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## Integrated Unit of Study: Our Earth

Our kindergartners will inherit a complex world where scientific, environmental, social, and moral issues intertwine. To meet the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, children need an equally complex set of skills and abilities. During this final unit of study children will explore the natural world by investigating and researching Earth's properties, focusing on its surface and plant life. Sustainability and individual and collective stewardship of the environment are explored in Read Alouds, Centers, and a Capstone Project.

These are big concepts for kindergartners. To support children's engagement with them, the unit intentionally unfolds in three, interconnected phases, drawing on developing skills and learning from previous units. The unit begins by fostering children's intellectual and emotional connections with nature, as explored in Unit 2, *Animals and Habitats*. Children use active investigations and background information to understand how plants grow. From there, the focus turns to trees and how they provide many things to other living organisms.

The second phase focuses on sustainable systems that reduce human impacts on the Earth, such as recycling/reusing, saving water, and food production and urban agriculture. Books, videos, and hands-on opportunities provide information about the importance of reusing and composting.

Finally, children are engaged as citizens, learning about their role as caretakers of the Earth by generating ideas for sustainable choices in their classrooms and school communities. Drawing on the design process of Unit 3, *Construction*, children create and write persuasive pieces. They work together in a class Capstone Project to advocate for taking better care of the Earth.

## Big Ideas

- People, other animals and plants depend on and impact the environment.
- As caretakers of the earth, people can create and participate in sustainable systems to use natural resources wisely.
- The natural world can improve people's quality of life and inspire artistic expression.
- Plants grow and change over time. They need light, water, and air to live and grow.
- Through investigations and research, people learn about the natural world.

## Guiding Questions

- **In what ways do people, animals, and plants depend on and impact the environment?**
- What are sustainable systems, and how do people make responsible decisions for our earth?
- How can the earth inspire artistic expression?
- How do plants grow and change over time? What do plants need to survive?
- How do people learn about the natural world?

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	Week 4
<b>Centers</b>	Art Table and Drama: Setting up “Garden to Table” Easel: painting inspired by our Earth Blocks: building plants Library & Listening: making a book inventory Discovery and Writing: Sorting and Writing about Seeds 1 STEM: Mini Gardens	Art Table and Easel: creating real trees Blocks: building inspired by our Earth Dramatization: Growing and Preparing Food Library & Listening: researching plants Discovery: Sorting and Writing about Seeds 2 STEM: Compost Writing & Drawing: writing about worms	Art Table: creating imaginary trees (combined with Easel) Easel: painting imaginary trees Blocks: building a block forest 1 Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food Library & Listening: researching rainforests STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost Writing & Drawing: Capstone Studio	Art Table: creating collages inspired by nature Easel: painting still lifes Blocks: building a block forest 2 Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food Library & Listening: researching recycling Discovery Table: planting a different way (beans) STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost Writing & Drawing: Capstone Studio
<b>Texts</b>	<i>From Seed to Plant</i>	“Today Is The Hottest Day” <i>The Gift of the Tree</i>	<i>The Great Kapok Tree</i> <i>Be a Friend to Trees</i>	<i>Be a Friend to Trees</i> <i>Recycle!</i>
<b>Writing</b>	Argument	Argument	Argument	Argument
<b>Shared Reading</b>	“Earth Day”	“Five Little Seeds”	“A Cut Down Tree”	“Reduce, Reuse, Recycle”

Arc of Unit 4

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	Week 8
<b>Centers</b>	<p>Art Table: creating collages inspired by nature 2</p> <p>Easel: painting inspired by water</p> <p>Blocks: building a recycling truck</p> <p>Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food</p> <p>Library &amp; Listening: researching ways to conserve water</p> <p>Discovery: taking care and observing the two plants</p> <p>STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost</p> <p>Writing &amp; Drawing: Capstone Studio</p>	<p>Art Table: inspired by <i>Rainbow Weaver</i></p> <p>Easel: painting inspired by Mayan designs</p> <p>Blocks: building a recycling system</p> <p>Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food</p> <p>Library &amp; Listening: researching art made with recycled materials</p> <p>Discovery: transplanting the bean plant</p> <p>STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost</p> <p>Writing &amp; Drawing: Capstone Studio</p>	<p>Art Table: sculpting with recycled materials</p> <p>Easel: painting inspired by City Green</p> <p>Blocks: building gardens</p> <p>Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food</p> <p>Library &amp; Listening: researching gardens</p> <p>Discovery Table: harvest</p> <p>STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost</p> <p>Writing &amp; Drawing: writing about trees</p>	<p>Art Table: creating inspired By Our Earth 2</p> <p>Easel: painting Inspired by caretakers of the earth</p> <p>Blocks: building gardens 2</p> <p>Dramatization: continue Growing and Preparing Food</p> <p>Library &amp; Listening: researching caretakers of the earth</p> <p>Discovery Table: harvesting</p> <p>STEM: Continue Mini Gardens and Compost</p> <p>Writing &amp; Drawing: conserving and reusing paper</p>
<b>Texts</b>	<p><i>Recycle!</i></p> <p><i>Our Earth: Making Less Trash</i></p> <p><i>Our Earth: Saving Water</i></p>	<p><i>Rainbow Weaver</i></p>	<p><i>City Green</i></p>	<p>“Caretaker of the Earth” texts</p> <p>Cristal Martinez Caretaker of the Earth</p>
<b>Writing</b>	Argument	Argument	Personal Recount	Personal Recount
<b>Shared Reading</b>	“Worms”	“A Seed Needs”	“Have a Ball”	“Everything Grows”

Arc of Unit 4

## Unit 4 Read Aloud Texts

Week	Title, Author
1	<i>From Seed to Plant</i> , Gail Gibbons
2	<i>The Gift of the Tree</i> , Alvin Tresselt
3	<i>The Great Kapok Tree</i> , Lynne Cherry
4	<i>Be a Friend to Trees</i> , Patricia Lauber
5	<i>Recycle</i> , Gail Gibbons <i>Our Earth Making Less Trash</i> (Scholastic nonfiction reader), Peggy Hock <i>Our Earth Saving Water</i> (Scholastic nonfiction reader), Peggy Hock
6	<i>Rainbow Weaver</i> , Linda Elovitz Marshall <i>City Green</i> , Dyanne Di-Salvo Ryan
7	<i>City Green</i> , Dyanne Di-Salvo Ryan
8	<i>Caretakers of the Earth</i> , Cristal Martinez: <i>Caretakers of the Earth</i> , various authors

Unit 4 Introduction: Read Aloud Text

## The Capstone Project Guide

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

- Margaret Mead

### Introduction

At the end of kindergarten, children draw on skills and knowledge they have developed throughout the school year to advocate effectively for our Earth. During this last unit of study, children's intellectual and emotional connections with nature have increased, and they have learned about sustainable environmental systems. Through the Capstone Project, as citizens of their classroom, school, city, and the Earth, children agree on and work together to convince members of their community to adopt a sustainable practice to protect the environment.

<b>Big Ideas</b> People, other animals and plants depend on and impact the environment.  As caretakers of the earth, people can create and participate in sustainable systems to use natural resources wisely.  The natural world can improve people's quality of life and inspire artistic expression.	<b>Guiding Questions</b> In what ways do people, animals and plants depend on and impact the environment?  What are sustainable systems, and how do people make responsible decisions for our earth?  How can the earth inspire artistic expression?
<b>Text Connections</b> <i>The Great Kapok Tree</i> <i>Be a Friend to Trees</i> <i>City Green</i>	<i>Recycle!</i> <i>Our Earth Saving Water</i> <i>Rainbow Weaver</i> Caretakers of the Earth series

### The Final Product

As a class, children decide on a sustainable practice to advocate for and a target audience to persuade. The final product of the Capstone Project is open-ended. The approach and modality for convincing the target audience will vary. For example, children may decide to:

- convince next year's Kindergarten students to use fewer paper towels by inviting them to a performance that includes story acting
- create posters to hang around the school to persuade other students to participate in the lunchroom recycling program
- share a video message with third grade teachers to convince them to set up Beautiful Stuff areas in their classrooms.

Unit 4 Introduction: Capstone Project

## The Activities

The specifics of the Capstone Project will be determined by the children’s growing interests in sustainable systems. Over the course of four weeks, work takes place during Intro to Centers whole group meetings, in Centers, and in Thinking and Feedback sessions. Persuasive writing related to the project will occur during Writing lessons.

Children engage with the project in multiple ways, lacing through days and components. The children's work is individual and collaborative, discussing and working in both small and large groups. Similar to the *Our Town* project from Unit 3, each child will not necessarily engage in every part of the project. Rather, children will participate actively in specific aspects of the work and act as critical reviewers for work others lead.

### Small Groups

The Capstone is a whole class endeavor grounded in small group work. Each child will be part of a small group. According to their documented interests, skills, and social interactions, pre-assign children to groups, and task each group with specific roles. Ensure that each child is a part of at least one small group. Also, allow for fluidity once the groups have launched in response to the evolving work and children’s needs and contributions. Groups might include Planning, Feedback, Presentation, and Writing, for example.

## Timeline

More specific guidance is found in each week’s Centers lessons.

Weeks 1-4	
<i>Plan</i> Observe and document children’s questions, interests, and misconceptions. Use the Entry Point Tool. This documentation will be valuable in helping children choose a sustainable practice to advocate for and in forming small groups.	
Week 5	Teacher Preparation
<i>Whole Group</i> Select a focus and audience.	<input type="checkbox"/> Analyze documentation
<i>Capstone Studio</i> Children brainstorm individually and/or in pairs about how to communicate their idea.	<input type="checkbox"/> Transform the Writing and Drawing Center into a Capstone Studio.
Week 6	
<i>Capstone Studio</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Analyze the initial brainstorm

Unit 4 Introduction: Capstone Project

<p>The planning group drafts plans for the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create small groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p>	
<p><i>Capstone Studio</i>  The presentation and writing groups enact the plan  Children elicit additional ideas from the feedback group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gather necessary materials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 8</b></p>	
<p><i>Capstone Studio</i>  Children revise, if needed.   Children present their work.   Celebrate!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If applicable, coordinate with colleagues to schedule and plan.</li> </ul>

Unit 4 Introduction: Capstone Project





## Writing: Introduction to Argument

Argument is an important and difficult genre, written to convince someone to do something or to think something. Over six weeks, children engage with argument by deconstructing texts, debating, and jointly and individually constructing arguments. As part of the Capstone Project, the class works together to create a poster, arguing to a school-based audience for a sustainable practice, such as recycling or saving energy, to be implemented in the school. Children write individual arguments to people at home, about a sustainable practice that can be implemented there.

**Audience** plays a significant role in argument writing. The audience influences the writing of every aspect of the argument. For the jointly constructed poster, the class chooses an appropriate school-based audience, and children choose a person or people at home as the audience for their letters. All aspects of each argument are written with these audiences in mind.

In preparation for writing their own argument letters, children learn about the parts of a letter: **heading, greeting, body, closing, and signature.**

### Purpose

The **purpose** of arguments is either to convince someone *to do something* or to convince someone *about something*. In this unit, children convince someone *to do something*.

### Structure

Arguments unfold in four **stages**. The first stage is the **thesis**, which is the part of the argument that states what the writer or speaker is trying to convince someone to do or think. **Reasons** support the thesis. They should be varied and appeal to the audience. **Evidence** supply facts and details to support the reasons. Children work in small groups to draw evidence from unit texts. Arguments end with a **reinforcement of the thesis**, in which the thesis is repeated, but in a new way.

### Language

Children explore the use of **adjectives** to strengthen arguments. As a class, they revise the argument to include positive and negative adjectives.

## Mentor Texts

Note that the following texts are not written as arguments themselves. Instead, they are fictional stories that include characters who argue.

*Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin  
*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* by Mo Willems  
*The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry  
*The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka  
*Recycle!* by Gail Gibbons

## Vocabulary

**adjective:** a word or phrase used to describe a person, place, thing, or idea

**appeal:** to be interesting

**argument:** a genre of writing whose purpose is to convince someone to do something or to think something

**audience:** an individual or group for whom a piece of writing is composed

**body:** the main part of the letter

**closing:** the end of the letter, before the writer signs her or his name

**convince:** to persuade

**evidence:** facts and details used to support reasons in an argument

**feedback:** specific, helpful suggestions given to improve work

**genre:** a type of writing

**greeting:** the beginning of a letter, where the audience is addressed

**heading:** the part of the letter that includes the recipient's address and the date

**image:** a representation of something in the form of a drawing, photograph, etc.

**impact:** to have an effect on someone or something

**medium:** a form of communication

**negative:** not good

**persuade:** to convince

**positive:** good

**publish:** to prepare writing for an audience

**reason:** why the audience should do or think something

**research:** to get information about something

**reinforcement:** saying again, in a new way

**revise:** make changes to writing

**signature:** the letter-writer's name

**stages:** the parts of a piece of writing

**sustainable:** using things like paper, water, and energy carefully now so that there are enough resources for people to use later

**thesis:** the part of the argument that states what the writer or speaker is trying to convince someone to do or think

**topic:** what the writing is about

Adapted from Brisk, M.E. (2015). *Engaging students in academic literacies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Unit 4 Introduction: Writing Argument

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## Writing: Introduction to Personal Recount Poetry

Over the course of two weeks, children deepen and extend their skills and understanding of personal recount through poetry. Children deconstruct, tell, and later write personal recount poems using different poetic devices. They plan for and write a poem about an experience they've had taking care of the Earth.

### Purpose

The **purpose** of writing a personal recount is to document a sequence of events and to entertain the reader. Note that in this context, "entertain" means to be interesting to the reader, and does not imply that all writing must recount funny or happy events.

### Structure

Personal Recounts unfold in three stages. The **orientation**, written at the beginning of the recount, orients the reader to the recount. In the orientation, the characters (who) and setting (where and when) are introduced, along with a brief introduction of what the recount will be about (what). The **sequence of events** recounts what happens, in chronological order. It includes the major events and the sub-events that further develop each major event. The **conclusion** of a personal recount can be written in one of three ways: as a final event, by talking about why the experience was important, or with a feeling.

### Language

In Unit 4, the class revisits the **verbs** in personal recounts, reviewing that personal recounts include a variety of verbs that relate to the topic. The class generates a list of past tense verbs related to taking care of the Earth.

### Poetry

In SFL-based writing, poetry is considered a medium, rather than a genre, because poems can be written for many different purposes, with different structures, and using different language. In this unit, the children learn how to write poetry, focusing on the **poetic devices** of **rhythm**, **repetition**, and **rhyme**. They learn that poets make choices about which poetic devices to use based on what they want their readers to think and feel.

## **Mentor Texts**

*Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen  
“Good Luck Gold” by Janet S. Wong  
“Things” by Eloise Greenfield  
“Two in Bed” by Abram Bunn Ross  
“Today is the Hottest Day” by Arnold Adoff  
“Rainbow Fish, Red Frog”  
“Planting” by Dick Wilmes

## **Vocabulary**

**audience:** an individual or group for whom a piece of writing is composed

**conclusion:** the end

**document:** to record, sometimes by writing

**entertain:** to interest someone

**enticing:** drawing the reader in; making the reader want to know more

**feedback:** specific, helpful suggestions given to improve work

**genre:** a type of writing

**informative:** providing useful information

**line break:** the place where lines of a text are split

**medium:** a form of communication

**orientation:** in a personal recount, the text that introduces the story

**personal recount:** a genre of writing whose purpose is to document a sequence of events and to entertain

**poetic device:** a tool poets use

**poetry:** a form of writing that often includes rhythm, rhyme, and repetition

**publish:** to prepare writing for an audience

**purpose:** the reason for doing or creating something

**repetition:** saying or doing the same thing more than once

**revise:** to make changes to writing

**rhyme:** words with the same ending sound

**rhythm:** regular, repeated beats

**sequence of events:** the events in a personal recount, in order

**stages:** the parts of a piece of writing

**tense:** the form of a verb related to time

**title:** the name of a piece of writing

**variety:** many different

**verb:** a word that expresses a physical action, mental action, or state of being

Adapted from Brisk, M.E. (2015). *Engaging students in academic literacies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Unit 4 Introduction: Writing Personal Recount Poetry