

EXPLORE YOUR ENVIRONMENT: K-8 ACTIVITY GUIDE

PLT's new flagship curriculum *Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide* includes 50 hands-on, multidisciplinary activities to connect children to nature and increase young people's awareness and knowledge about their environment. Activities include detailed step-by-step instructions, academic correlations, time and material requirements, and corresponding student worksheets with green career connections. This supplementary curriculum is designed to develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



Teaching About the Environment

Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide offers educators a wide variety of engaging, hands-on activities, organized into grade bands: K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. Many activities also suggest variations for doing the activity with a different grade level or audience.

Topics include trees and forests, wildlife, water, air, energy, waste, climate change, invasive species, community planning, and more. The activities encompass the economic, ecological, and social aspects of environmental issues and are designed to help students learn how to think, not what to think.

The activities are suitable for use in formal classrooms and nonformal settings and several are particularly suited to exploring urban environments. Most activities are designed to take one or two 50-minute periods of instruction.

PLT activities are designed to be easy to use. Each activity contains all the information needed to teach the core lesson, including background information, preparation instructions, materials and time requirements, step-by-step instructions, student pages, assessment suggestions, and suggestions for extending the lesson.

Taking students outdoors to make observations or collect data is the core of many lessons and while there are lessons for both indoors and outdoors, all activities offer ways to "Take It Outside!" to extend student learning. In addition, many suggest service-learning opportunities that take students into their community.

[Read our announcement.](#)

Get it now! Purchase a print guide or e-book available from [Shop.PLT.org](#), or get it through your [PLT State Coordinator](#) along with high-quality professional development and additional resources tailored to your state's standards and environment. Through these interactive (and fun) in-person or virtual workshops, participants practice how to use PLT materials while also gaining insights from the facilitator and each other related to content and teaching strategies.

Hands-on Learning

PLT activities are hands-on and investigation-based, making learning fun while also building skills, stimulating knowledge gains, and actively engaging students. They afford students the opportunity to learn through real experiences, rather than just reading or hearing about them.

Children discover why leaves turn yellow in the fall. They learn how seeds travel through the wind and grow in the soil where they land. They look underneath leaves, stones, and rotting logs for evidence of decomposers. They create nature journals, develop their creative writing skills, craft stories from their observations. They "adopt" a tree and learn about that species and watch how it changes through the seasons.

They pretend to be trees and gather the nutrients they need for them to survive, collecting different colored squares for each element. They learn to "read" a cross section of a tree to see how old it is through the number of rings and what happened in each year. They learn to focus and observe using their five senses. They map out sounds they hear, they collect data and build bar graphs, comparing different elements in nature they find.

They learn in a different way.

[Review brief summaries of the 50 activities](#) contained in PLT's *Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide*.

Well-tested Teaching Strategies

All PLT activities have been thoroughly field-tested by educators working with students in the classroom and in nonformal settings. In addition to inquiry-based instruction and outdoor teaching and learning, PLT activities employ differentiated instruction strategies, career connections, STEM skills building, and authentic assessment.

For example, each activity suggests effective strategies for students to apply and demonstrate what they learned from the activity. A Career Corner is included with every student worksheet to introduce youth to related green careers. Every activity incorporates at least some elements of STEM and lists relevant STEM skills. Some activities are denoted as STEM exemplars.

Activities can be used as individual, stand-alone lessons, or several activities can be linked together into a unit of instruction using a storyline technique. Storylines suggested in the guide support learning progressions that hold areas of knowledge and skills together.

PLT is dedicated to ensuring that our education materials contribute to authentic and meaningful learning spaces that represent diverse voices. This newest curriculum has also been developed through a critical lens of justice and inclusion. PLT's model of professional development also helps to ensure that instruction and content strategies can be modified to meet the needs of all learners.

[Learn more about how this guide was developed and some of its key features.](#)

PLT Meets Academic Standards

Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide is supplementary curriculum that is multi-disciplinary, with an emphasis on science, reading, writing, mathematics, and social studies.

Each PLT activity displays explicit connections to practices and concepts expected by the following national academic standards so teachers can easily see where the materials will fit into their lesson plans:

- Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)
- Common Core State Standards—English Language Arts (CCSS.ELA)
- Common Core State Standards—Mathematics (CCSS.MATH)
- College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies (C3)

Our professional development further demonstrates these connections, as well as to state and local standards.

For example, see our [NGSS Correlations Toolkit](#) for this guide, also available at [plt.org/myk8guide](#).

High-Quality Professional Development

PLT offers online, in-person, and blended professional development tailored for specific grade levels, academic standards, environmental topics, and formal and nonformal teaching situations.

- Enhance your teaching skills and become comfortable teaching outdoors.
- Receive instructional resources tailored to your state's standards and environment.
- Experience PLT activities and get tips specific to your setting.
- Earn continuing education credits.

Connect to a professional network through your PLT State Coordinator at [plt.org/yourstate](#).

Get PLT's Explore Your Environment: K-8 Activity Guide!

[Purchase a copy](#) of this 432-page guide from [Shop.PLT.org](#), available as an e-book or printed guide.

[Contact your PLT State Coordinator](#) to find about a scheduled workshop in your area, including remote professional development opportunities, or work with him or her to plan one for your unique setting!

Additional Resources

Cross-reference indices for activities include subject; grade level; topic; STEM skills; and differentiated instruction.

Also included are a variety of appendices, for example, Teaching to Standards, Tips for Teaching Outdoors, suggested Units of Instruction, Making a Scientific Argument, Planning an Investigation, and Assessment Rubric.

- [Download resources](#) for this guide at [plt.org/myk8guide](#), including the worksheets (or student pages) for each activity.
- [Subscribe to our newsletter](#) to receive notice of new resources that support this curriculum, plus ideas for engaging students with nature in both a formal classroom and nonformal setting.

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Environmental Education Resources

Every month we carefully select new educational apps, videos, interactive websites, books, careers information, and teacher-generated materials that support PLT lessons.

GreenSchools

PLT's GreenSchools program inspires students to apply their STEM and investigative skills to create greener and healthier schools – and save schools money.

Apply for a Grant

Do you have an idea for a service-learning project to improve the environment at your school or in your community? Apply for a PLT GreenWorks! grant by Sept. 30.

MAKE LEARNING FUN



ATTEND A TRAINING

Get our educational materials and professional development by participating in an in-person workshop or an online course.



CONTACT YOUR COORDINATOR

Get information relevant to your state, plus local assistance and connections to resources and professionals in your community.



APPLY FOR A GRANT

Get funding to help your students complete an action project to improve their environment. Deadline to apply is Sept. 30.

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