

Unit of Study: Pets

Unit Overview: The unit on pets presents children with a variety of opportunities to develop increased competency across a variety of standards as they explore materials and experiences related to pets.

Over the course of the unit, teachers will assist children to transition dramatic play to a pet store. Drawing on children's experiences, teachers will take children on a virtual tour of a pet store on the internet, and work with them to create a list of materials, pet storage containers, and supplies that they can see at a pet store and later create in dramatic play.

As the unit evolves, children will explore the similarities and differences among various types of pets, investigating their appearances, care needs, and diets to better understand what it means to take care of a living creature. Where possible, teachers will introduce living creatures to the children to connect experiences to content.

While individual classroom experiences throughout this unit may vary, key assessment experiences will present students with opportunities to create patterned collars for the dramatic play pets, design and create their own pets, practice caring for animals, read books about a variety of pets and animals, and practice counting with animal manipulatives.



Teachers will facilitate a variety of structured and embedded learning experiences, tying students' unique experiences with content to facilitate a high-interest unit of investigation.

Teachers will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts featuring animals. Throughout the course of large and small group readings, teachers will prompt children to share their experiences related to various types of animals, and to recap details/information from the text related to animals/stories of interest.

The following activities represent some recommended learning experiences to facilitate this unit of study, in addition to other teacher-developed activities.

Learning Experiences

COGNITION		
Strand A: Early learning experiences will support children to develop effective approaches to learning		
Strand A: Cooperation with Peers in Learning Environments		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
Activity Description: Child-Directed Play in the Dramatic Play Pet Store Teachers will monitor play in the dramatic play pet store and support peer interactions using teaching strategies. Teachers will guide children to interact and cooperate with one another to complete shared play goals for increasing lengths of time.	Teaching Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw attention to peers and how they are playing - If child works alone at an area, T may ask another child to join him/her. - Comment on peers' play and actions - Make available duplicate objects/toys so children can copy one another's actions. - Verbalize observations and "wonder" about how the children can proceed in their play. - When leaving morning meeting, may ask c who they will play with/what they will build/play together. - Comment on props and open-ended materials in D.P. to spur student interest, critical thinking, and new play options. - Help extend play by introducing new problems/scenarios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record interactions between learners when supported/prompted to interact. - Record interactions with different peers - Rephrase classmates' words when needed to ensure that communicative attempts are understood between peers - Encourage peers to share their thoughts, ideas, and play with others - Identify what task/problem children are attempting to complete together and document
Learning Objectives: Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage in and complete learning activities with peers - Plan and complete learning activity with a peer - Help and cooperate in group - Model or teach peers how to use materials or complete a task 	Individualizations/Modifications	
	DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills. PROGRESSION: Comprehension of Information Presented Orally Teachers will support ELL learners by using gestures and Spanish vocabulary to clarify what peers are saying while at play. Will encourage interactions between children that have shared languages.	
	IEP/IFSP Connections:	

COGNITION		
Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to use logic and reasoning.		
Strand B: Attributes, Sorting, and Patterns		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
Activity Description: Patterning Beaded Pet Collars Teachers will set out a variety of beads (different sizes should be made available to accommodate various fine motor abilities) and will work with children to create beaded dog/cat collars for the animals in dramatic play, explaining that the collars will enable children to recognize/identify the animals if they get lost. Teachers will assist children to complete or create specific AB or ABB patterns for their collars, using scaffolding questioning strategies to build learners' attention to attributes of materials.	Teaching Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask children to describe the features of bead materials (color/texture/shape) - Wrap tape around ends of string to make it easier for children to manipulate. - Provide models of AB and ABB patterns; ask children to predict what attribute comes next in a sequence. - Verbalize pattern sequences, fading out the prompt (i.e. "red, blue, red, blue, red, blue, red... [pause], blue") - Encourage c. to look around the environment and identify patterns they see (i.e. floor tiles, lighting fixture placement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage with students one-on-one while assessing and providing verbal prompts/cues - Review patterning sequence by pointing out each alternating color/object and saying it aloud - Fade out repetitions of sequences to allow children to "fill in the blank" - Invite children to complete pattern sequences by filling in the next logical piece in the pattern
Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify similarities and differences in objects, people, events, sounds based on one attribute - Compare relative attributes of objects, - Recognize patterns in routines, objects and/or sounds and replicate sequence using objects or language 	Individualizations/Modifications	
	DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand A: Early learning experiences will support children to develop listening skills PROGRESSION: Vocabulary Teachers will using patterning experience to reinforce learners' vocabulary understanding/retention. Target vocabulary will include vocabulary that pertains to size/shape/color of beading materials. Teachers will reinforce and generalize the vocabulary by using the vocabulary words at various points in the day, adding vocal inflection to draw student awareness of the word.	
	IEP/IFSP Connections:	

Social and Emotional Development

Strand E: Early learning experiences will support children to develop, express, recognize and respond to emotions.

Strand E: Recognition and Response to Emotions in Others

Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
<p>Activity Description: Perspective-Taking: Reflecting on Pets' Needs</p> <p>Teachers will introduce a stuffed bunny or similar animal as the class “pet” and work with the children to create an appropriate container/habitat for the pet so that it will be closed off from children (for example, an upside-down plastic laundry basket could be used to serve as a cage, with ripped up magazine pages for bedding). Teachers will solicit student input on how to make an appropriate home. The teacher will explain that the pet will be having babies soon and that the children will need to check on the pet each day and take care of her.</p> <p>Prior to the babies being “born” the teacher will engage children in perspective-taking by bringing the pet to morning meeting every day, using structured questions to help children think about how they should modify their behavior to care for the bunny (e.g. “our bunny has big ears. How do you think she feels when she hears our voices being loud?... What can we do so she <i>doesn't</i> feel scared?... How do you think we should hold her? Can you show me how you think you would pass her to someone else?”). Teacher will guide children to pass the pet around the group, with students taking turns stroking, talking to, and/or “feeding” the bunny. (see Caring for a Pet Activity for Stage 2 of this activity)</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask students how they think the bunny feels. Talk about what it means to feel scared. Invite children to share things that scare them. - Use facial expressions and tones of speech to symbolize/represent various emotions/actions (scared expression/ “gentle” touch/ calmness / quiet) - Model how to “handle” the bunny before passing it to students. - Use targeted questions to help children reflect on their own emotional experiences and use this reflection to help children consider the bunny’s perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher will monitor student facial and verbal responses to descriptions of bunny’s feelings to identify evidence of empathy or perspective-taking. - Listen to and document children’s accounts/descriptions of their experiences that made them feel scared. - Monitor and record student behaviors towards the bunny.
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize, label and respond to a wide variety of emotions in others - Make connections between emotional reaction of others and own emotional experiences - Recognize and show acknowledgement of the feelings, needs and rights of others through behavior - Begin to understand that different people may have different emotional reactions 	<p>Individualizations/Modifications</p> <p>DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS:</p> <p>STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills.</p> <p>PROGRESSION: Communication of Needs</p> <p>Teachers will incorporate basic English vocabulary to describe bodily functions, emotions, and needs (i.e. thirsty, hungry, tired, angry).</p>	
	<p>IEP/IFSP Connections:</p>	

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Physical Development & Health

Strand D: Early learning experiences will support children to maintain physical health status and well-being

Strand D: Healthy Behaviors

Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
<p>Activity Description: Caring for a Pet: Following the Reflecting on Pets' Needs Activity, the teacher will use felt or other materials to create miniaturized stuffed bunny babies and will put them in the cage for children to discover. The teacher will give each student a bunny to take home as a "pet" and will instruct children and their parents to take care of the pet by bringing it out for daily walks or exercise, preparing healthy food together for it to snack on, and reading to it every night. Teachers will encourage parents to email/text photos of their children doing activities with their pets and will give children opportunities to share their pictures and talk about the activities they completed with their pets.</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is a school-to-home connection. To support parents to use effective strategies, teachers will instruct parents to assist their children to make healthy meals, brainstorm outdoor/exercise activities each day, and select a book to read to the "pet". - During arrival/drop off, teachers will ask parents/children what they did with their bunny the night before. - Teachers will provide students with opportunities to share their experiences with their bunnies with the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invite parents to email/text/print pictures of the activities their children undertake with the "bunnies" - Develop and use a checklist of basic health practices (i.e. taking a bath, going for a walk, brushing teeth, eating healthy food, going to bed early after a nice bedtime story). Complete the checklist each day at morning meeting by asking students to raise their hands if they [insert task] the night before with their stuffed bunny. - Work with children to create small documentation books about things they did with their bunnies, utilizing pictures, direct quotes from children, and direct quotes from parents.
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children participate in self-care routines, hygiene and nutrition with assistance and prompting from caregivers. 	<p>Individualizations/Modifications</p> <p>DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills. PROGRESSION: Communication of Needs Teachers will encourage parents to incorporate basic English vocabulary into daily conversations to describe bodily functions, emotions, and needs (i.e. thirsty, hungry, tired, angry), as these words are extremely important for dual-language students so that their basic needs can be met while at school.</p>	

	IEP/IFSP Connections:	
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Early Language, Communication, and Literacy

Strand D: Early learning experiences will support children to gain book appreciation and knowledge

Strand D: Interest and Engagement with Books

Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
<p>Activity Description: Reading Books: Teachers will read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts featuring animals. Throughout the course of large and small group readings, teachers will prompt children to share their experiences related to various types of animals, and to recap details/information from the text related to animals/stories of interest.</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give children opportunities to respond to questions - Ask children to share their experiences related to books - Ask children to make predictions - Ask children to share what they know about animals or experiences portrayed in texts - Give students opportunities to participate by inviting them to imitate animal sounds, make gestures to represent animals, and point out images in the story. - Introduce both fiction and non-fiction text relating to animals - Set books out in an attractive, inviting arrangement/display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make note of the books each child independently seeks out/looks at and record their titles and the length of time that the child attended to them. - Give children opportunities to select books to read for group reading sessions - Monitor engagement and participation in reading experiences and document observations
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Select fiction and nonfiction books to be read and attend with interest - Independently choose to “read” books and select a variety of texts including fiction and nonfiction 	<p>Individualizations/Modifications</p> <p>DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand C: Early learning experiences will support children to develop early literacy skills PROGRESSION: Connect written print and spoken language Teachers will point out written words in both English and Spanish books and will point to the object/ideas they represent. Say key words from the text in Spanish, or ask the student to say the name of select images in Spanish to teach the class.</p>	
	<p>IEP/IFSP Connections</p>	

Creative Arts		
Strand A: Early learning experiences will support children to engage in and enjoy the arts		
Strand A: Visual Arts		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
<p>Activity Description: Creating Animals Teachers will present a range of three-dimensional and two-dimensional art supplies and will challenge children to create a pet for the dramatic play pet store. Teachers will use teaching strategies to support children to create their own representations with a variety of child-selected materials.</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a variety of 3-dimensional materials - Ask children reflective questions, (e.g., “what kind of animal are you trying to make?” “what does that animal look like? How will you give yours [stripes/long neck/fur/etc.]”) - Model how to use and manipulate materials - Comment on children’s actions - Draw attention to peer use of materials - Ask children to describe what they are doing/attempting to do with materials. - Before children commence work, ask children to explain their plan for constructions. - Prompt reflection by asking children about whether or not they accomplished their plan. - Use tech and other resources (e.g., cell phone, computer, books) to show visual models of children’s ideas (e.g., looking at a pictures of animals etc. that relate to a child’s idea/plan) - Bloom’s Questions: “What did you create? Is that what you planned to make? How is it different? Tell me about [detail]? How do you know it’s a ____? Does this look similar to the one we looked at in the book?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take pictures of children’s creations, with corresponding text captions of children’s own descriptions of creations. - Use “tell me about what you made,” prompt to elicit student reflection on work. Record student descriptions
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use different materials and techniques to make art creations that reflect thoughts, feelings, experiences, knowledge - Use a variety of tools and materials to represent ideas through the visual arts 	<p>Individualizations/Modifications</p> <p>DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills. PROGRESSION: Social Conventions Teachers will engage dual-language learners in discussions about what they are making. Teachers will repeat key words and will use pointing and gestures to reinforce meaning. Teachers will restate students’ conversational statements into complete sentences and will ask follow up questions.</p>	

	IEP/IFSP Connections:	
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Early Mathematical Discovery

Strand A: Early learning experiences will support children to understand counting and cardinality

Strand A: Recognition of Quantity

Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
<p>Activity Description: Counting Animals in Teacher-Led Small Group Sessions</p> <p>Teachers will set out animal manipulatives during small group sessions and give students a few minutes to play with the animals independently. Once children have had an opportunity to play with the manipulatives, the teacher will present a written number to children, discuss the features of the number, and assist children to count out the quantity represented by the numeral using the animals. Teachers will use knowledge of students and only present numbers that align with each students' individual Zones of Proximal Development. As children demonstrate proficiency with one-to-one correspondence and rote sequencing, teachers will increase the quantities introduced during sessions.</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give children 2-3 minutes to play with/explore animal figurines prior to beginning exercise. - After introducing a written numeral, encourage children to use their fingers to trace the written number or "draw" the numeral figure in the air. - After children have "drawn" or traced the numeral with their fingers, prompt them to count up to that number. - When children do not initiate oral counting, say the first two numbers and then fade out - Use hand-over-hand guidance to help children count out the correct number of animals if child cannot yet do so independently. - Have children physically move animal figurines to one side as they count - After children finish counting the number of animal figurines in a group, say, "yes, there are [number] animals in this group." - Help children compare quantities by asking, "which group has more?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use number quantities aligned to student's ZPDs - Use a checklist to indicate if children can name various quantities of objects, regardless of configuration or size differences.
<p>Learning Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize and name, without counting, the number of objects in small groups of at least 3 or 4 objects - Quickly recognize and name, without counting, the number of objects in collections of up to at least five items 	<p>Individualizations/Modifications</p> <p>DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS:</p> <p>STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills.</p> <p>PROGRESSION: Vocabulary, Symbols, and Environmental Print</p> <p>Teachers will present number symbols to students and say the target numbers in students' dominant languages.</p>	

	IEP/IFSP Connections:	
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Early Mathematical Discovery		
Strand D: Early learning experiences will support children to understand shapes and spatial relationships (geometry and spatial sense)		
Strand D: Spatial Relationships		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
Activity Description: Supporting Spatial Awareness through Dramatic Play Supporting children’s self-directed play, teachers will role play as customers in the pet shop and request various items for purchasing, using only positional language to indicate the locations of desired items (e.g., “I want the pet that is over the cat,” or, “I want the cat food in the back of the shelf”). Teachers will reverse the roles by asking children to describe where specific items can be found.	Teaching Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid using gestural prompts to indicate the desired item. - For older/higher benchmark children, teachers will pose as a store clerk and will ask for directions on where to put items/pets (e.g., “where should I put this turtle?”) - When children do not use positional vocabulary and use another method to communicate location (i.e. pointing, gestures), teacher verbalize the communication (i.e., “you’re pointing to the cat next to the dog. Where is the cat?”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a checklist with rows for a variety of positional vocabulary (i.e. up, down, over, under, next to, beside, behind, in front of) and columns for expression and reception (expressive = children can use/generate the vocabulary themselves; receptive = children understand when the vocabulary is used by someone else). Teachers will check off which words children use and/or respond to in the context of play. Teachers will have translated versions of these words in Spanish so dual language learners may also be assessed.
Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use positional vocabulary (e.g., up/down, in/out, on/off, under) to identify and describe the location of an object - Use relational vocabulary of proximity (e.g., beside, next to, between, above, below, over and under) to identify and describe the location of an object 	Individualizations/Modifications DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand A: Early learning experiences will support children to develop listening skills PROGRESSION: Comprehension of Oral Instructions, Questions, and Prompts Teachers will emphasize the target positional word in sentences and will repeat the word in Spanish to support comprehension. Teacher will use gestures for ELL learners to support understanding of positional vocabulary.	

	IEP/IFSP Connections:	
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Early Scientific Inquiry		
Strand C: Early learning experiences will support children to understand patterns, process and relationships of living things		
Strand C: Unity and Diversity of Life		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
Activity Description: Animal Comparisons: Teachers will set out bins of animal figurines on a table. As children interact with figurines, teachers will ask c. questions about the animals they are playing with and will encourage them to make connections between different types of animals using open-ended questioning techniques	Teaching Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set out a wide variety of animal figurines - Ask children to describe the animal (including what it looks like, where it lives, what it eats) - Ask children if they can think of any other animals that have similar features (i.e. "What's another animal that has four legs?") - Help c. reflect on why animals have certain body parts (i.e. why does the lion have sharp teeth like that? Why is do you think the giraffe has such a long neck?) - Ask child to consider the age of the animal (do you think this is a baby? Why/not?) How will it change as it gets bigger? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anecdotal records of children's experiences during activity. Ts will record children's comments, grouping/categorizations in response to teacher prompts and questions.
Learning Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compare and contrast basic features of living things (e.g., body parts and their uses) between and across groups - Group and classify living things based upon features, providing evidence to support groupings - Recognize changes in living things over their lifespan by observing similarities and differences between babies and adults - Demonstrate an understanding of how living things grow and change through predictable stages (e.g., birth, growth, reproduction, death) 	Individualizations/Modifications	
	DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Strand B: Early learning experiences will support children to develop speaking skills. PROGRESSION: Vocabulary Teacher will label the various body parts for the students in English/Spanish and encourage the students to repeat the names back. Teacher will label the body part across a variety of animals to support comprehension/generalization	
	IEP/IFSP Connections:	

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Social Studies		
Choose an item.		
Choose an item.		
Learning Experiences:	Interactions	Assessment Strategies
Activity Description:	Teaching Strategies: -	-
Learning Objectives:	Individualizations/Modifications	
	DUAL – LANGUAGE LEARNERS: STRAND: Choose an item. PROGRESSION: Choose an item.	
	IEP/IFSP Connections	

Family Engagement Strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have children take care of a pretend “pet” at home. Children will have their pet join them for healthy meals, exercise activities, and self-care tasks - Create a schedule of days that children can share their pets with the class (either during pickup or morning meeting) , in accordance with program policies. Animals not allowed in the facility may still be shared with the students through a window or fence - Encourage parents to bring in pictures of their pets for students to share and chart during morning meetings.

Materials: