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Edited by Kathy Charner, Maureen Murphy, and Charlie Clark

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“What is my child doing all day long?” asks a concerned family member as she drops off her four-year-old one morning. “When I ask my child what he does each day, he says he plays. Is he playing all day long? When does he learn? What are you teaching him?”

Most teachers hear these questions often. Family members want to know what their children are learning and how it is being taught. One way to ensure you have an answer to these questions is to structure the children’s days using a well-written and understandable lesson plan. If a family member asks what her child is learning, showing her a lesson plan gives her a better sense of how you structure each day to give young children opportunities to learn.

The lesson plan, which is an outline of how you intend to cover a certain topic in the classroom, helps you concentrate on the concepts you want the children to learn. A lesson plan includes children’s books and songs or poems you will need to help the children learn, as well a description of how you will assess the children’s understanding of the material covered in the lesson plan. A well-written lesson plan will help you stay on track throughout the day and make sure the children understand the concept you are teaching them. It is also an effective tool to communicate with family members so they know what to expect from their child’s learning experiences.

It is important to have a lesson plan in a preschool classroom because preschool children are developing social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and literacy skills, all of which prepare them to be ready to learn in kindergarten. A well thought-out and effectively implemented lesson plan helps you keep the children on track toward accomplishing their educational goals.

Teaching Preschoolers
Lesson plans must be flexible so you may cater to the needs and learning styles of individual children. There is no room for rigid lesson plans and worksheets in a supportive educational environment that engages young children in problem solving and inquiry learning. Fill a preschooler’s day with opportunities for the child to engage and interact with the environment. Children should experience art, engage in construction, have opportunities to play music and to dance, experiment with science, and have the chance to participate in a myriad of other learning activities in a variety of centers. During this time, when to the untrained eye it might appear the children are “just playing,” you should travel among learning centers, offering opportunities for the children to expand on their own ideas and giving them a chance to take on new experiences.

Following the Lesson Plan
Before following a lesson plan from this book, it is important to assess the needs and abilities of the children in your care. While each idea in this book certainly provides an enjoyable and educational experience, you are the best judge of
Introduction

how well it will work for the children in your class and whether you need to adapt it for your class.

The Components of Each Lesson Plan
The lesson plans in this book are well organized and easy to follow. The learning objectives are clear and concise, and each lesson plan covers all parts of the daily curriculum, including circle and group time activities, suggested book lists, activities for a variety of learning centers, ideas for curriculum-related snacks, reviews of the information each plan presents, and ways to assess how well the children are learning the material.

Circle or Group Time
Circle or Group Time is an integral part of the early-childhood experience and each plan in this book provides a fun and developmentally appropriate circle time activity that matches the unit of study and helps to achieve the stated objectives. When planning Circle or Group Time, remember to minimize the amount of time children spend sitting and listening. Circle Time for preschoolers should be a good mix of active and passive engagement. Sing a song, do a fingerplay, or engage in a movement activity in between those parts of a Circle or Group Time activity when the children are sitting and listening. This balance helps the children to stay engaged and makes it a pleasurable experience for all.

Center Time
Center Time is usually the time during which the children are actively learning. Each plan in this book contains activities across the curriculum that are meant for use in many different learning centers. Providing interesting and developmentally appropriate activities in different learning centers gives the children more opportunities to engage in active inquiry and support their own learning. It is your responsibility during this time to monitor the children carefully, intervening as necessary and offering insight or help in finding the answers to questions. For example, suppose your unit of study that day is on the transition from preschool to kindergarten. At Circle or Group Time, you read Danny’s First Day in Kindergarten to the children and talk with the children about what they think it will be like when they go to a new and different school. At Center Time, some of the children go to the Dramatic Play Center you set up to resemble a typical kindergarten classroom by setting out a flannel board graph story, several books, some manipulatives, and a table with two chairs. You observe a little girl playing in the center as she places several dolls at the table, and begins yelling at the dolls, telling them to stop moving and be quiet. You approach and offer insight on her play.

“I can see that you are pretending to be the teacher,” you might say, “can you tell me why you sound so angry?”

“They won’t sit still. They are supposed to be learning their ABCs but they won’t sit still.”
“Do you remember the book we just read?”

“Yes, Danny’s First Day in Kindergarten.”

“In the book, Danny was afraid to go to kindergarten. Do you remember why?”

“Yes, Danny was afraid he would not be allowed to play.”

“Do you remember what the teacher did?”

“Yes, she let Danny play.”

From there you can lead the child to the conclusion that while children do have to listen to the teacher in kindergarten, they will not be expected to sit quietly all day. This is a non-threatening, positive way to help a child better understand what kindergarten will be like.

Lesson Plans
Lesson planning does not come naturally to many teachers. There is no “lesson planning” gene. However, successful teachers do possess certain intrinsic traits: they enjoy teaching and being with children. Other skills teachers acquire through training and practice. As you learn to plan, organize, and present effective activities, your ability to produce quality lesson plans will also increase. These lesson plans provide direction to your teaching and learning that happens in your classroom. Teaching and learning are complex processes that cannot be left to chance.

Organization and Use
First, think about the reason for the lesson plan. A lesson plan is not just proof that you are doing your job; it is also a great way to help organize the curriculum. Lesson plans serve as records of the activities that children engage in. Lesson plans are instrumental in tracking successful ways of presenting concepts to young children. In addition, it is crucial to have written lesson plans available in the event you need a substitute teacher.

Second, allow adequate time to develop a lesson plan. You cannot write an effective plan on the run. It takes time and thought to prepare a lesson plan of activities that actively engage children. Ideally, give yourself 48 hours to prepare an effective lesson plan.

Third, develop your plan with care. Decide what the children will learn. Look at the current concept you are teaching and determine the next logical sequence. What new skills should you expand the lesson plan to include? What new knowledge should the children gain? When thinking about these things, try to include reference notes and materials so you can have them ready if you need
them. Next, reflect on what the children already know. Is there new information they need to have before they can move on to what you want them to learn? How will today’s activities build on yesterday’s? Keep copies of any materials you may need to refer to with your lesson plan.

**Ideas for Lesson Plans**

The best source for inspiration on what to teach in the early-childhood classroom is the children. Listen to them, observe them, and talk to them, and you will quickly find out what interests them. For example, you might see a few children in the Dramatic Play area wearing hardhats and work vests. They then march across to the Block Center where they proceed to build large structures with the biggest blocks they can find. Observe this behavior and you will undoubtedly realize it is time for a unit on construction!

When planning, many teachers use the KWL chart. To do this, the teacher asks the children two questions about the unit of study: What do the children already know (K) and what do they want (W) to know. The third aspect (L) outlines what the children learned through the unit of study. To make a KWL chart, create a large three-column chart with appropriate headings that you can refer to as the unit progresses. A sample KWL chart looks like this:

### All About Dinosaurs KWL Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K—What we already know</th>
<th>W—What we want to know</th>
<th>L—What we have learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dinosaurs lived a long time ago.</td>
<td>Exactly how long ago did dinosaurs live?</td>
<td>We looked up dinosaurs on the computer and learned that they lived millions of years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are lots of different kinds of dinosaurs.</td>
<td>How many different types of dinosaurs are there and what are they?</td>
<td>We found out through research that there were more than 300 different kinds of dinosaurs. Since we could not study that many, we decided to concentrate on the tyrannosaurus rex, the pterodactyl, and the plesiosaur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some dinosaurs were mean and they ate other dinosaurs, but some were nice and only ate plants.</td>
<td>Which dinosaurs ate plants? Which dinosaurs ate other dinosaurs?</td>
<td>Currently researching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some dinosaurs lived in the United States but we do not know where the others lived.</td>
<td>Where did dinosaurs live? How do we know where they lived!</td>
<td>We read a book that told us that dinosaurs lived all over the whole world. We know this because people find dinosaur fossils all over the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When planning for young children, limit the learning objectives to three or four so you can successfully complete the unit of study and meet all of your objectives.

**Review**
As the end of the day approaches, take some time to review with the children the ideas and activities they have been working with all day. This process is as simple as gathering the children in small groups and playing a quick game to assess how well the children are learning. For example, if you were studying dinosaurs, as cited above, consider presenting two or three dinosaur models to a group of children and ask them to show you the ones that ate plants and the ones that ate meat.

**Assessment**
A lesson plan is not complete without this final step to help you determine how well the children successfully completed the learning objectives. To assess the children’s learning, present a fun and engaging activity from which you can ascertain how well the children understand the day’s concepts. This can be as simple as asking children to point out red items in the room if you were learning about the color red. Or, ask yourself a question such as, “Do the children use the word red when talking to each other?” Listen carefully to classroom conversations to find the answer. If you find that the children did not adequately achieve the learning objectives, you may need to repeat the lesson plan at another time or in another manner. How well the children gain knowledge helps you determine which lesson plans to use in the future.

* Virginia Jean Herrod, Columbia, South Carolina
All About Me

All About Us: Me and My Classmates

**Learning Objectives**

The children will:

2. Learn about each other.

**Circle or Group Time Activity**

- Sing the following song with the children.

**What Can You Do?** (author unknown)
(Tune: “Skip to My Lou”)
What can you do all by yourself?
What can you do all by yourself?
What can you do all by yourself?
How about you, ________?

- The children take turns holding a microphone or tape recorder and
  answering the question in the song. Answers might include “dress myself,”
  “put on my shoes,” “write my name,” “brush my teeth,” and so on.

**Learning Centers**

**Note:** In many of the following activities, children need to use photographs
of themselves. Have family members send in photos of their children, or take
photos of the children using a digital camera. Make copies of the photos so that
you have several of each child.

**Art**

Provide drawing paper, markers, crayons, yarn, and tissue paper. Invite the
children to look at their faces in the mirror and draw self-portraits. Make sure they
use the appropriate colors marker or crayons for eyes and yarn for hair. Ask them
to describe their hair color and eyes. Underneath each portrait, help them write
their names, ages, and hair and eye colors.

**Dramatic Play**

Encourage the children to talk about themselves to each other while playing;
they may use dolls or puppets to talk for them.

**Math**

Create a graph to determine the children’s favorite centers. Glue four photos of
different centers on the left side of the graph. Invite the children to put their
photos on the row of the graph marked for their favorite centers. When complete,
have them count the photos in each row and write the totals at the end of the
rows. Count the photos aloud with those children who need help.

**Literacy**

Use the pages from the Art Center activity to make an “All About Me” book
for each child (using a hole punch and yarn or a stapler). On another piece of
paper; the children glue photos or draw pictures of themselves as babies or toddlers. Provide glitter, glue, and other to make covers for their books.

**Writing**

Write “I Can Do It Myself” on top of a piece of chart paper. Each child places a photo of himself on a line of the chart paper and tells you what to write next to his photo. Older children can write the words themselves. Give each child a piece of paper divided into four sections (My Favorite Color, My Favorite Food, My Favorite Activity, and What I Can Do Myself). Ask the children to draw pictures in each box related to the subject. If possible, the child can also write about each category. Add this to the “All About Me” books the children make in the Art Center.

**Book Suggestions**

- All By Myself by Mercer Mayer
- I Can Do It Myself by Emily Kingsley

**Snack**

Send a note home to the children’s families, asking each family to send in their child’s favorite snack to share with the children in the class on a designated day.

**Review**

During Circle or Group Time, read the “I Can Do It Myself” chart with the children’s help and review the graph that shows the children’s favorite centers. Ask the children to count the photos for each center. Have them share their “All About Me” books with the class.

**Assessment**

Can the children say what color their hair and eyes are? Can the children describe what they can do by themselves?

**Related Song**

*I Am Special* by Deborah Hannes Litfin

(Tune: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”)

*I am special, you are too. We are friends, here at school. We play together and learn too. We are friends, here at school.*

Deborah Hannes Litfin, Forest Hills, NY
All About Me

Differences

Learning Objectives
The children will:
1. Learn about themselves.
2. Talk about the likenesses and differences of people.
3. Understand that they are special in their own ways.

Circle or Group Time Activity
- Attach an unbreakable mirror to the bottom of the inside of a box. Gather the children and show them the box with the lid on.
- Do not open the box. Instead, engage the children’s interest by telling them there is something in the box. Start by saying: “I have something very special in my box. Can you guess what it might be?” Allow time for the children to guess.
- After the children offer several suggestions, tell them there is a picture of someone very special in the box, and you are going to let them see who it is one at a time. Ask them not to say anything after they have looked in the box so all the children can be surprised.
- The first child opens the box, looks inside, and then passes it to the next child.
- When all the children have seen themselves in the mirror, ask them who they saw. Ask them if they noticed the color of their hair, skin, or eyes and talk about different physical attributes. You might even want to make a class graph of hair colors or eye colors.
- Remind them that you said the person in the box was very special. Tell them everyone is special.

Learning Centers
Art
Provide multicultural skin-toned paints, paper, playdough, crayons, markers, wiggle eyes, and yarn for the children to make self-portraits. Have them use cotton swabs to dab paint on their wrists to find the color that most closely matches their skin color. Talk about how people have a variety of skin colors, which is one thing that makes everyone unique.

Dramatic Play
Make a stage out of large hollow blocks, or mark an area on the floor. Add different costumes or stage clothing, props, and a microphone and let the children put on a show. They can dress up and sing and dance to show how special they are.

Sand and Water
Line the bottom of the water table with aluminum foil. Be sure it lies flat and smooth. Invite the children to look at their reflections in the aluminum foil and talk about their features.
All About Me

Science
Add unbreakable mirrors of different sizes and other reflective objects to the Science Center. As the children look in the mirrors, talk about their hair, eye, and skin colors.

Snack and Cooking
Use people-shaped cookie cutters to cut pieces of bread into people shapes. Provide watercolor brushes and food coloring for the children to use to paint them. If possible, use colors that represent skin colors, or let the children paint their pieces whatever color they want for a crazy, unique snack!

Book Suggestions
Here Are My Hands by Bill Martin Jr.
The Skin I'm In by Pat Thomas
We're Different, We're the Same by Bobbi Cates
Whoever You Are by Mem Fox

Snack
Provide food options that have both similarities and differences, such as bananas and oranges (both fruits but with different colors and tastes), or crackers and noodles (both starches but with different textures). Encourage the children to discuss the ways in which they differ and the ways in which they are the same.

Review
Have the children look in the mirror in the box again and name something that makes them special (their hair, eyes, something they like to do, or their clothes).

Assessment
Can the children recognize their own features, including hair, skin, and eyes when the feature is called out during class? (“If you have brown hair, stand up.”) Can they find someone who has a similar feature or a different feature? Can they name something that makes them unique?

Related Song
You Are Special by Shelley Hoster
(Tune: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”)
You are special, yes it’s true.
There is no one just like you.
You have your own beautiful smile,
And your own special style.
Come on, everybody, can’t you see,
You’re as special as can be!

Shelley Hoster, Lawrenceville, GA
Hands

Learning Objectives
The children will:
1. Discuss what fingers and hands do.
2. Practice following directions.
3. Refine small motor skills.

Circle or Group Time Activity
- Read Here Are My Hands by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault to the children, or teach them the following song:

My Hands Can Wave by Margery Kranyik Fermino

My hands can wave,
My hands can clap.
Then I lay them in my lap.
My fingers wiggle fast and slow,
Then back into my lap they go.
My thumb can circle 'round and 'round,
Pointing up and then straight down.

- Repeat the verse with the children, inviting them to mimic the motions the verse describes.
- Invite children to look at their hands. Ask them questions such as, “How many fingers and thumbs do you have?” “Can you twirl your thumbs in a circle?” Ask them to touch their fingers to their palms, wiggle their fingers fast and slow, and so on.

Learning Centers
Art
Provide magazines, construction paper, child-safe scissors, and glue. Invite the children to cut or tear out pictures of people doing things with their hands. As the children glue the pictures to construction paper, talk with them about the pictures.

Dramatic Play
Encourage the children to think about ways they communicate with others using only their hands and fingers and no words. For example, they can wave hello or goodbye, use their hands to say “come here” or “stop,” and give a thumbs up to say “good job.” If possible, teach the children some simple signs using sign language.

Math
Provide children with markers and paper or counting chips, and pictures of a triangle, circle, oval, square, and rectangle. Ask them...
to use the chips or make marks on paper to count the different ways their fingers and hands can make shapes (finger-to-thumb circles, two fingers and two thumbs for a triangle, and so on). Children can increase their possibilities with partners.

Science
The children place a fingertip on a stamp pad and then press it onto paper to make a fingerprint. Invite them to look at their fingerprints using a magnifying glass. Have them compare their fingerprints with friends.

Writing
Provide drawing paper, lined paper, and markers. Help the children trace their hands on the drawing paper. This will be the cover sheet. Have them dictate what their hands can do as you write their words on lined paper. Staple their cover sheets to their lined papers.

Book Suggestions
* Finger Rhymes* by Marc Brown  
* Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* by Zita Newcome  
* Here Are My Hands* by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

Snack
Make thumbprint cookies with the children. Use a favorite sugar-cookie recipe, or buy refrigerated sugar-cookie dough. Let children place spoonfuls of cookie dough on cookie sheets. Have them make thumbprints in the center of each cookie. Fill the center of each cookie with jam, if desired. Bake and enjoy.

Review
Review the songs and incorporate them into classroom favorites during Circle or Group Time. Discuss the different ways the children use their hands at home, at school, and at play.

Assessment
Observe children making connections between their hands and fingers and the songs and verses. Can they follow directions given in the songs and verses? Did they appear to enjoy participating? Were they able to complete the activities?

Margery Kranyik Fermino, West Roxbury, MA
Happy Birthday to Me!

**Learning Objectives**
The children will:
1. Learn the dates of their births.
2. Learn what a birth certificate is.

**Circle or Group Time Activity**
- Ahead of time, wrap a birth certificate (create a facsimile) in a box and tie it with a bow.
- Ask the children to guess what is inside. After a few guesses, open the box and show them the birth certificate.
- Explain that everyone gets one of these special papers when they are born, telling the name of the person born and the parents’ names.
- Tell the children when your birthday is, then show the children the picture for the month of your birth on a calendar.
- Show the children every month and ask them to stand when you show the months in which they were born.
- Recite the following poem with the children:

_**Poem of the Months**_ by Susan Oldham Hill

January snowflakes, July has the Fourth,
February hearts, And August has the rays!
March has shamrocks, September gets much cooler,
April’s raindrops start. And October’s leaves do fall,
May has sunshine, November is so thankful,
June has summer days, December’s last of all.

- Go back over the calendar pictures and say the poem again. See how many children have birthdays in each month. Practice saying their birthdays.
- Explain to them that even our country has a birthday. Tell them about July 4, fireworks, and show them the copy of the Declaration of Independence. Display the pictures of the nation’s birthday celebrations.

**Learning Centers**

**Art**
Make birthday books with the children. Provide 9” x 12” construction paper in light colors and markers for the children to make self-portraits. When the drawings are finished, take dictation from the children about the dates of their birth and a sentence about why they like birthdays, or a special birthday they remember. Staple the drawings together to make a classroom book. **Safety note:** Adult-only step.

**Dramatic Play**
Make a party store. Provide a cash box, play money, and party items to buy, such as hats, banners, wrapped boxes, table decorations, and favors. Have on hand shopping bags and store receipts.

**Small Motor**
Provide headbands, folded for strength, with each child’s name and birthday written across the front. Encourage the children to decorate the headbands with birthday stickers.
Math
Make a birthday bar graph. Ahead of time, prepare a large chart paper with a grid of boxes 7" x 4", marked in 12 columns and 10 rows, with the names of the months in the bottom row. Make a 6" x 3" name card for each child to fit in the grid boxes. Ask the children to tell which month they were born in, checking the list for those who are not sure. Show them how to tape or glue their name cards in the grid, starting at the bottom box nearest the name of the month. Ask the children which month has the most birthdays and which has the fewest.

Music
Provide rhythm instruments the children can use to play songs, such as “Happy Birthday” and “Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

Book Suggestions
Happy Birthday, Dear Duck by Eve Bunting
Happy Birthday, Moon by Frank Asch
Hooray for the Fourth of July by Wendy Watson
Over and Over by Charlotte Zolotow

Snack
Bake apple or carrot muffins. Serve each with a birthday candle for children to blow out after they sing “Happy Birthday” together.

Review
Recite “Poem of the Months” with the children several times. Display the birthday graph and ask the children to explain what it shows. Name each month and ask the children to stand if their birthday falls in that month. Read the birthday book and enjoy each child’s thoughts about his special day. Wear the birthday headbands and discuss birthdays coming soon.

Assessment
Ask the children to tell their birthdates. If necessary, tell them the month to help them remember.

Susan Oldham Hill, Lakeland, FL
I Am Special

Learning Objectives
The children will:
1. Feel good about themselves.
2. Learn that they are all unique and different.
3. Find their own special talents.

Circle or Group Time Activity
- Pass an unbreakable mirror around and let each child find one or more thing that they like about themselves.
- Let each of them take a turn describing to you what they like. For example, “I like my hair,” “I like my eyes,” and so on.
- Write the children’s names and their descriptions of their features that they like on paper and then hang them up in the classroom for all to see.

Learning Centers

Art
Set out wiggle eyes and collage materials beside several face shapes cut out of construction paper. Encourage the children to decorate face shapes to look like themselves.

Blocks
Tape individual photos of each child on blocks for use in the Blocks Center.

Dramatic Play
Set out a prop box containing old hairstyling materials that have their cords cut off, like curling irons, hair dryers, and so on. Add unbreakable mirrors, combs/brushes (disinfect after each use), pretend nail polish, rollers, hairnets, and salon aprons. Let children have fun creating hairstyles for each other and pretending to be salon stylists.

Literacy
Take full-body photos of each child, develop, cut out their body shapes, laminate them, and add magnets to the backs of each child shape. Write each child’s name on construction paper and laminate it, adding a small magnet to the back. Set out the photos and names so the children can match them.
**Library**
Set out paper, crayons, and markers and encourage the children to draw self-portraits. Collect the portraits and staple them into a book. Title the book “I Like Me.” Laminate the pages and set it out for the children to look through.

**Book Suggestions**
- *ABC I Like Me!* by Nancy Carlson
- *I Like Me!* by Nancy Carlson
- *I’m Gonna Like Me: Letting Off a Little Self-Esteem* by Jamie Lee Curtis

**Snack**
Have children bring in their favorite snack to share with everyone. Let them each have a day that is just for them to bring a special snack. Have a sign-up sheet for families to choose a date for that month.

**Review**
Play games that have to do with acting, using a favorite talent like clapping, jumping, balancing on one foot, and so on.

**Assessment**
Ask the children to describe their favorite things about themselves.

*Sue Myhre, Bremerton, WA*