starting point for discovering and planning your own ways to let young children’s fascination with farms and farm tools become the context for a delightful world of literacy-learning experiences. The convenient workbook format is your tool for organizing every aspect of the learning project—from interest identification through active investigation and learning, then on to project completion and evaluation. You’ll create opportunities for your young students to build competence and confidence in **SIX EARLY LITERACY SKILL AREAS:**

- **Written Language**—Ability to represent ideas or words in a printed or written format. Examples: Field sketches, drawing, writing, drawing familiar print and logos.
- **Text Comprehension**—Ability to understand and process the meaning of ideas represented in text. Examples: Students are asked questions about stories read and asked to draw or state the answer.
- **Phonological Awareness**—Ability to hear and discriminate the sounds of language. Refers to activities that require sensitivity to, manipulation of, and use of sounds in words. Examples: Rhyming games and songs.
- **Print Awareness**—Ability to recognize and “read” words and text accurately and quickly. Examples: Label and read tools, recipes, menus.
- **Oral Language**—Ability to use words to communicate ideas and thoughts and to use language as a tool for deeper understanding. Examples: Telling and retelling stories, dictating to adults questions and answers, and making webs and lists.
- **Alphabetic Awareness**—Ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet in the context of word recognition and word use. Example: Learn important letters related to project, identify key words.

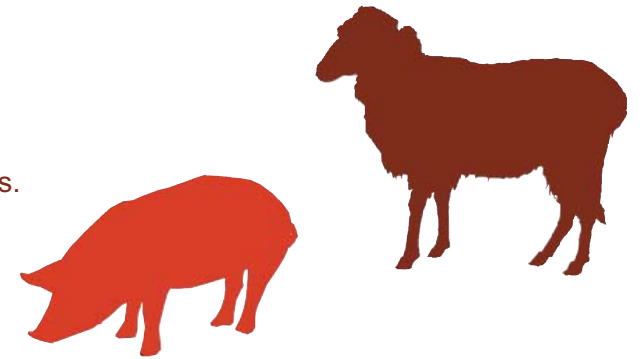
Before we begin: Is a “Farm Learning Project” right for this class?

How have the children expressed this interest?

- Conversations Drawings Observations Parent report Asset-Based Assessments Other _____

How practical would this project be for young children?

- The interest is more concrete than abstract.
- The project lends itself to an abundance of first-hand, direct experiences and real objects that young investigators can manipulate.
- The topic can be related easily to the children’s prior experiences.
- Plenty of interest-related sites and resources for field trips and guests are close by.
- Young children can explore/research the interest with minimal adult assistance.
- Children can represent what they know and learn by using age-appropriate skills and techniques.
- The interest topic is culturally relevant to the children and their families.



What are the children’s questions about farms?

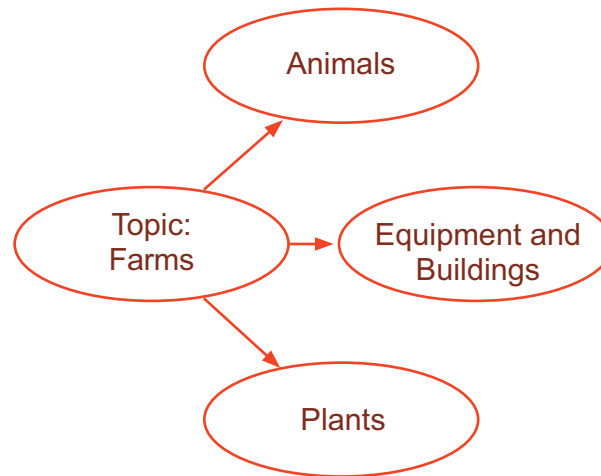
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. How do cows give milk? | 6. What is in a barn? |
| 2. What do pigs eat? | 7. _____ |
| 3. What do farmers do? | 8. _____ |
| 4. What grows on a farm? | 9. _____ |
| 5. How do you plant a field? | 10. _____ |



Our Project-Planning Web

Topic: Farms

The learning project planning web might start in the way shown below. What other ideas do you have to help the project grow?



Bright Ideas for “Farms” Learning Project Activities

Children’s questions:

1. How do cows give milk?
2. What do pigs eat?
3. What do farmers do?
4. What grows on a farm?
5. How do you plant a field?

6. What is in a barn?

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Activity	Materials*	Children’s Questions	Early Literacy Areas	Curricular Areas
<p>Brainstorming—Read <i>Farming</i> by Gail Gibbons. Ask children to retell the story. Let children act out their favorite parts of story. Ask children what they know about farms and what they would like to learn about farms. List responses on large paper and post in room for future reference.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Farming</i> by Gail Gibbons • Large paper or board • Marker 		Text comprehension Print awareness Oral language Alphabetic awareness	Literacy Motor
<p>Barn Raising—Read <i>Wake Up, Big Barn</i> by Suzanne Chitwood. Have children repeat the barn sounds aloud, pointing out beginning letter/sound of the silly words. Provide materials for barn raising. Use a cardboard box for barn and large plastic beverage container for silo. An adult should cut windows, double door, and a rounded opening for the silo. Cut off one of the box-top flaps, leaving three. Tape cut flap to opposite facing flaps to form barn roof. Stabilize remaining flap with tape to create a hay loft. Children can paint barn red and glue red construction paper to silo. Ask children to draw small farm animals on paper, cut them out, and paste them on barn sides. Children can glue hay in loft and on barn floor. Provide barn images and books for reference. Children can use barn when playing with animal figurines. (Cut an opening in one side, doll-house-style, for easy access.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wake Up, Big Barn by Suzanne Chitwood • Paints and brushes • Cardboard box • Large plastic beverage container • Paper • Crayons • Construction paper • Glue • Hay 	6	Written language Text comprehension Phonological awareness Print awareness Oral language Alphabetic awareness	Literacy Art Social studies Motor
<p>Milk Makers—Where does milk come from? Record children’s answers. Remind children that animals like sheep and goats produce milk. We can eat cheese from their milk. Title list <i>Milk Makers</i>. Discuss beginning sound/letter of title. Read <i>The Milk Makers</i> by Gail Gibbons. Ask children to tell what they learned from the story. Point out that some cows are dairy cows and others are beef cows. What foods are made with milk? List children’s answers and add other dairy foods (butter, ice cream, yogurt, pudding). Ask children to identify the beginning letter/sounds of each of these words. Give children a cow coloring sheet as well as magazine images and coupons of milk products for children to cut out and paste to make a collage. Ask children to dictate why dairy cows are important farm animals. Write their thoughts on separate papers to post with each collage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Milk Makers</i> by Gail Gibbons • Large paper or board, marker • Cow coloring sheet • Scissors • Crayons • Glue • Magazine images and coupons of milk products and items made with milk • Paper 	1, 2, 4, 6	Text comprehension Oral language Written language Alphabetic awareness	Literacy Science Social studies Art



Bright Ideas for “Farms”

Learning Project Activities, continued

Children’s questions:

1. How do cows give milk?
2. What do pigs eat?
3. What do farmers do?
4. What grows on a farm?
5. How do you plant a field?

6. What is in a barn?
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8. _____
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10. _____

Activity	Materials*	Children’s Questions	Early Literacy Areas	Curricular Areas
<p>Haystack Shapes—What is a haystack? Read <i>Haystack</i> by Arthur Geisert. Ask question again. List children’s answers on large paper. Hay can be stored in stacks or bales. Stacks are piles of hay; bales are rolled up and bound together with string. Show images of each. Provide shredded yellow construction paper (or hay), glue, and construction paper. Demonstrate how to make haystack and bale shapes; stacks are rounded mounds; bales are either cylinders or rectangles. Provide stencils of shapes for children who are not comfortable drawing their own. Children can make these shapes on paper and glue hay to shape to create stacks and bales. Help label stacks or bales. Display pictures by children’s answers to, “What is a haystack?” Children can count how many stacks and bales they made in all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Haystack</i> by Arthur Geisert • Shredded yellow construction paper or real hay • Glue • Construction paper • Stencils of triangle, rectangle, and circle • Pencils • Large paper and marker 	4, 5, 6	Written language Text comprehension Print awareness Oral language Alphabetic awareness	Literacy Math Motor Science
<p>Pig Out!—What do pigs eat? Make list of answers on large paper. Explain that pigs will eat almost anything! However, this is not very healthy (for pigs or people). To be healthy, pigs need high-energy food like grains (corn, barley, oats and wheat) and lots of water. For a pig, water is more important than food! Write grain names on paper. Show children examples of each. Children can glue examples of each grain next to its name on the list. Give children worksheets with each grain name printed in large letters. Ask children to glue pieces of the corresponding grain on each letter of its name. Children can print the title Great Grains at the top of their paper.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large paper or board • Marker • Pre-printed worksheet • Grains: corn, wheat, oats, barley • Glass of water • Pencils 	2	Written language Print awareness Oral language Alphabetic awareness Phonological awareness	Literacy Motor Social studies Science
<p>Field Planting—Read <i>The Rusty, Trusty Tractor</i> by Joy Cowley and Olivier Dunrea. Ask children to list the steps in planting a field. Record responses on large paper. Why did the grandfather want to keep his old tractor? Was this a good decision? Invite a farmer to bring his/her tractor to school for children to view (or plan visit to local farm to see farm equipment at work). Farmer can demonstrate equipment and talk about his/her crops and animals. Allow time for children to ask questions. Ask the farmer to name some of the jobs he/she does on the farm. After the visit, ask children to list the jobs of a farmer. Record answers on large paper. Using farming or bluegrass music, let children create actions to match each job. Act out the jobs with children. Call out to each child and ask, “What job does <i>Farmer (child’s name)</i> like doing best?” When they act out the job, everyone else joins in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Rusty, Trusty Tractor</i> by Joy Cowley and Olivier Dunrea • Large paper or board, marker • Farming or country/bluegrass music • Music player 	3, 4, 5	Text comprehension Print awareness Oral language Written language	Literacy Social studies Motor



Bright Ideas for “Farms”

Learning Project Activities, continued

Children’s questions:

1. How do cows give milk?
2. What do pigs eat?
3. What do farmers do?
4. What grows on a farm?
5. How do you plant a field?

6. What is in a barn?
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Activity	Materials*	Children’s Questions	Early Literacy Areas	Curricular Areas
<p>Shearing Sheep—Read <i>Farmer Brown Shears His Sheep: A Yarn About Wool</i> by Teri Sloat. Point out the Sh sound in <i>shears</i> and <i>sheep</i>. Ask children what Farmer Brown did with the wool? Show children real examples of wool products: sheepskins, pulled wool, wool yarn, and wool socks/sweaters/hats. Children can make sheep by tracing their hands on construction paper. Turn hands with fingers pointing down. Children can glue cotton balls on sheep and color face (thumb) and legs (4 fingers) black. Ask children to print <i>sheep</i> on paper. Children can dictate how wool is turned into a sweater. Write story on separate paper and display with sheep.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Farmer Brown Shears His Sheep: A Yarn About Wool</i> by Teri Sloat • Construction paper • Paper, marker • Cotton balls • Glue • Crayons, pencils • Sheepskin, pulled wool, wool yarn, wool clothing 		<p>Text comprehension Oral language Alphabetic awareness Phonological awareness Print awareness Written language</p>	<p>Literacy</p>
<p>Farm Favorite—Read <i>Barnyard Banter</i> by Denise Fleming. Stop at each animal to let children make that animal’s sound and movements. After reading, call out an animal name and have children perform the movements and sounds. Let children take turns as leader. Poll to see which is the class’s favorite farm animal. List each suggestion under the title <i>Favorite Farm Animal</i>, note the Ff sounds. Children can help count the tally marks. Graph results on large paper labeling each animal with an Ff adjective (ex: <i>Famous Pig, Fabulous Cow, Fearless Goose, Fantastic...etc.</i>). Label the animal with the most tallies as <i>Favorite _____</i>. Let children help pick out Ff titles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Barnyard Banter</i> by Denise Fleming • Large paper or board • Marker 		<p>Alphabetic awareness Phonological awareness Oral language Written language Print awareness Text comprehension</p>	<p>Literacy Motor Science</p>

Add your own ideas for learning project activities in the spaces below!

* When selecting materials for activities, please check first for allergies.

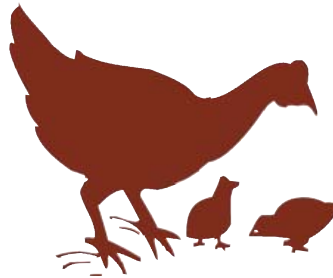
Materials and Resources

Books:

All the Places to Love by Patricia MacLachlan
Barnyard Banter by Denise Fleming
Barnyard Dance! by Sandra Boynton
Big Red Barn Board Book by Margaret Wise Brown
Blue Skidoos To The Farm by Angela C. Santomero and Tammie Speer-Lyon
Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type by Doreen Cronin
Duck for President by Coreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin
Duck On A Bike by David Shannon
Farm Machines by Jon Richards
Farmer Brown Shears His Sheep: A Yarn About Wool by Teri Sloat
Farming by Gail Gibbons
Giggle, Giggle, Quack by Doreen Cronin
Hooray for Dairy Farming! by Bobbie Kalman
Mickey's Day on the Farm by Vincent Jeffers
Moo Baa La La La by Sandra Boynton
My Dad Works on a Farm by Sarah Hughes
Old Macdonald Had a Farm by Frances Conroy
Our Animal Friends At Maple Hill Farm by Alice Provensen and Martin Provensen
Russell the Sheep by Rob Scotton
The Rusty, Trusty Tractor by Joy Cowley
Sally Goes to the Farm by Stephen Huneck
Sheep Don't Count Sheep by Margaret K. McElderry
Small Pig by Arnold Lobel
The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash by Trinka Hakes Noble
The Little Red Hen by Paul Galdone
The Milk Makers by Gail Gibbons
Wake Up, Big Barn by Suzanne Chitwood
Wolf by Becky Bloom and Pascal Biet

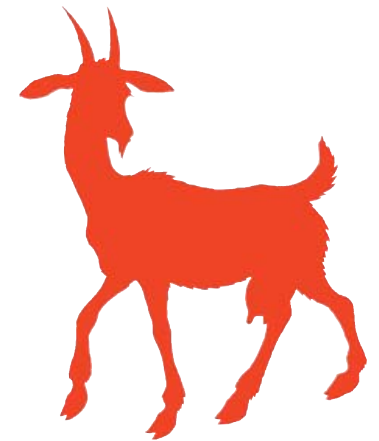
Artifacts:

Images of farm life
Farm animal figurines
Toy tractors
Hay bale
Toy hoes, rakes, wheel barrows, and wagons
Sheepskin
Wool yarn
Wool clothing
Toy foods from farm animals
Baskets for harvesting food
Grains



Construction and Art Materials:

Cardboard box
Construction paper
Cotton balls
Glue
Grains
Large paper or board
Magazines
Paints and brushes
Paper
Paper plates
Plastic beverage container
Scissors
Construction paper
Shape stencils
Tape



On the Web:

<http://www.pre-kpages.com/farm.html>
<http://www.kidsfarm.com/>
<http://www.cyberspaceag.com/>
<http://www.usda.gov/news/usakids/>
<http://www.mda.state.mi.us/kids/>

Music, Songs, and Finger Plays:

http://www.anglefire.com/dc/childsplay/Down_on_the_Farm_Theme.htm
<http://www.preschooleducation.com/sfarm.shtml>
<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com/farm.html>
<http://www.alphabet-soup.net/farm/farmpoem.html>

Enhancing Classroom Centers During the Learning Project

Blocks/Construction:

Place the barn and silo children made in the center, along with farm animal figurines, toy tractors, toy trucks, and a doll house family. Children can use blocks to build corrals and fences for animals and sheds for farming equipment.

Science:

Place a dried corn kernel in a plastic zip-close bag (open) with a moist paper towel. Children can observe the progress as it sprouts. Also place green onions in a clear glass with water so children can see the roots grow.

Math/Manipulatives:

Put corn and other grains in different-sized containers for children to count to see which container holds the most and which holds the least.

Sand/Water:

Replace sand with grains from “Pig Out” activity (Page 5). Provide cups, funnels, and feed scoops to use. Place several rubber dish washing gloves at the water center. Poke holes in the fingers and let children fill them with water, pretend they are udders, and practice “milking.”

Housekeeping/Dramatic Play:

Add straw hats, bandanas, work boots, bib overalls, toy hoes, wheel barrow, wagon, rake, and a harvest basket with plants and animal products found on a farm.

Book Center:

Turn center into a hay loft with hay (or yellow shredded paper) and a blanket to sit on. Add selected books listed on Page 7 for children to enjoy.

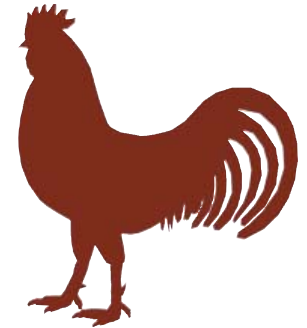
Art Center:

Provide animal and farm equipment stencils for children to trace. Add cotton balls, yarn, feathers, paper scraps, and glue to embellish outline drawings of farm animals.

Planning for Special Guests and Field Trips

How Do You Do? (Meet & Learn with Guest Experts)

- Farmer
- Gardener
- Department of Agriculture Representative
- 4-H member
- Child who raises and shows farm animals
- Agricultural extension agent



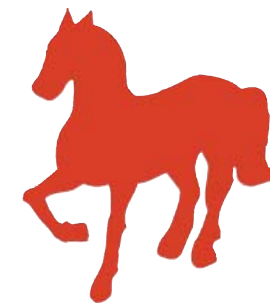
Guests (dates, times, notes):

Let's Go! (Field Trips)

- County fair
- Farm
- Tractor pull
- Demonstration farm or agricultural museum

Field Trips (dates, times, notes):

The “Big Event” ... coming together and sharing what we’ve learned

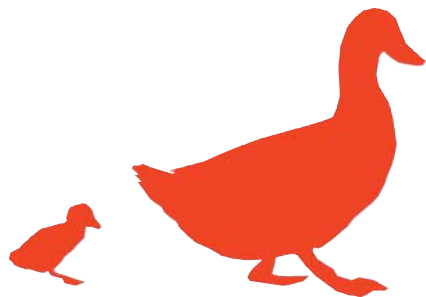


Farmyard Talent Show

Invite friends, family, and neighboring classes to a farmyard talent show. Help children dress up as their favorite farm animal or farmer. Each animal/farmer or animal group can say a few words about their role on the farm. Children can sing farm-themed songs and encourage the audience to act them out or sing along. Allow time for children to guide guests around the room and describe the various farm activities that have taken place and what they have learned about farming.

Are we there yet?

- The children are satisfied with their new knowledge.
- Further investigation would require skills the children do not have (such as advanced reading and writing).
- The children are losing interest in the topic.



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Looking Back ... evaluating our learning project

Take a look back at the children’s questions list and project web to answer the following questions:

1. What have the children learned? Did they find the answers to their questions?

2. Are there new questions for investigation? How might they be answered?

Project Sparkle is an applied research project of the Center for Innovative and Promising Practices at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. Funding was provided by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Administration of Children, Youth and Families (90LO0091), The Puckett Institute is a not-for-profit organization engaged in research-to-practice activities that promote the healthy functioning of children and families. Please visit us on the Internet at www.puckett.org to learn more about all of our projects and to access important information about asset-based, interest-based children’s learning opportunities and everyday learning activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.