

We Skoolhouse



Ready-Made Curriculum: My Community and Me



Introduction: My Community and Me

This investigation invites children to explore their place in the world—beginning with themselves and extending out to their homes, neighborhoods, and shared spaces. Through drawing, building, observation, and dialogue, children make meaning of the people and places that shape their daily lives. This unit emphasizes belonging, identity, and contribution.

The guide can be followed step by step or used more fluidly—adapt it to your setting, your children, and their pace. Some groups may move quickly, while others may linger. Repetition and reflection are embedded intentionally to support deep learning. Children revisit core books and materials across the weeks, layering new understanding through familiar experiences.

These experiences are not assignments, but invitations—offered with respect for each child's development, family structure, communication style, and comfort level. All stories, homes, and contributions are welcome. The adult's role is to observe, scaffold, document, and honor the meaning behind each child's choices.

Books Used Throughout the Unit:

- "Last Stop on Market Street" by Matt de la Peña
- "All Are Welcome" by Alexandra Penfold
- "A Home Can Be..." by Stephanie Seidler
- "Families, Families, Families!" by Suzanne Lang
- "Maybe Something Beautiful" by F. Isabel Campoy

Vocabulary

Home, family, neighbor, community, building, place, belonging, help, share, together, decorate, protect, favorite, observe, sketch, create, care, give, build, connect, responsibility, contribution, respect, tradition, collaboration, environment, architecture, structure, neighborhood, citizenship, beliefs

Week 1: Who Am I? Who is With Me?

Focus Concept: Identity and family

Weekly Objective: Children begin by exploring themselves—what makes them unique and who they live with. Through name work, portraits, and symbolic representations, they develop a sense of self and begin forming connections between identity and family.

Monday – My Name Is...

Morning Meeting

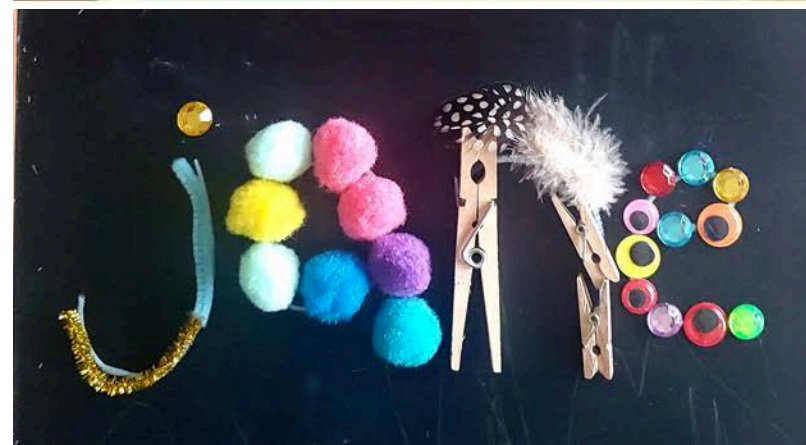
- Book: Families, Families, Families! by Suzanne Lang
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do you like about your name?”
 - “What’s a fun story about your name?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children use loose parts (stones, beads, fabric, corks, buttons) to build their names on paper mats or trays.
 - Children can write their name or you can do it for them, in which they can then layer on the materials.
- Provide laminated name cards, letter models, and mirrors so children can reflect on the connection between their name and their identity.
- Journal Prompt: Draw or trace your name.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you notice while building your name?”
- Start the Word Wall: You can add children’s ideas, questions, and observations.



Tuesday – Loose Parts Self-Portraits

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do you see when you look in the mirror?”
 - “Can you show your hair, your smile, or your feeling with materials?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children create self-portraits using loose parts and mirrors.
- Provide natural and open-ended materials such as yarn, stones, seed pods, wood, shells, and felt.
- Offer trays or wood slabs for constructing on.
- Journal Prompt: Draw your self-portrait or one facial feature. Write or dictate: “This is me.”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What part of you did you notice most today?”



Wednesday – Painted Self-Portraits

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What feeling do you want your painting to show?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children paint self-portraits using mirrors and skin-tone palettes. Invite close looking before painting. Offer sketching as a first step, and allow for expressive variation.
- Optional Journal Prompt: Draw something you noticed in your painting. Write or dictate: “This shows me when...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “How did painting yourself feel different from using loose parts?”



Thursday – Who Live in My House

Morning Meeting

- Book: A House is a House for Me by Mary Ann Hoberman
- Discussion Questions:
 - “Who do you live with?”
 - “What do you love about your home?”
 - “Do families always look the same?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children build a house-shaped frame using popsicle sticks glued around a paper base and a cut-out triangle roof. Inside, they draw the people or pets they live with. Optional: Add labels such as “My Family” or names.
- Draw a room, family member, or activity from home. Write or dictate: “This is where I...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you include in your house that makes it yours?”



Friday – My Family (Loose Parts)

Morning Meeting

- Book: Families, Families, Families!
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What materials could show different people in your home?”
 - “What makes each person in your family unique?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children use natural and open-ended materials (stones, cloth, wood rounds, corks, twigs) to create a symbolic representation of their family. Offer trays, slabs, or empty frames as a surface.
- Journal Prompt: Draw your family design or one person you represented. Write or dictate: “This is ___.”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: Reflect: “What did you think about when choosing materials for your family?”



Week 2: My Home & How I Built It

Focus Concept: Homes and Structures

Weekly Objective: Children explore the concept of home—not only who lives there, but what it looks and feels like. They express their ideas through sketching, loose parts, box construction, and collaborative building. They begin to notice the structures in their environment and build their own symbolic representations.

Monday – Sketching My Home

Morning Meeting

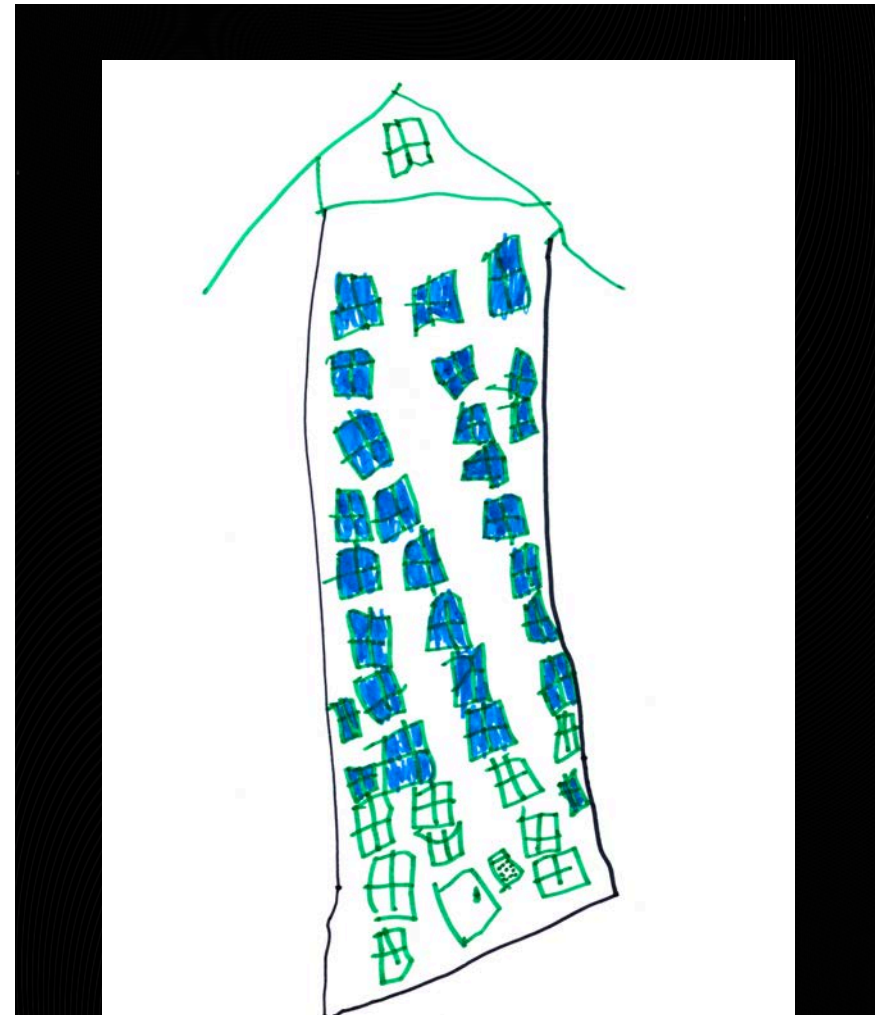
- Book: A Home Can Be..., by Stephanie Seidler
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What makes your home feel like yours?”
 - “Is there a favorite place inside your home? What makes it your favorite?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Invite children to bring in or look at a photo of their home or a special place within it. Provide clipboards, pencils, and fine-line pens for sketching. Offer tracing paper or viewfinders to help frame details like doors, windows, and steps.
- Journal Prompt: Draw part of your home or a favorite place inside it. Write or dictate: “This is where I...” or “My favorite part is...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you realize when reflecting on your home?”



Tuesday – What Can You Build?

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What makes a home feel strong or cozy?”
 - “Can we build a place someone could live in?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer upcycled and open-ended building materials—boxes, tubes, fabric, tape, cardboard.
- Include images of global homes and architectural features (e.g. domes, stilts, huts, apartments). Allow solo or collaborative builds.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “How did your ideas change as you built?”



Wednesday – My Home with Loose Parts

Morning Meeting

- Book: A Home Can Be..., by Stephanie Seidler
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What helps people know this is your house?”
 - “What parts can you include with materials?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer trays of natural and open-ended materials: corks, bark, fabric, buttons, small tiles, stones, wood pieces.
- Provide wooden frames or slabs for children to build their homes symbolically through transient art.
- Journal Prompt: Draw your loose part creation or a detail from it.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What materials helped you the most today?”



Thursday – Building with Boxes

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What happens when you work with other people?”
 - “How can we combine our ideas?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Offer a range of cardboard boxes, masking tape, scissors, crayons, markers, construction paper, and fabric scraps.
- Children collaborate to design and build shared spaces—houses, rooms, structures. Let them decorate or name their builds.
- Journal Prompt: How can you draw what you worked on today?

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you like about building with others?” “What was hard about building with others?”



Friday – Decorating Our Windows

Morning Meeting

- Book: Families, Families, Families! by Suzanne Lang
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do you want someone outside to see when they walk by?”
 - “How do we brighten our space and invite others in?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children use transparency sheets, cellophane, contact paper, window markers, tissue paper, dried flowers, etc. to design individual or collaborative window art.
- Display designs on classroom or home windows to reflect identity and pride in community.
- Journal Prompt: Draw your window design or another's. Write or dictate: “My window shows...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What do our windows say about our classroom/home?”



Week 3: Exploring My Community

Focus Concept: Neighborhoods, community spaces, and shared environments

Weekly Objective: Children expand their sense of belonging by exploring the spaces and places that make up their wider community. Through walks, sketches, mapping, and collaborative dialogue, they begin to notice the structures, people, and features that contribute to community life.

Monday – What's in Our Community?

Morning Meeting

- Book: Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do we pass on our way to school or the store?”
 - “What makes a place part of a community?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Take a community walk around your school, center, or home. Invite children to look closely at buildings, signs, and people.
- Bring clipboards, pencils, or sketchpads to document what they see (drawing, symbols, or words).
- Optional: use disposable cameras or print digital photos afterward for follow-up sketching and/or reflection.
- Journal Prompt: Draw one place you saw on our walk.
Write or dictate: “I saw a ___.” or “I liked the ___ because...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What surprised you or caught your eye on our walk?”



Tuesday – Visit and Sketch Your Favorite Place

Morning Meeting

- Book: Last Stop on Market Street
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What makes a place special to you and why?”
 - “How can we show what we love about it?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children vote on a favorite location to visit (e.g. library, bakery, post office, garden).
- Visit in small groups or take several short trips across the week. Encourage children to sketch details of the building, environment, people, etc.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What makes this place special?”



Wednesday – Map Our Neighborhood

Morning Meeting

- Book: A Home Can Be... by Stephanie Seidler
- Discussion Questions:
 - “If we walked out the door, what would we pass first? What other places will our map need?”
- “What could we add to show where people go?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Work collaboratively on a large floor map of the neighborhood. Use paper, cardboard, or poster board and loose parts and open-ended materials. Children contribute by drawing or building elements (parks, homes, roads, landmarks) and placing them on the map. Add symbols or signs.
 - There is no rush on this project - let the work last for the week and even go into next week.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you add to our map and why?”



Thursday – What Would You Add to Our Community?

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome
- Discussion Questions:
 - “Is there something you wish we had nearby that we can add to our neighborhood map?”
 - “How would you build it?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children brainstorm ideas together—then sketch or create additions to the community they began working on yesterday.
- Journal Prompt: Draw your idea. Write or dictate: “I would add a ___ because...”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “How would our ideas help the community?”



Friday – Creating Our Community (Cont'd)

Morning Meeting

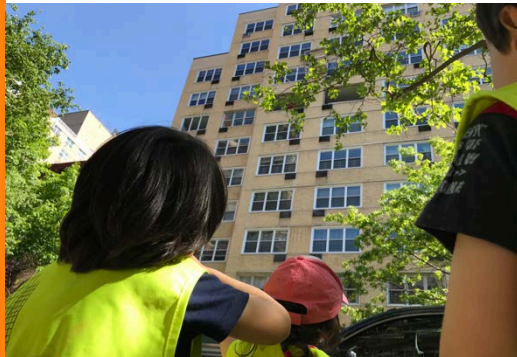
- Book: Families, Families, Families!
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do we need to include?”
 - “How do people travel from one place to another?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Before jumping back to the collaborative community piece, travel outside as a group to refresh what's around you, while also inspiring new ideas.
- Invite children to work together using recycled materials or natural loose parts to recreate key features of the community.
- Label buildings, include figurines or drawn people, and add roads or water. Children can add to it across several days.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did we learn about where we live?”



Week 4: Giving Back and Looking Forward

Focus Concept: Connection, contribution, and community care

Weekly Objective: Children reflect on their role within a larger community—how they can express appreciation, give back, and continue shaping their shared world. Through collaborative art, meaningful gestures, and final reflections, they build a sense of belonging and purpose.

Monday – What Can We Do for Our Community?

Morning Meeting

- Book: Last Stop on Market Street
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What is something kind we could do for someone in our community?”
 - “How do we show appreciation or say thank you?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Brainstorm a list of community helpers and nearby places (firehouse, postal workers, local grocery store, library) - You can also go on a walk for inspiration!
- Begin planning a class “thank you” gesture (e.g. bake muffins, make bookmarks, decorate cards). Invite children to vote on who they want to thank and how (begin work tomorrow or next day based on materials needed).

Closing Circle

- “How do we feel when we help others?”



Tuesday – Creating our Gifts

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What makes a gift feel special?”
 - “How do we work as a team to make something together?”
 - “What message do we want to send with our gift?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children decorate and personalize the items, package them, and write a collective thank-you note. Photograph the process for display or documentation.
- Draw what you helped make. Write or dictate: “We made ___ for ___.”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What did you enjoy most about creating something to give?”



Wednesday – Delivering our Gifts

Morning Meeting

- Book: Families, Families, Families! (final revisit to tie together family and community)
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What do you hope the people feel when they receive our gift?”
 - “How do we act when we visit someone?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Take a walking field trip (or host a visit) to deliver the class gift. If unable to visit in person, make a video message or drop it off with a note. Children can share what they made and why. If hosting, invite the recipient to speak or answer questions.
- Journal Prompt: Draw what it felt like to give. Write or dictate: “I felt ___ when we gave ___.”

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What was the best part of giving back?”



Thursday – Plan Our Bake Sale

Morning Meeting

- Book: All Are Welcome
- Prompt: “Tomorrow we’ll host a bake sale. How can we work together to prepare?”
- Discussion Questions:
 - “What will we need to do before we open our sale?” What jobs can we do?”
 - “Who will we invite—and where will the money go (what charity to donate to)?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Children plan the bake sale: help bake (if possible), decorate signs and menus, make price tags, role-play shopkeeper roles, and help count pretend or real money.
- As a group, vote on which organization or cause to donate proceeds to (e.g. pet shelter, food pantry).

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What makes something feel special when you give it away?”



Friday – Host Bake Sale & Celebrate Community

Morning Meeting

- Book: Last Stop on Market Street (final revisit)
- Discussion Questions:
 - “How do you think people will feel when they see what we made?”
 - “What did we learn about helping and giving this month?”
 - “What else do you want to learn about your community?”

Follow-Up Investigation

- Host the bake sale! Children take turns greeting, serving, and explaining the project. Encourage reflection during and after the event.
- Prepare donation envelope, take photos, and celebrate each child's contribution. Invite families or school community to stop by.

Closing Circle

- Reflect: “What can our hands and hearts do for the world?”



About Centers, Provocations, and Materials

The following center setups and materials are designed to support the investigation across the unit. The intention is not to do everything at once—but to select, rotate, and adapt based on the children's interests, developmental needs, and the rhythm of the group.

These ideas should be seen as options to choose from, not a checklist to complete. Overloading the space with too many choices can overwhelm young children. Instead, offer a small number of materials at a time, and observe how children engage with them before introducing more.

You might choose to:

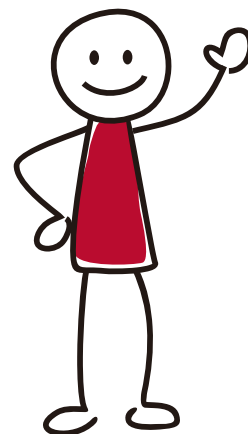
- Keep certain materials consistent for multiple weeks to allow for repetition and mastery.
- Rotate in new elements slowly to spark renewed interest or deeper thinking.
- Modify invitations to become more complex or more accessible as needed.

Children should be welcomed to:

- Make choices about how and where they work within the classroom.
- Move materials between areas (when appropriate) to support their ideas or projects.
- Combine materials across centers to create more layered and meaningful representations.
- Take responsibility for the tools they use by helping to return them when finished.

While autonomy is encouraged, a sense of shared care and responsibility is expected. In all cases, the role of the adult is to:

- Observe how materials are used and what thinking is emerging.
- Document children's approaches, choices, and discoveries.
- Decide when to step back, when to scaffold, and when to offer something new.





Science & Discovery Center

Purpose: Encourage observation, questioning, and reflection about homes, neighborhoods, and shared environments.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **Magnified Materials:** Provide real leaves, dirt, mulch, stones, and small architectural materials (bricks, wood samples). Offer magnifying glasses and sorting trays.
- **Map Making Table:** Offer printed images of your school neighborhood and surrounding streets. Add clear overlays, dry-erase markers, and loose parts for mapping.
- **Light Table Neighborhood:** Use transparent building shapes, home photos printed on transparency film, and people counters. Children design layered community layouts.
- **Weather & Window Logs:** Set up a window-view station with binoculars, weather chart, and sketch pads. Invite children to observe what they see happening outside over time.

Notes: Add vocabulary cards (neighborhood, observe, weather, near, far, nature, materials). Include clipboards for sketching and labeling.

Dramatic Play

Purpose: Foster empathy, social connection, and symbolic play rooted in real-life experiences.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **My Home Corner:** Include culturally diverse dress-up clothes, pretend kitchen tools, family photos, baby dolls, and pillows to reflect the comfort of home.
- **Neighborhood Role Play:** Rotate between setups such as a grocery store, post office, fire station, or café based on the children's lived experiences.
- **Baker's Corner (for bake sale week):** Add pretend baking supplies, aprons, "money," and trays to prep for bake sale play.
- **Build-a-Community Prop Shelf:** Allow children to create menus, signs, or name tags to add to evolving dramatic play environments.

Notes: Encourage children to co-construct their own props and roles. Include clipboards for writing lists, signs, or pretend mail.

Sensory Table

Purpose: Promote open-ended exploration of movement, sound, and touch through rolling materials.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **Rolling Bin:** Bin filled with kinetic sand, tubes, balls, rolling pins, or spools to explore pressure and movement.
- **Loose Parts Rolling Play:** Bottle caps, corks, small logs, washers, pebbles, lids, and dowels for free exploration and stacking.
- **Tactile Trail:** Create a ramp with sections of different textures (felt, bubble wrap, foil) and test how objects roll across.
- **Make-Your-Own Ball Station:** Foil, yarn, tape, and soft modeling dough for creating rollable shapes.

Notes: Take your time moving through sensory bin bases, as children need time and repetition of experiences. You can also alternate bases in addition to/instead of kinetic sand, e.g. water, water beads, soil.



Blocks & Construction

Purpose: Encourage architectural expression, spatial thinking, and community-based construction play.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **Neighborhood Build Zone:** Add cardboard buildings, fabric scraps, and wood blocks for creating familiar streets and spaces. Include people figures and vehicles.
- **Home Design Challenge:** Offer photos of global homes (e.g., yurts, apartments, cabins). Invite children to recreate their home or invent new ones.
- **Build Your Family:** Offer peg dolls, natural wood pieces, and yarn to construct representations of each child's family within their space.
- **Community Landmark Build:** Place images of firehouses, libraries, parks, etc., with building materials to inspire collaborative structures.

Notes: Use clipboards for sketching building plans. Add word cards like build, home, family, roof, structure, together.

Art Studio

Purpose: Support creative representation, reflection, and identity expression through diverse materials.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **Self-Portrait Station:** Offer mirrors, multicultural skin-toned paints, pastels, and pencils for detailed self-portraits.
- **Community Sketching:** Offer paper, coloring utensils and provide real images of the community, landscapes, famous buildings, etc. to inspire.
- **Community Mural Alternative:** Offer long paper with loose parts or paint to co-create a “place we belong” visual. Children can add their homes, favorite people, or places.
- **Name Design Area:** Provide beads, letter stamps, natural materials, and glue for constructing names in creative ways.

Notes: Display inspirational books or printed documentation nearby. Offer verbal prompts like: “What makes this place feel like home?”

Literacy Center

Purpose: Provide grounding, imaginative, and symbolic play with materials that reflect the textures of community spaces.

Materials & Setup Options:

- **“Build My World” Bin:** Fill with kinetic sand, pebbles, corks, small wood pieces, and tiny construction tools. Children design mini neighborhoods or buildings.
- **Community-Inspired Dough Play:** Scented play dough (lavender, lemon, or cinnamon) with tools to inspire the creation of people and/or environments.
- **Loose Parts Identity Bin:** Provide buttons, fabric, twigs, and smooth stones with mirrors and trays—you may also add toy people.

Notes: Add natural or home-themed scents for deeper sensory connection. Include books and family photo inspiration cards for storytelling prompts.





“When we show up for each other, we build something bigger than ourselves.”

— Fred Rogers