



Monthly Themes & Explorations

2026-2027

-  **August:** Building Our Community
-  **September:** Colors, Shapes, Sizes & the Five Senses
-  **October:** Nature & Harvest Discoveries
-  **November:** Thankful for Our Families & Construction
-  **December:** Fairy Tales, Castles & Winter Wonder
-  **January:** Arctic Animals & Winter Discoveries
-  **February:** Space & The Night Sky
-  **March:** Puddles, Ponds, Life Cycles & Forest Animals
-  **April:** Seeds, Gardens & Dinosaurs
-  **May:** Earth Day, Weather, Ocean Adventures & Celebrating Our Learning

Guided Play The “Applebee” Way!

We will use these concepts as a catalyst for learning. We believe that topics emerge from conversations and interests of young children during play. Once topics of interest are identified, our teachers act as co-collaborators, helping the children make decisions about the direction of inquiry and launch into in-depth studies of the concepts, ideas and interests that arise. These investigations have no time limit and can overlap throughout the year. As teachers we invite interaction and design our activities according to the children's interests. We can have multiple themes working together on any given day. We are keen observers and scaffold curriculum around the children's needs and interests. It's a fun process to watch the children engage in. We will provide parents with a “Peek @ The Week” every Monday morning. We will post pictures and annotate the process the children worked through as they played together. We will also introduce your children to letters organically within each theme. Your child will grow in all areas of development at their own pace this year. We can't wait to get started!

August – Building Our Community

- All About Me
- Friendship & Kindness
- Classroom & Community Helpers
- Creating Classroom Routines
- Pet Care

Projects

- Self-portraits using mirrors
- Friendship tree
- Community helper dramatic play center
- Class book: *All About Us*
- Create a classroom map and neighborhood block center

Cooking Projects:

- Friendship Fruit Salad
- Community Helper Trail Mix

September – Colors, Shapes, Sizes & the Five Senses

- Colors in Nature
- Shapes Everywhere
- Big and Small
- Patterns and Sorting
- Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting & Touching

Projects

- Color mixing paintings
- Nature shape hunt
- Rainbow sensory bottles
- Texture collages
- Taste-testing graph
- Sound shakers and listening walk

Cooking Projects:

- Rainbow Fruit Kabobs
- Shape Pizzas

- **October – Nature & Harvest Discoveries**

- Apples and Harvest
- Leaves and Trees
- Pumpkins and Gourds
- Birds and Their Nests
- Woodland Creatures

Projects

- Apple printing and apple pie baking
- Leaf people and leaf rubbings
- Painted pumpkins
- Build bird nests from natural materials
- Nature weaving
- Woodland animal habitats

Cooking Projects:

- Pumpkin Muffins
- Bird Nest Snack Cups

November – Thankful for Our Families & Construction

- Thankful for Our Families
- Family Traditions and Celebrations
- Homes and Shelters
- Construction and Building

Projects

- Family gratitude tree
- Family recipe book
- Cardboard box houses
- Building blueprints
- Loose-parts construction site
- Build bridges and towers

Cooking Projects:

- Thankful Harvest Soup
- Pretzel Log Cabins

December – Fairy Tales, Castles & Winter Wonder

- Castles and Kingdoms
- Dragons and Knights
- Fairy Tale Characters
- Light and Celebration
- Storytelling and Puppetry

Projects

- Build a cardboard castle
- Design crowns and capes
- Puppet theater
- Fairy-tale sensory bins
- Lantern making
- Create story maps and books

Cooking Projects:

- Castle Rice Krispie Treats
 - Snowflake Sugar Cookies
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January – Arctic Animals & Winter Discoveries

- Polar Bears
- Penguins
- Snowy Owls
- Seals and Walruses
- Ice and Snow Exploration

Projects

- Ice painting
- Build igloos from blocks and boxes
- Create arctic animal habitats
- Frozen treasure excavations
- Snowflake art

Cooking Projects:

- Snow People Pancakes
- Snow Dough Pretzels

February – Space & The Night Sky

- Sun, Moon and Stars
- Planets
- Constellations
- Astronauts and Rockets
- Day and Night

Projects

- Cardboard rockets
- Planet mobiles
- Glow-in-the-dark constellations
- Moon crater sensory trays
- Starry night paintings
- Create astronaut helmets and a pretend space station

Cooking Projects:

- Moon Rock Energy Bites
 - Galaxy Parfaits
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March – Puddles, Ponds, Life Cycles & Forest Animals

- Rain and Puddles
- Frogs and Tadpoles
- Ducks and Pond Life
- Life Cycles
- Enchanted Forest Animals

Projects

- Pond sensory small world
- Frog life cycle art
- Rain gauges
- Plant a pollinator garden
- Build bee hotels
- Flower pressing
- Observe insects and keep nature journals

Cooking Projects:

- Rain Cloud Fruit Cups
- Frog Pond Pudding Cups

April – Seeds, Gardens & Dinosaurs

- Seeds and Planting
- Bee's & Pollinators
- Dinosaurs and Fossils
- Volcanoes and Rocks
- Comparing Living Things

Projects

- Plant a class garden
- Dinosaur dig excavation
- Fossil impressions in clay
- Erupting volcano experiment
- Build dinosaur habitats
- Create a garden journal and nature sketches

Cooking Projects:

- Dinosaur Fossil Cookies
 - Volcano Pudding Cups
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May – Earth, Nature, Weather Cycles & Celebrating Our Learning

- Earth Day and Recycling
- Gardens in Bloom
- Weather Cycles and Seasons
- Ocean Adventures
- End-of-Year Celebration

Projects

- Recycled art sculptures
- Windsocks and pinwheels
- Weather journals and graphs
- Cloud paintings and sun prints
- Water cycle experiment in a bag
- Create a four-seasons mural
- Garden picnic

Cooking Projects:

- Rain Cloud Fruit Cups
- Frog Pond Pudding Cups

Year-Long Guided Play Experiences

🍎 Cooking & Baking • 🎨 Creative Art • 🌿 Nature Journaling • 🪵 Loose Parts Exploration • 🌱 Gardening • 📖 Storytelling & Documentation • 🔬 Science Investigations • 🍌 Community Building • 🎵 Music & Movement

Guided Play Inspired Books

