

Animal Adventures: Building Social Skills and STEAM Knowledge with Imagination Playground

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Age Group:

4 Year Olds

Learning Goals:

1. Social Skills:
 - Learn to work together and share ideas.
 - Practice talking to each other and listening.
 - Understand how to be kind and help each other.
2. STEAM Skills:
 - Explore building and creating with blocks.
 - Learn about counting and measuring.
 - Discover how things work through experiments.

Materials:

- Imagination Playground Big Blue Blocks (large)
- Imagination Playground Small blue blocks for table top activities
- Measuring tools (rulers, measuring tapes)
- Small toy animals
- Various STEAM-related materials (e.g., ramps, balls, gears)
- Stopwatch or timer

Introduction:

Good morning, everyone! Today is going to be an exciting day filled with adventure and creativity. We're going to explore why animals sometimes need bridges and how we can help them using our Big Blue Blocks.

Imagine you're a little rabbit hopping around in a forest. You're having a blast exploring when suddenly, you come across a wide river! How would you get to the other side? That's where a bridge comes in handy. It helps animals cross safely from one place to another, just like how we use roads and sidewalks.

Have you ever seen animals crossing a river or stream? Maybe you've noticed birds flying over water or ducks swimming across a pond. Animals, just like us, need to find ways to get where they want to go. But sometimes, they need a little help from us to build bridges.

Today, we're going to work together to build our own bridges using the Big Blue Blocks. We'll help toy animals cross rivers and have lots of fun doing it. But most importantly, we'll learn how to work together, share our ideas, and be kind to each other.

Are you ready for this adventure? Let's go!

Activities:

Activity 1: Build a Helping Bridge (Whole Group)

1. **Objective:** Work together to build a bridge with the Big Blue Blocks.
2. **Procedure:**
 - **Step 1:** Gather all the children in a circle.
 - **Step 2:** Introduce the concept of building a bridge to help toy animals cross a river (an imaginary line or a marked area).
 - **Step 3:** Explain that they will need to work together to build the bridge using the Big Blue Blocks.
 - **Step 4:** As a whole group, discuss ideas and decide how to build the bridge.
 - **Step 5:** Guide the children as they take turns placing blocks to construct the bridge.
 - **Step 6:** Once the bridge is built, let the children test it by making the toy animals cross the river.
 - **Discussion:** Talk about how they worked together, who helped whom, and what they liked about building the bridge.

3. Skills Developed:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Empathy

Activity 2: Tabletop Animal Bridges (Small Group)

1. **Objective:** Build a bridge for toy animals using small blue blocks.

2. **Procedure:**

- **1-2 minutes - Direct Teacher Instruction:**
 - Gather the children together and introduce the challenge: "Today, we're going to build small bridges for our toy animals using these blue blocks."
 - Show them the small blue blocks and explain the objective clearly.
 - Demonstrate how they can work together with a peer to build their bridges.
- **2-8 minutes - Guided Discovery with a Peer:**
 - Let the children work in pairs or in a group of three
 - Allow the students to have time to practice building a bridge
 - Scaffold their learning by asking open-ended questions
 - "What would happen if you moved the bottom blocks closer together?"
 - Monitor for engagement and intervene during moments of error
- **1 minute - Conclusion and Check for Understanding:**
 - Gather the children back together.
 - Ask questions to check their understanding, such as:
 - "Why did you decide to build your bridge that way?"
 - "How did you work together with your partner/group?"
 - Reinforce key concepts and encourage the children to share their experiences.
- **Release or Play Prompt for Center Time:**
 - "Now that you've built your bridges, let's think about what the toy animals can do on them. At the center, you can use the Big Blue Blocks and toy animals to create your own animal bridges. Can you make a bridge that's tall enough for the giraffe to go under? What about a bridge that's wide enough for the elephant?"

- Encourage them to continue exploring and playing with the concept of animal bridges during center time.
3. **Skills Developed:**
- Cooperation
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving

Activity 3: Independent Animal Bridges (Centers)

1. **Objective:** Independently or with a peer, create an animal bridge using the Big Blue Blocks during free choice center time.
2. **Procedure:**
 - Step 1: Set up a center with the Big Blue Blocks and a variety of toy animals. Step 2: Encourage children to create an animal bridge, either on their own or with a peer.
 - Step 3: Provide prompts to guide their play, such as "Can you build a bridge that is tall enough for the giraffe to go under?" or "What happens if you make the bridge wider?"
 - Step 4: The teacher provides scaffolding as needed, asking guiding questions and helping children reflect on their observations.
 - Discussion: After center time, gather the children to discuss what they built, how they worked alone or with a peer, and what they enjoyed.
3. **Skills Developed:**
 - Independent exploration
 - Reflective thinking
 - Problem-solving

Closing Circle:

Gather the children back in a circle to discuss the day's activities. Ask them to share what they learned about working together, building, and exploring with the ramps. Using a white board or large paper, record the responses and ideas. Post the reflections and new ideas in the center for children to reference the rest of the week. Reinforce the importance of being kind, listening to each other, and working as a team.

Extensions and Adaptations:

Extension 1: Color and Shape Sorting

- Set up a station with different colored and shaped blocks.
- Children sort the blocks by color and shape, practicing categorization and cooperation.

Extension 2: Timed Building Challenges

- Introduce a stopwatch or timer.
- Children try to build a structure within a certain time limit, working quickly but cooperatively.

Teacher Tools:

- Glossary of terms for STEAM and social skills.
- Materials list and setup suggestions.
- Additional activity ideas and resources.

Social Skills:

1. Learn to work together and share ideas.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
2. Practice talking to each other and listening.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.2: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details.
3. Understand how to be kind and help each other.
 - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.

STEAM Skills:

1. Explore building and creating with blocks.
 - CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
 - CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP5: Use appropriate tools strategically.
2. Learn about counting and measuring.
 - CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.CC.A.1: Count to 100 by ones and by tens.
 - CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.MD.A.1: Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object.
3. Discover how things work through experiments.
 - CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP2: Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
 - CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP4: Model with mathematics.