

Explore & Learn

Lessons and Activities

PK, TK, and VPK Instruction

What Affects Our Planet?

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Ezra Watches the Weather



Avery Rabedaux
Illustrated by Deb Johnson



Spring and summer, fall and winter.
Rain and sun, snow and wind. Every
season, every day, Ezra watches the
weather.

Ezra feels a cool breeze as he plays. The bare trees bend. The wind whistles.

Listening to the chimes, Ezra watches the wind.



Plink! Plink! Puddles pool in the streets, on the lawns, and on the sidewalks.

"Splash!" Ezra shouts. Jumping in the puddles, Ezra watches the rain.



The rain is done. The sun is out. Mom stands at the window. "Come quick, before it disappears!"



Ezra and Dad run over to see the great big arch. Sandwiched between Mom and Dad, Ezra watches the rainbow.

“To the park!” Ezra says. The sun glows in the sky, and Ezra waves hello.



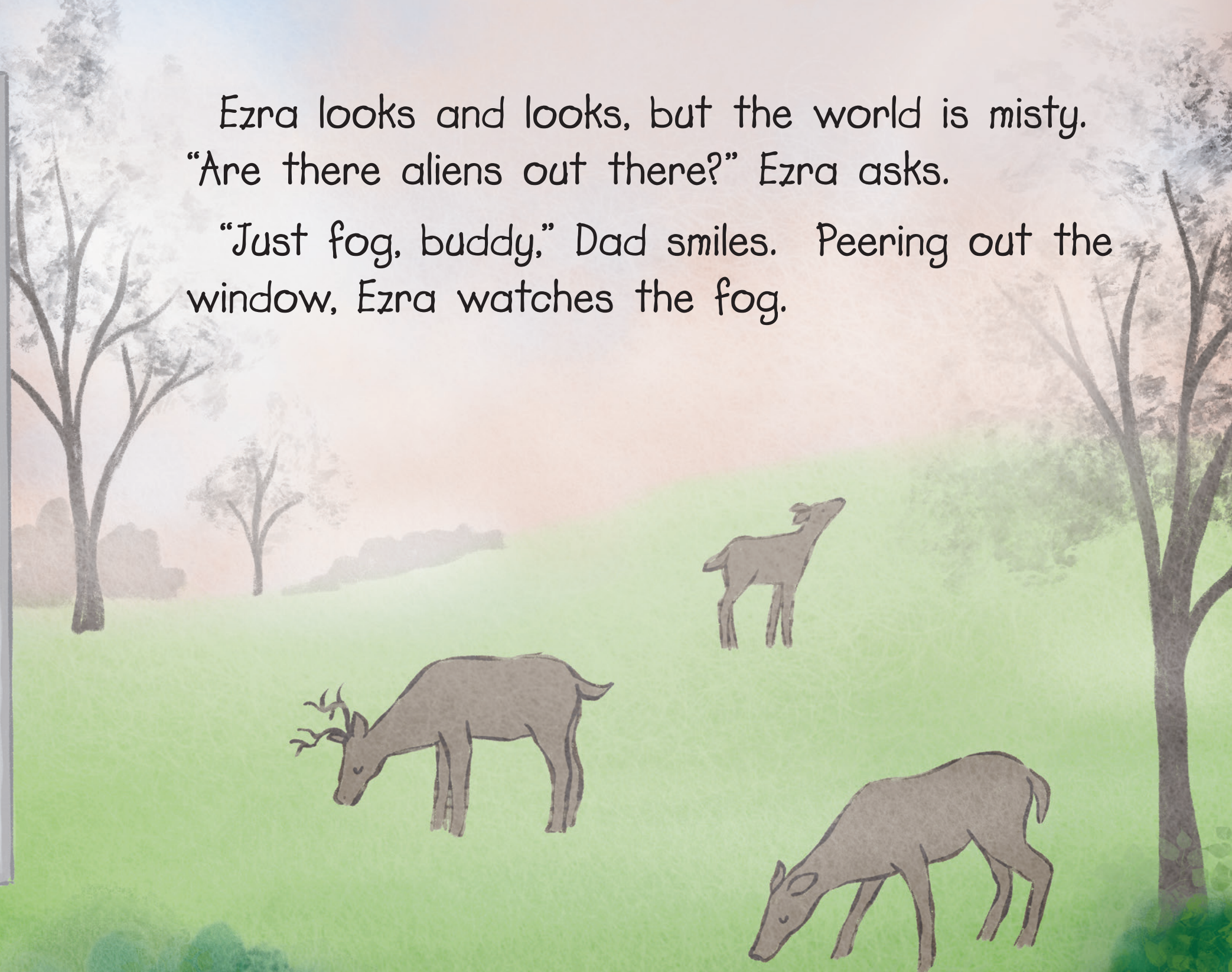
“Hi, sun! Thank you for keeping me warm!” Running around the playground, Ezra watches the sun shine.





Ezra looks and looks, but the world is misty.
“Are there aliens out there?” Ezra asks.

“Just fog, buddy,” Dad smiles. Peering out the
window, Ezra watches the fog.



Boom! Crack! Thunder shakes the house. Lightning splinters the sky.

Snuggled up with Mom and Dad, Ezra watches the thunderstorm.





Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat. What on Earth is that?



It looks like snow, but it is freezing like ice.
“It’s sleeting!” Mom shouts. “Hurry, hurry!
Let’s get inside.”
Sitting under a blanket, Ezra watches the sleet.

The gray sky sprinkles soft snowflakes.
Woosh! The wind picks up. Dad calls out
to come inside.



While drinking hot cocoa, Ezra
watches the blizzard.

Ezra sits on his porch and watches the weather.



Thunder and lightning, wind and sleet. Every day, every season, Ezra will be watching.

Notes for the Grown-ups

This book allows for a rich shared reading experience for children who are early and developing readers. The dynamic images help new readers to tell the story, either as they read or as they are read to. What a valuable tool for building the confidence new readers need to embark on the adventures that await them while reading!

To extend this reading experience, do one or more of the following:

Designate a “weather-watching” area. Observe the seasonal weather changes.

Identify weather patterns in the book that you may not experience. Look online for videos of those weather patterns.

Look at the illustrations together and identify the changes in Ezra’s clothing. Talk about what clothes people may wear in different kinds of weather.

After reading, come back to the book again and again. Rereading is an excellent tool for building literacy skills.

Discuss the seasons and how they are shown in the book. Talk about seasonal weather patterns.

What Affects Our Planet?

Teacher's Guide



Day 6 Preparation and Materials

Morning Meeting

- **Materials:** *Morning Meeting* routine (card 1); vocabulary concept cards for *Sunny*, *Wind*, *Rain*, and *Snow*

Literacy

- **Materials:** *Teach Letters and Sounds* routine (card 2), copy of *Ezra Watches the Weather*; chart paper

Literacy Explorations

- **Materials:** *Interactive Writing* routine (card 4); *Weather*, *Rain*, and *Snow* vocabulary concept cards; copy of *Wild Weather*; sentence strips or sticky notes; tape (if using sentence strips)
- **Preparation:** Ensure that each Literacy Exploration center is prepared.

Physical Development

- **Materials:** beanbags (one per student)

Phonological Awareness

- n/a

Mathematics

- **Materials:** three colors of counting manipulatives
- **Preparation:** Prepare enough sets of 15 counting manipulatives with five of each color for groups of three or four students.

Social Development

- **Materials:** *Teach American Sign Language* routine (card 13); *Writing Social Stories* routine (card 16); “I Can” video; *Ways to Say I Can* (page 174); crayons
- **Preparation:** Prepare to share the video, and distribute the student-created social stories.

Fine Motor Development

- **Materials:** *Rainbow Coloring Page* (page 26 of *Student Activity Book*); crayons
- **Preparation:** Prepare one copy of *Rainbow Coloring Page* for modeling.

Social Studies

- **Materials:** *Introduce Vocabulary* routine (card 6); *Meteorologist* vocabulary concept card; *Weather Report* (page 27 of *Student Activity Book*); digital weather report and/or video of local meteorologist
- **Preparation:** Locate and prepare to share a digital weather report and/or a video of a local meteorologist reporting the weather.

Creative Explorations

- **Materials:** construction paper; straws (one per student); a variety of colors of tempera paint; tissue or crepe-paper
- **Preparation:** Cut a streamer from tissue or crepe paper.

Music and Movement

- **Materials:** audio recordings and lyrics for “Sun Smiles,” “Draw Your Shape,” and “Snow Guys and Gals”
- **Preparation:** Prepare to share the audio recordings of the songs.

Closing Circle

- **Materials:** *Closing Circle* routine (card 18)

Morning Meeting



10-15
minutes



1. Follow the *Morning Meeting* routine (card 1).
2. Review the *Sunny, Wind, Rain, and Snow* vocabulary concept cards. Tell students they are going to create movements to represent each type of weather.
3. Have students brainstorm movements that could represent each type of weather, such as moving their arms around for *wind* and forming circles with their arms above their heads for *sunny*. Choose the final movements yourself or vote as a class.
4. Display the vocabulary concept cards one at a time, and have students do the movements. Repeat as time allows.



Free Play

Free Play is a fundamental part of the *Explore & Learn* day. See page 99 for free play ideas related to this unit.



Literacy



20-30
minutes



Alphabet Knowledge Warm-Up

1. Gather students together, and follow the *Teach Letters and Sounds* routine (card 2) to teach the letter of the day. Choose which letter to teach based on your scope and sequence. (See page 39 in the *Management Guide* for more information.)

Whole-Group Lesson

2. Display the book *Ezra Watches the Weather*. Read the title, author, and illustrator aloud. Ask students what they notice about the cover illustration.
3. Ask, “What do you think this book will be about?” Accept a variety of student responses, guiding students to understand that the book will be about a boy who watches the weather.
4. Say, “Today, we will make predictions about the types of weather the character may see in the book.” Share the sentence frame: *I think Ezra will watch ____.*
5. Model sharing your own response using the sentence frame, for example, “I think Ezra will watch rain.”
6. Have students share their responses one at a time using the sentence frame. Record students’ responses on chart paper, and save for the following day’s lesson.

Literacy Explorations

15-20
minutes

small groups



centers

Meet with one group to deliver Small-Group Lesson 2 (page 102), while the rest of the students engage in self-chosen centers. For more information about independent learning centers, see page 103.

Physical Development

10-15
minutes

whole group

1. Gather students together, and say “Today, we are going to pretend our beanbags are snowballs. You are going to balance your snowballs on different parts of your bodies.”
2. Distribute the beanbags, and say the directions aloud, guiding students as needed. Say, “Balance your snowball on your ____.” (head, shoulder, elbow, knee)
3. You may create more directions or allow student volunteers to lead the game, as time allows.

Phonological Awareness

10-15
minutes

whole group

1. Gather students together. Say, “Words have parts called *syllables*. I will say a word, and you will break the word into its parts, or syllables.” Remind students they can divide words into syllables more easily by placing their hands under their chins to feel the syllables.
2. Say the word *galoshes*, and have students repeat the word. Together with students, place your hand under your chin, and say the syllables *ga•lo•shes*, deliberately pausing between each syllable. Say, “My chin drops for each syllable. The syllables are *ga, lo, shes*. There are three syllables in this word.” **Note:** When we speak, we sometimes divide words into syllables differently than when we divide words into syllables in writing.
3. Continue with the following words. Have students repeat the word. Then, have students segment the word into syllables using the backs of their hands to feel their chins drop. You can also have students clap or stomp their feet for each syllable. Have students determine the number of syllables in each word they say.
 - misty: mis•ty
 - humid: hu•mid
 - temperature: tem•per(a)•ture
 - cloudy: clou•dy
 - blizzard: bli•(z)ard
 - humidity: hu•mi•di•ty

★ ★ Teacher-Choice Read-Aloud

Per the pacing plan suggestions on page 38 of the *Management Guide*, after the phonological awareness activity is a good time in the *Explore & Learn* day for a teacher-choice read-aloud.



Mathematics

20-30
minutes

whole group



small groups

Whole-Group Lesson

1. Gather students together. Explain that today they are going to be detectives, and they will solve “The Case of the Missing Weather” in each of the patterns that you show them.
2. Create an AB pattern using two colors of manipulatives. Leave an empty space later in the pattern. Say, “The weather pattern is sun, raindrop, sun, raindrop, sun, ____, sun, raindrop.” As you chant the pattern, point to each manipulative.
3. Point to the empty space, and ask students to think about what type of weather completes the pattern. Invite students to respond verbally or by pointing to the manipulative that is needed. Add the missing part of the pattern, and chant the pattern as a group.
4. Repeat the activity, having students identify a missing part from the following patterns.
 - sun, sun, raindrop (AAB)
 - sun, raindrop, snowflake (ABC)
 - snowflake, snowflake, raindrop, sun (AABC)

Small-Group Practice

5. Have students form groups of three or four, and distribute the sets of manipulatives you prepared. Have students take turns making patterns with one missing part. Have the rest of the group determine what belongs in the empty space.
6. Repeat until each student has had a turn making a pattern.

Social Development

10-15
minutes

whole group



independent work

1. Gather students together, and say, “We have been practicing saying *I can*. This shows that we understand our own abilities and can make plans. We can also say *I can* in sign language. This helps us communicate with people who speak sign language.”
2. Follow the *Teach American Sign Language* routine (card 13), referencing *Ways to Say I Can* (page 174), to teach the phrase in ASL.
3. Show the “I Can” video, having students sign the phrase each time it appears.
4. Have students move to their workspaces and continue to work on their social stories. Circulate and support a few students to complete step 5 of the *Writing Social Stories* routine (card 16).

Fine Motor Development



10-15
minutes



independent work



whole group

1. Gather students together. Say, “Today, we will color a picture of a rainbow carefully. What colors are in a rainbow?” (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet)
2. Say, “We can make different shades of colors by using different pressure with our crayons.” Display a sheet of drawing paper in clear view of students, and select a crayon. Model coloring with light and hard pressure, narrating the differences between the colors that are produced.
3. Say, “As you color your rainbows, try using different pressures to make different shades of colors.” Display a copy of *Rainbow Coloring Page* (page 26 of *Student Activity Book*), and model coloring each band of the rainbow with the appropriate colors, using different pressures. Narrate the difference between the pressures you are using as you color.
4. Have students move to their workspaces to complete *Rainbow Coloring Page*. Distribute crayons to students, and circulate as students color to monitor for appropriate pressure.

Social Studies



15-25
minutes



whole group



independent work

1. Gather students together. Follow the *Introduce Vocabulary* routine (card 6) to introduce the *Meteorologist* vocabulary concept card. Explain that meteorologists use tools to make guesses about what the weather will be.
2. Display the digital weather report and/or a video of a local meteorologist that you prepared. Have students discuss what they notice. Ask, “How is a meteorologist a community helper? How can their job help you or your family?” Accept a variety of responses.
3. Discuss vocabulary and concepts that could appear in a weather report (e.g., *temperature, humidity, types of precipitation*).
4. Tell students that they will act as meteorologists by observing the weather and creating a weather report. Have students observe the weather by looking out the window or going outside. Have partners discuss what they observe, then discuss as a group.
5. Have students move to their workspaces. Distribute crayons, and instruct students to complete *Weather Report* (page 27 of *Student Activity Book*) based on the weather they observed.

Free Play Idea

Add props to a free play center to support students in role-playing meteorologists. You may consider adding microphones, weather maps, and images of different types of weather.



Creative Explorations



15-25
minutes



1. Gather students together. Hold up the streamer you prepared, and blow on it until it moves. Ask, “How is the air I blow from my mouth similar to the wind? How is it different?” Accept a variety of student responses. Tell students that they will blow like the wind today to create art.
2. Display a sheet of construction paper in clear view of students. Put a small amount of paint on the paper, and use a straw to blow the paint in different directions. Emphasize that the air you are blowing represents wind. Continue blowing until the paint is well distributed. Add another color, and continue to blow the paint.
3. Distribute a sheet of construction paper and a straw to each student. Squeeze small amounts of paint on students’ papers, and have them use the straws to blow the paint.
4. Add new colors of paint to students’ papers as they work.
5. When students complete their paintings, place them on flat surfaces to dry.

Music and Movement



10-15
minutes



1. Gather students together. Play the audio recordings of “Sun Smiles,” “Draw Your Shape,” and “Snow Guys and Gals,” and sing along with movements. Encourage students to join in as they feel comfortable.
2. Sing each song several times until students are comfortable with the lyrics and movements. Continue practicing as time allows.

Closing Circle



5-10
minutes



1. Follow the *Closing Circle* routine (card 18).
2. If time allows, choose an extension activity from the routine card.

Card 1

Morning Meeting

Objective: Students will build community through safe, predictable routines.

Materials: Daily Picture Schedule Cards ([schedulecards.pdf](#); optional)

Gather and Greet

1. Signal to the whole group that it is time to gather for the morning meeting. You may choose to use a song as a transition.
2. Gather students together in a circle. Remind students about personal space and the importance of keeping their hands and feet to themselves.
3. Have students greet each other. You may choose to do a whole-class greeting with a song or have students pass one of the following greetings around the circle by greeting the peers next to them:
 - high five
 - elbow bump
 - fist bump
 - wave

Our Day

4. Share the plan for the day. This can be done by reviewing the *Daily Picture Schedule Cards* together or through a morning message—a short note addressed to the class that includes one or two main events that will take place during the day. The daily learning objectives are included in the *Teacher's Guide* for your easy reference.

Theme

5. Have students engage with the theme, color, shape, and/or phrase of the week. Ideas are included in the daily lesson plans in the *Teacher's Guide*.

Card 2

Teach Letters and Sounds

Objective: Students will learn the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent to support reading readiness and emergent writing skills.

Materials: Letter Cards ([lettercards.pdf](#))

Preparation: Choose which letters to teach based on your scope and sequence. (See page 39 in the *Management Guide* for more information.) Prepare to share the selected *Letter Cards*.

Name It

1. Display the selected *Letter Card*, and say, "This is the letter _____. This is a capital _____ (point to the capital letter), and this is a lowercase _____ (point to the lowercase letter)."
2. Point to the *Letter Card*, and say, "What letter is this?" (Students respond with the letter name.)

Say It

3. Say the sound the letter represents, and discuss how the sound is formed. Have students repeat the sound several times.

Write It

4. With your finger, trace the capital letter on the card. Narrate your movements, describing the starting point and the types of lines you are forming.
5. Ask students to hold up their pointer fingers and form the lines of the uppercase letter on flat surfaces. Have students repeat the sound the letter makes while they are forming the letter.
6. Repeat steps 4–5 with the formation of the lowercase letter.



sunny



**how people describe the weather
when the sun is out and it is bright
and dry**

sunny

Related Words

bright sunglasses warm/hot

Sentence

I like to wear sunglasses outside when it is bright and **sunny**.

Engage

- ★ What is your favorite thing to do when it is sunny outside?
- ★ Can you name different types of clothing that people wear in sunny weather?
- ★ What are some things that you can do outside in sunny weather that you cannot do when it is rainy?
- ★ Look at the picture. What clues can you see that tell you it is a sunny day?



Solving Problems

Cam E. Chameleon wakes up one morning to a loud CRACK and BOOM. *What in the world is that?* she thinks. She walks over to the window and looks outside. The sky is pouring rain, while thunder booms and lightning crackles.

“Oh, no!” she cries. “What about school today?”

Cam goes to find her mom. “Mom, can I go to school if it is raining? I love school and don’t want to miss it!”

“Of course, you can go,” her mom answers with a smile. “Listen. The thunder and lightning have stopped. The rain is gentler now as well. A little rain never hurt anyone.”

“But, Mom, I’ll get all wet!” Cam moans.

“Cam, you are a very good problem solver. Take a breath to calm down, and then think about it. What can you do to protect yourself from the rain?” asks Cam’s mom.

Cam takes a big breath as she walks back to her room to get ready for school. Then, in her room, she takes another breath. She feels a lot calmer, and being calm helps her think. “I can figure this out,” she says. And just like that, she knows what to do. “I have an umbrella! And I have a raincoat! I can use them to stay dry outside. When I’m inside, the rain can’t touch me.” Cam smiled a very big smile as she calls out to her mom. “Problem solved!” she says.

“I knew you’d figure it out,” her mom replies.

Cam can confidently solve problems when she calms down first, and then thinks of solutions. “I can solve problems,” she says. And she knows this is true.

Key Words

calmer

figure out

knows

problem

protect

solve

think



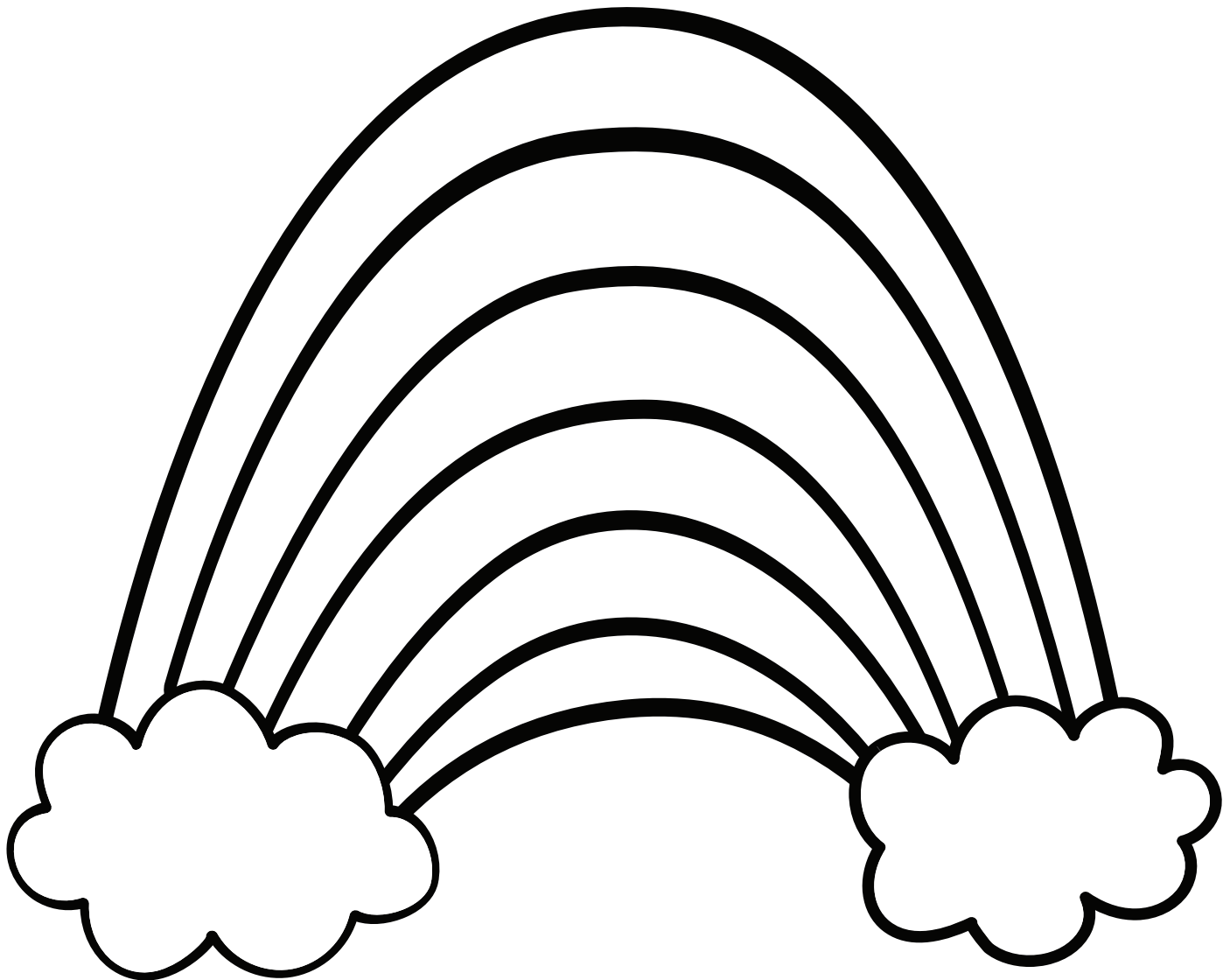
Listen



tcmpub.digital/el_story16

Name: _____

Rainbow Coloring Page



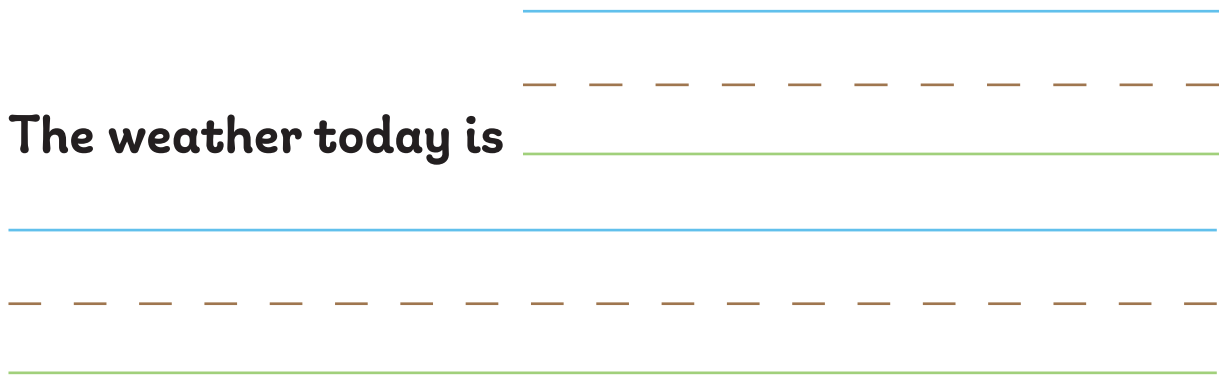
Adults, read this aloud: Color the rainbow. Use light and hard pressure to make different shades.

Name: _____

Weather Report



The weather today is



Adults, read this aloud: Draw the type of weather you observed. Write words to complete the sentence.

Social Development and Executive Functioning

Social development and executive functioning include skills and competencies that are essential to getting along with others and managing cognitive processes to regulate behavior. Developing these skills is essential in early childhood as young learners set the foundation for healthy identity development and strong interpersonal relationships.

There are six components that will be assessed in this area:

- **Building Relationships**—Building relationships is the ability to establish and maintain relationships with peers and adults. This involves communicating with others, working together to achieve shared goals, and navigating social situations that may involve differences or conflicts.
- **Social Awareness**—Social awareness is the capacity of early learners to become aware of the needs, desires, and perspectives of others. This involves feeling empathy and showing care for others. Students use cues and situational context to learn that other people's perspectives may be different from their own. Social awareness also involves understanding and navigating social norms.
- **Decision-Making**—Decision-making involves the processes through which prekindergarten students gather information and make choices that balance their own needs and rights with others' needs and rights. When making personal choices and engaging in social interactions, students consider different ideas and solutions. They also reflect on and evaluate the consequences of their decision-making.
- **Working Memory**—Working memory is the capacity to hold information in mind for a short amount of time. Young learners draw on working memory to process information and complete tasks. This includes focusing when gathering information, organizing thoughts and information, following multistep directions, and problem-solving.
- **Attention**—Attention involves the ability to take in information from the environment and select and focus on one or more things. Students at this level are developing their abilities to sustain attention for increasing lengths of time. Attention involves focusing sufficiently to understand information or perform a task and ignore distractions.
- **Self-Control**—Self-control is the ability to manage one's own feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and actions. This includes regulating emotions in various social situations, delaying gratification, and controlling impulses to make thoughtful and intentional choices.



Date: _____



✓+

[illegible]

Social Development and Executive Functioning Rubric

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Directions: Use the *Social Development and Executive Functioning Checklist* to summarize these skills throughout this unit. Based on your notes and annotations on the checklist, determine at which level the student is working for each criterion. Circle or highlight the rating for each component.

	Advancing	Meeting	Emerging	Beginning
Building Relationships	Builds, sustains, and expands relationships.	Builds and sustains relationships.	Starting to build and sustain relationships.	Starting to build relationships with support.
Social Awareness	Considers the needs, desires, and perspectives of others when making choices.	Is aware of the needs, desires, and perspectives of others.	Starting to be aware of the needs and desires of others.	Starting to be aware of the needs of others with support.
Decision-Making	Considers multiple ideas when making choices that balance own needs and rights with others.	Makes choices that balance own needs and rights with others.	Starting to make choices that balance own needs and rights with others.	Starting to make choices with support.
Working Memory	Recalls information to follow multi-step directions and solve problems.	Recalls information to follow multi-step directions.	Starting to recall information to follow directions.	Starting to recall information for short amounts of time with support.
Attention	Focuses and sustains attention for increasing periods of time.	Focuses and sustains attention.	Starting to focus and sustain attention.	Starting to focus on one thing with support.
Self-Control	Manages own feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and actions in various social situations.	Manages own feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and actions in routine situations.	Starting to manage own feelings, thoughts, behaviors, and actions.	Starting to manage own feelings and thoughts with support.