

Going Green

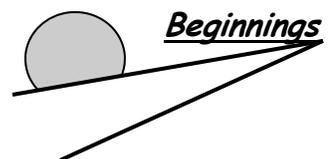
Creating an Earth-friendly Classroom

Beginnings 2008-2009 (1)

Arkansas Department of Human Services

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Little Rock, AR

School of Human Environmental Sciences, 1 U of A, Fayetteville, AR



Going Green

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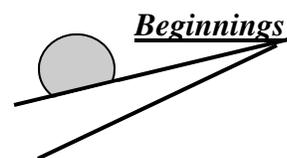
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About the Benchmarks

Many of the activities in *Beginnings* address multiple benchmarks, which are not necessarily referenced. Check the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework Handbook for Three & Four Year Old Children (2004)*.



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Making a Connection

Going green, conserving, recycling, reducing, reusing, nature, ecology, environmentalism, energy-saving, earth-friendly, fresh, local, these are all words our society is using right now concerning being more conscious about the environment.

How can early childhood teachers make an earth-friendly difference in their classroom? The following issue of *Beginnings* is a connection between the environment and early childhood. Simple activities, motivations, and inspirations are throughout this issue for creating a "**green**" classroom.

Baby Steps to *Going Green in the Classroom*

Here are some "green" options for the early childhood classroom. These ideas will create less waste, help the environment, and conserve energy.

- During meals use cloth napkins, and reusable silverware, cups and plates, instead of disposable. It will eliminate waste in our landfills.
- Order recycled paper products. Most major office supply companies offer a recycled paper product.
- Spearhead a recycle project for your classroom waste. Begin with choosing to recycle the paper waste. Later add plastic, glass, and metal. Try to get other classrooms to join in the fun!
- Choose food that is produced locally. Arkansans are fortunate in that many foods are available locally or can even be grown in your own backyard. Energy is saved when food does not have to be shipped long distances.
- Buy second hand. Thrift Stores are perfect places for teachers to shop. See page 32 to read about one teacher's experience shopping for her classroom.

The Green Hour

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, suggests a "green hour" for families (we would suggest it for classrooms). A green hour is an allotted time for play and interaction with nature. The amount of time doesn't have to be an hour, just begin with 15 minutes and gradually increase the time.

Of course, children in child care should be outside a substantial portion of the day, but are they really connecting with nature during that time?

Green Hour suggestions:

- Class picnic in the grass.
- Nature walk- this can also be done in urban areas
- Dirt play- digging and discovering
- Planting plants- there are plants that can be planted for every season
- Tree climbing- (tree climbing should be done with parents, not at school)
- Cloud observing
- Leaf pile jumping

Check out the following website for ideas on how to make time spent outside meaningful:

www.greenhour.org

If you need help locating a green space near you, access the following website and simply type in your zip code.

<http://www.greenhour.org/section/about/naturefind>

Switching to Cloth Napkins

Think about how much paper is used during meal time in child care centers. If each classroom has 20 children, and there are 3 meals a day, that is 60 napkins per classroom per day. Most child care centers have more than one classroom, and that is a lot of paper.

Here is the eco-friendly solution- CLOTH NAPKINS!

Cloth napkins are so easy to make

You will need:

Scissors (fabric scissors will make this easier)

Sewing machine

Thread

Fabric pins

Measuring tape

Choose the size of napkins you intend to make. For children, an appropriate napkin size is 8"x8." When choosing a fabric, make sure that it will be soft and absorbent (a simple cotton should work). Measure and cut 8"x8" squares of fabric. For each square, fold the edges in about 1/8". Use fabric pins or iron the edges. Sew the edges of the fabric to form a hem. Too simple!

Another option:

Buy cloth napkins at yard sales or thrift stores. Typically, they are very reasonably priced.

Use Your *Green Words*

Early childhood is a perfect time to introduce new words into children's vocabulary. Use the following terms during the day. The children will quickly pick up the new vocabulary and use it, too.

Reuse- "Don't throw away the paper towel roll; we'll reuse it for an art project."

Recycle- "Here is a piece of recycled paper."

Reduce- "Only use one paper towel after washing your hands. It will reduce the trash."

Ecology- "Let's try to find what kind of insects live in our playground. We will be studying ecology."

Environment- "The environment is our surroundings, everything around us. What kinds of things are in our environment?"

Energy- "When the lights are on we are using electric energy. Let's turn a few lights off to save energy."

Conserve- "Do you think you could use less glue for this art project? We should try to conserve/ use less glue, so there will be enough for other children and more art activities."

Benchmark 5.3: Expands vocabulary

One Person's Trash...

During a class meeting or small group, show the children objects that are typically trash items (paper towel roll, used tissue paper, broken jewelry, unused keys, etc.).

Have the children suggest what could be done with this trash (other than throw it away). Children are so creative! Their ideas will blow your socks off.

Benchmark 3.24: Finds more than one solution to a problem

Joseph Had a Little Overcoat

By Simms Taback

Joseph begins the story with a nice long overcoat, but then the overcoat gets worn. Instead of throwing the overcoat away, Joseph decides to turn it into a jacket. When the jacket gets worn, he turns it into a vest. The story continues with Joseph recreating his overcoat all the way to a button. What a great example of conserving, and reusing! This book is a Caldecott Medal winner. The illustrations have been created using watercolor, pencil, Gouache, ink, and collage.

Benchmark 3.1: Shows enjoyment of books and stories and discussion of them

Sewing Art

What you will need:

Sewing material- thread, yarn, buttons, beads, zippers, fabric

Glue

Paper- use recycled!

Some children may be motivated by the illustrations of this book to create their own collage art. With supervision children may want to even try to sew themselves. Provide bodkins and large weave fabric for the inspired. Bodkin needles do not have sharp points, so they are perfect for young children. Remember: supervision, and assistance may be needed!

Benchmark 2.12: Preplans art project and then works with care

Grandma Lena's Big Ol' Turnip

By Denia Lewis Hester

Grandma is searching for the perfect turnip seeds to plant in her garden. She finally chooses the turnip called Purple Top. Grandma plants the seeds, and she finds that one turnip is mighty big. When the turnip is ready, she tries to pull it out of the ground. The turnip doesn't budge! Grandma gets the whole family to help her pull the turnip out. Grandma makes a big mess of turnip greens with corn-bread- a Southern favorite!

Benchmark 3.2: Tells a story in sequence, following the pictures in a book

Turnip Green Recipe

Turnip Greens (Save the turnips for another recipe.)

Bacon

Onion

Hot sauce

Wash the greens really well (insects and caterpillars love to hide in the folds of the greens). Cook a little bacon and onions for flavor. Once bacon is cooked add water and greens. You will need just enough water to steam the greens. Cook until the turnip greens are tender. Add salt, pepper, and hot sauce to taste (you might skip the hot sauce for children).

Benchmark 1.7: Demonstrates willingness to try new things

Seed Sorting

You will need:

A variety of seeds with packaging (larger seeds like pumpkin seeds will be easier to handle for children)

Sorting bowls

Transfer tools- fingers, tweezers, strawberry hullers

Tape one seed to each seed packaging for reference. Dump all the seed varieties in one bowl. Provide various bowls for the children to sort the seeds to match the seed packaging. Hint: buy packaging with the plant name and image on it.

Benchmark 3.10: Classifies objects by physical features such as shape or color

Yard Sale Prop Box

You will need:

Yard sale items- clothes, jewelry, household items

Money box- to provide change

Fake money

Price tags

Yard sales are great for the environment and the budget. Children will be able to buy and sell items at the yard sale. Try to use *green* vocabulary when playing with the children, like *reusing material*.

Benchmark 2.1: Shows creativity and imagination in play with materials and props

D r a m a t i c P l a y

Wash Day

You will need:

Clothes pins

Clothes line- this can be created with sturdy string or twine

Laundry basket

Clothes (Consider baby clothes, they will be lighter for the clothes line.)

When we hang clothes on the clothes line, we are conversing energy. Conversing energy helps the earth. This is a great dramatic play activity but could be done for the classroom laundry. Wash your dishcloths, cloth napkins, and aprons, then hang them outside to dry on the playground.

Benchmark 2.3: Assumes various roles in dramatic play situations

Don't forget to read:

Mrs. McNosh Hangs Up Her Wash

By: Sarah Weeks

Illustrated by: Nadine Bernard Westcott

Mrs. McNosh hangs up her wash, her dog, herself in a lawn chair, and nearly everything else in the yard. This is a silly book with a catchy rhyme.

Benchmark 5.1: Demonstrates phonological awareness (hearing and recognizing the sounds of language)

D r a m a t i c P l a y

Farmer and His Seeds
(The tune is to: *Farmer in the Dell*)

The farmer plants the seeds,
The farmer plants the seeds,
(Pretend to plant seeds)

Hi, Ho, the dairy-o,
The farmer plants the seeds.

The sun comes out to shine,
(Make large circle with both arms)



The rain begins to fall,
(Wiggle fingers, while moving hands down)

The seeds begin to grow,
(Pretend to grow with whole body)

The farmer cuts them down,
(Move arms like using a sickle)

He binds them into sheaves,
(All the children group together)

And now we'll have some bread.
(Pretend to eat bread- Yummy!)
Adapted from *Ring A Ring O' Roses* book

Benchmark 5.5: Participates in songs, finger plays, rhyming activities, and games

Grinding Wheat Kernels

You will need:

Wheat stalks

Mortar and pestle or smooth rocks

Sifter

Separate the wheat kernels from the stalks. Place the kernels in the Mortar or in a bowl. Grind the kernels. Sift out the kernels as it gets mixed in with the flour. Some children will really enjoy this activity and work on it for long time. Helpful hint: Use a magnifying glass to help separate the wheat kernel from the stalk.

Benchmark 1.9: Shows persistence in approaching tasks

This Land is Your Land

Words and Music by Woody Guthrie

Beautiful illustrations by Kathy Jakobsen

This book gives you warm feelings. It has beautiful words and illustrations.

Chorus:

This land is your land, this land is my land,

From California to the New York island;

From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream water,

This land was made for you and me.

While the teacher is reading the book, have the children hold hands. Afterwards, a discussion about words might be helpful.

Benchmark 3.30: Functions as a member of the classroom community

Move to Nature

Put on some soft music- nature sounds would be nice if you have a nature CD.

Suggest different movements for the children:

Float like a leaf falling from a tree.

Be as still as a tree trunk.

Move like a windy day.

Wave like a dandelion just blown.

Benchmark 2.6: Expresses through movement what is felt and heard in various musical tempos and styles

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream,
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream.

Activity Idea:

With a group of children, sit together on the ground. Line up on the ground where one child is in front, the following child is facing the same direction, directly behind the first child, and so on. Sing the song and pretend to row your boat. This is not only great exercise for children (and adults), but you can also discuss different kinds of transportation that does not use gasoline (biking, walking, rowing a boat, or even floating in a boat.)

*Remember your lifejackets! Provide real lifejackets, or just pretend.

Benchmark 2.4: Participates freely in music activities



3-D Nature Match

You will need:

Muffin pan (12 wells)

Nature items- 2 each (small pine cones, rocks, shells, flowers, acorns, etc.)

12 very small paper drink cups (they will just fit into the openings)

Randomly place one nature item in each of the wells. Place a cup over the nature item. The children can lift two cups at one time to see if the nature items match. If they do not match put the cups down, and try again!

Benchmark 3.11: Classifies objects conceptually (things that go together)

Recycle Number Sorting

You will need:

Three buckets

Various clean, plastic recyclables (with recycle number 1, 2, 3 on bottom)

On each bucket write 1, 2, or 3. The small buckets are for children to sort the recyclables. Plastic containers typically have a recycle number on the bottom. The children will be able to match the recycle number with the corresponding bucket. Some younger children will need assistance with this activity. The children may come up with other ways to sort the plastics- by shape, by color, by product.

Benchmark 3.15: Demonstrates an understanding of number (how many) and numeral (3 is a numeral) relationship (numeration)

Homemade Air Freshener

You will need:

Mortar and pestle or medium bowls with wood spoon

Water

Small containers for air freshener

Go on a nature hunt with the children to find strong-smelling nature items (flowers, mint, basil, honeysuckle, garlic, etc.).

Upon your return, put water in the bottom of each bowl.

Have children choose what items they would like to put in their perfume. Stir or grind the nature items and water together to create the air freshener. Put the scents in small containers to send home. Reminder: Children should not drink the liquid.

*Be aware of allergies of children.

Benchmark 3.23: Shows awareness of cause-effect relationships

Creepy Crawls

This activity will have to be done outside.

- Put down a piece of plywood in an area on the playground where there is grass,
- The plywood should be at least 2 feet by 2 feet.
- Leave the plywood on the ground for a few days- maybe even a week.
- Peak under once a day to see the progress.
- On the day of discovery, make sure to have lots of magnifying glasses*. Remove the plywood, what do you see?

Benchmark 3.20: Uses senses to learn about the characteristics of the environment and to collect data (scientific process: observing)

Thought Evoking Questions:

What do you think happened to the grass?

What kind of insects are under the plywood?

Does the dirt look different than the rest of dirt on the playground?

Why do you think the grass turned yellow (or died)?

Do you think that the insects like it under the plywood?
Why? Why not?

What would happen if we left the wood down a few more days?

*When using magnifying glasses, be extra careful if they are made of breakable glass. Also, if magnifying glasses are left in direct sun, they can cause a fire. Be careful and have fun!

Green Fruit Salad

You will need:

Honeydew melon

Kiwi fruit

Green grapes

Green apples

Cut the fruit into appropriate bite-size pieces, making sure each grape is cut in quarters to minimize choking hazard. Mix it all together for a beautiful fruit salad. Serve with vanilla yogurt for an addition to the snack.

Benchmark 4.5: Shows awareness that some foods are better for your body than others

Hummus

You will need:

1 can (15oz.) garbanzo beans

2 or more garlic cloves

1 tsp. ground cumin

1/2 tsp. black pepper

Salt

1 tbsp. of lemon juice

1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

Combine in a food processor. Process until well blended.

Yummy! Yummy!

Benchmark 4.3: Tries new food before deciding whether he/she likes them

Salad, Why Not?

For some reason, child care centers rarely serve green salads for snack or lunch. If you decide to "think green," why not try a green salad? Let the children help design it.

Let's start with the basics for a salad:

Lettuce

Tomatoes

Cucumbers

The sky is the limit on the variety of vegetable to add to a salad:

Red beans

Shredded cheese

Zucchini

Blueberries

Strawberries

Sunflowers seeds

Dried fruit- raisins, craisins (dried cranberries)

Shredded carrots

Chopped sweet potatoes

Chopped boiled egg

Spinach

And much more

Talk to the children about what they would like in a salad. Try it! Experiment with all kinds of vegetable and fruit combinations.

Eating fresh vegetables and fruits is not only good nutrition. It is also great for the environment!

Benchmark 4.4:Recognizes different types of food

Paint with Flowers

You will need:

Flowers- roses, sunflowers, peonies

(Fresh flowers would be great, but synthetic flowers are fine.)

Paper

Tempera paint

Shallow container for paint

Put a small amount of paint in the bottom of the container.

Provide lots of paper and a variety of flowers for the children to use as paint brushes. They may even create some beautiful bouquets.

Benchmark 2.11: Creates drawings and paintings that gradually become more detailed and realistic

Nature Headbands

You will need:

Brown mailing paper

Leaves- big and small

Nature items (small items that can be easily glued)

Glue

Tape

Cut the brown paper into strips (estimate length). Encourage the children to glue the leaves and nature items on the Kraft paper headband. Once the child has completed his or her headband, tape the paper into a ring, so it will fit his or her head.

Benchmark 4.6: Coordinates eye and hand movements to complete tasks

Natural Paint Dyes

Did you know that artist could create paint with nature items?

The cave paintings were often made of ground colorful rocks. The cavemen (and women) found rocks of various colors and ground them into a fine powder to create paint.

Here are some ideas to make your own natural paint:

- Red- water and raspberries
- Yellow- the liquid from boiling yellow onion skins
- Blue- water and blueberries

Experiment with different items in nature. Berries will make a deep paint color, but try other things, too.

Note: Make sure to wear old clothes. The natural paint will stain.

Benchmark 2.13: Recognizes and responds to beauty in the environment

Recycled Crayons

A teacher's activity

Coloring with crayons is such a typical activity in early childhood classroom. Sometimes children use crayons so much you end up with just a nub of crayon left. That nub is too hard for young children to color with, so you throw it away...but wait! Recycle it!

According to the website thecrayonbin.com, crayons take a long time to break down in our landfills. Let's help out the earth by recycling them.

You will need:

Muffin tins

Crayon nubs (bits and pieces of crayons)

Oven (This part is for the adults)

In the art area of the classroom place a muffin tin. As children wear down a crayon, add it to one of the muffin tin wells (remove the paper). Once each well is about half full, take the crayons to the kitchen area to be melted. Preheat your oven to 200 degrees or less. Insert the muffin tin. Watch the crayons closely. When the crayons look melted, take them out of the oven. Put them in the freezer to cool or on the countertop. Pop the crayon disks out of the muffin tins when cooled.

The crayon disk will be good for children with less defined fine motor skills. They are larger, which makes them easier to grasp. The shape of the disk are perfect for crayon rubbings, too.

Mud Sculptures, Mud Creatures, Mud Pies

Wait..don't turn the page. Mud pies, sculptures, and play may sound like no fun to you, but your children will love it!

You will need:

Large plastic bin

Mud or clay- this is a mixture of dirt and water

Other nature items- sticks, leaves, acorns, etc.

Spoons (to stir the mud)

Spray bottles with water (in case the mud gets dry)

Outdoor picnic table

Begin this project with a bin full of dirt. Slowly add water to make mud. The mud should not be too wet. Mud sculptures need to be created with mud that is pliable.

Encourage the children to create mud creatures by mounding mud balls on top of mud balls. They may want to add eyes (acorns), arms (sticks), or even clothes (leaves). Most children will have no problem indulging themselves in the mud and the activity, so join in.

What about clean up?

Well that's easy! Grab the water hose, and watch the dirt wash away. Another fun mud discovery!

Benchmark 3.19: Shows interest in exploring the environment

Ice Mobiles

Adapted from: *Nature's Playground*

You will need:

Nature items (small berries, leaves, small flowers)

Small bowls; canning lids; small, shallow containers

String

Water

Cold weather

Hopefully this activity can be done outside on a cold day, but it can be done in the freezer if necessary (in Arkansas a freezer may be needed). Put 3-4 containers lined up about 6 inches apart. Place one or two nature items in each small shallow container. Pour water into each of the containers. Cut a long piece of string. Place the string along the top of the containers, so the string is touching the water of each. Let the water freeze outside. Once the water has frozen, pop the ice out of the containers. Hang the mobiles outside a window.

Helpful hint: If you plan on freezing in a freezer, place the activity on a lunch serving tray. The tray will provide easy transition to the freezer.

Benchmark 3.21: Uses words to describe the characteristics of objects (scientific process: communication)

Make a Collection

When scientists study a certain leaf, flower, or rock, they make a collection of it. They may display them in shadow boxes to study.

Children, while playing, will find "special" rocks, leaves, and flowers. Encourage children to start a collection of nature items.

Provide a "safe place" for the collection.

Some "safe place" suggestions would be:

Brown paper sacks

Small boxes

Baskets

Later the children may want to display their collections! Provide glue and heavy mat board to create the display. Ask them if they would like to share with the class or hang it on the wall.

Idea: Have a scientist come share his or her collection.

Benchmark 3.22: Makes comparisons (scientific process: comparing)

Getting Little Hands Started **By Kim Kearney**

Reduce, reuse, recycle, going green, living green, environmentally friendly, energy efficient- we hear and see these catch phrases everywhere. Talking to children about the cost effectiveness of compact florescent bulbs, land fields, pollution of groundwater, and the dangers of global warming are subjects that can be scary and overwhelming to children.

Where do we begin? Start simple, and lead by example. Make caring about the environment a family tradition something the whole family takes part in.

Reduce:

- Buy in bulk. It reduces waste from packaging, and can save you money.
- Use cloth napkins and dish towels rather than paper towels.
- Plant a garden.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room, and turn off the water while brushing your teeth.

Reuse:

- Remember one person's trash is another person's treasure. Children can create a space ship, a race car, an art easel and house out of one box in one day?
- Children's art work is beautiful. With your child's permission, use leftover art work as wrapping paper for gifts. Then with just one fold, and a few kind words- instant card.
- Go to yard sales or have your own. It's time to clean out the clutter, and make little money, too.

Recycle:

- Once you know the recycling guidelines in your area, get your children involved.
- Help children recognize the different materials such as paper and plastics that can be recycled.
- Let the children label and decorate the bins with pictures of different types of recyclable items for each bin.

Going Green at the Thrift Store

By Debbie Mays

I have never really thought of myself as a " **green person.**" We do recycle. It is necessary to with all the milk cartons we go through each week. Every year I say I am going to save them, and create this huge igloo the kids can play in during winter. So far that hasn't happened.

The terms reduce, reuse and recycle are used a lot lately. **Going green is the buzzword** for trendy parenting magazines and *mommy and me* play groups. I like to think my monthly scavenger hunts are my effort to minimize waste and maximize my budget.

Something happened a few years ago, it seemed everywhere I went I saw **other peoples' "junk" as teaching aids and classroom materials.** When I look at a table brimming with old house wares, I see ways I could add variety to my teaching materials without breaking the bank. A turkey baster is great for the water table. A divided appetizer tray can give a normal sorting activity a fresh twist. I have even turned an old heart shaped table into a holder for my stick horses and housekeeping tools.

I actually think this may be an illness. I haven't had a normal shopping trip in a long time. They always turn into "how can I use this in my classroom" trips. They say the **classroom is our third teacher.** So why not add interesting things to my resource room that can be rotated frequently to spark the children's interest at a fraction of the cost they are found in education catalogs.

Some of the bargains I love to find when out "thrifting" are **muffin tins.** I use these a lot for sorting activities. You can always find **books** at great prices. I get a lot of my **multi-cultural items** at thrift stores.

Many of the indicators for quality include making our settings look more " **home like**". In thrift stores that is easy. You can find **pictures, clocks, curtains, baskets** and **shelving** for pennies on the dollar.

Another thing I pick up a lot is **old tins.** I call them my **story telling tins.** Just last week I bought a tin for twenty-five cents that had a momma bear, a daddy bear and a baby bear on it. My "Three Bears" finger puppets quickly found a home in that tin and I can't wait to pull it out to tell this story to my children.

Thrift shopping and being an avid yard sale junkie not only stocks your resource area at a fraction of the cost but it is environmentally friendly. I like to think I am doing my part to reduce, reuse and recycle on my monthly scavenger hunt for teaching aids.

My favorite book *Wonderful Rooms Where Children Can Bloom* by Aldene Fredenburg states that **children deserve beauty in their surroundings.** We can create beautiful environments for children while being *green.*

Look For New Issues of *Beginnings* on the Division of Child Care's Website!

Here is the direct link:

<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/services/printedmats/beginnings.html>

Or find it this way:

1. Begin at the Division of Child Care's Home Page:
<http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/>
2. Click on *Services* at the top of the page.
3. Then Click on *Printed Material* on the right hand side of the page.
4. On the next page choose *Beginnings!*

Some previous issues are already on this page. Soon there will be many more back issues to discover. Have fun!

References & Resources

Books

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