

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 509

CS 012 930

AUTHOR Mayo, Karen E.  
TITLE Look at Me!! I'm a Tree!: A Literacy-Based Integrated Thematic Unit on Forestry and Conservation Designed for Field Experiences in Early Childhood Education.  
PUB DATE 1996-11-01  
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (40th, Charleston, SC, October 31-November 3, 1996).  
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Conservation (Environment); Early Childhood Education; \*Emergent Literacy; Field Experience Programs; Forestry; Learning Strategies; Preschool Curriculum; Preservice Teacher Education; \*Science Activities; Science Education; \*Scientific Literacy; \*Thematic Approach  
IDENTIFIERS \*Learning across the Curriculum

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a literacy-based thematic unit on forestry and conservation designed for field experiences in early childhood education. This unit responds to national and state initiatives and serves as a model for enacting reform of science instruction by equipping preservice teachers with the necessary strategies to foster science process skills, promote scientific literacy, and make science meaningful, personal, and relevant to the student. The unit demonstrates for preservice early childhood teachers how to plan, implement, and assess integrated thematic instructional units in a field-based internship with kindergarten classes. Throughout the unit, a variety of strategies promote literacy in cross-curricular contexts--strategies such as creative dramatics, webbing, poetry writing, journalizing, and recording data on charts and graphs. (Contains eight references.) (CR)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

# Look at Me!! I'm A Tree!:

## A Literacy-based Integrated Thematic Unit on Forestry and Conservation Designed for Field Experiences in Early Childhood Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)  
 This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.  
 Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

---

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Mayo

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

**Dr. Karen E. Mayo**  
**East Texas Baptist University**

**A Paper Presentation for the 40th Annual Conference of the  
College Reading Association**

**November 1, 1996**

**Charleston, S.C.**

05012930

Look at Me!! I'm A Tree!: A Literacy-based Integrated Thematic Unit on Forestry and Conservation Designed for Field Experiences in Early Childhood Education

Karen E. Mayo

Background

During the last quarter of a century, national standardized test scores among high school students have fallen sharply in mathematics and science. Likewise, the number of students choosing careers in engineering, science, and mathematics has decreased steadily. Widescale investigations of science classes reveal that nearly a third of the nation's teachers lack adequate training in science and science education (Fort, 1993). It comes as no surprise that students complain of being bored and uninterested in science (Goodlad, 1984; JBeily, 1994).

These findings have caused an outbreak of several federally-funded agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Education, the Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Science Foundation to unite efforts and wage war on scientific illiteracy in this country (Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government, 1991). With the Congressional mandate of **GOALS 2,000**, the federally-funded **Project 2061: Benchmarks for Scientific Literacy**, and the publication of the 1996 National Standards for Science, our nation's schools have their work cut out for them in reforming the nature of science instruction into meaningful, stimulating hands-on experiences (Disinger, 1990; Haury, 1993; Mayer, 1993).

## Rationale

One suggested method of effecting systemic reform in science instruction may occur at the preservice level. It is hypothesized that through exemplary teacher education programs, preservice educators can be successfully trained in effective strategies for teaching science. This unit responds to national and state initiatives and serves as a model for enacting reform of science instruction by equipping preservice teachers with the necessary strategies to foster science process skills, promote scientific literacy and make science meaningful, personal, and relevant to the student (JBeily, 1994).

## Description

"Look at Me!! I'm a Tree!" demonstrates for preservice early childhood teachers how to plan, implement, and assess integrated thematic instructional units in a field-based internship with kindergarten classes. During the first twelve weeks of the semester, the university students participate in hands-on demonstrations of each week's lesson during their regular university "lecture". The preservice early childhood teachers then deliver the instruction weekly in a small group setting with two or three kindergarten children. The university professor supervises the site-based instruction by monitoring and rotating in and out of the two early childhood classrooms.

University students maintain a course portfolio which contains their lesson plans for each week, anecdotal records of the students' responses to the activities, and the preservice teachers' reflections.

The kindergarten students' work is compiled and bound into individual book form at the end of the semester.

## Content

The thematic unit, "Look at Me! I'm a Tree!!" is designed to promote the acquisition of scientific concepts related to forestry and conservation. The unit begins with the university students offering a retelling of Shel Silverstein's book, The Giving Tree. The kindergarten students are engaged in listening and responding to this story. Also, on the first day, the students adopt-a-tree to observe and monitor during the semester.

Throughout the unit, a variety of strategies promote literacy in cross-curricular contexts. Some of these, for example, are creative dramatics, webbing, mnemonic strategies to promote vocabulary and oral language development, poetry writing, journalizing, and recording and interpreting data on charts and graphs. These activities foster emergent literacy through scientific investigation. The unit is culminated with a tree-planting ceremony on the school campus.

## Conclusion

Through this internship experience, preservice early childhood teachers gain insight into the nature of integrated thematic instruction and its significance in teaching young learners. The interns learn how to take young students outdoors safely for hands-on science instruction. They discover ways to promote concept attainment and foster emergent scientific literacy. The preservice teachers also gain confidence and expertise in teaching science as inquiry. Above

all, they become aware of the necessity of introducing and reinforcing scientific concepts through relevant and meaningful experiences.

## Bibliography

- Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government. (1992). Enabling the future: Linking science and technology to societal goals. (Research Report No. ISBN-1-881054-02-0). New York, NY
- Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A Nation at Risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: Supt. of Documents.
- Disinger, J.F. (1990). Teaching creative thinking through environmental education (Report No. EDO-SE-0-33). Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 331-699).
- Fort, D.C. (1993). Science shy, science savvy, science smart. Phi Delta Kappan, 74, 674-683.
- Goodlad, J.I. (1984). A place called school: Prospects for the future. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Haury, D.L. (1993). Teaching science through inquiry. (Report No. EDO-SE-93-4). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 359 048).
- Jbcily, K. (1994). Successful science staff development: What is it like? How to go about providing it. Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency.
- Mayer, V.J. (1993). Earth systems education (Report No. EDO-SE-93-2). Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearing house for Science, Mathematics, and Environmental Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 359 049).

CS012930



**U.S. Department of Education**  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Paper presented at the 40th College Reading Association (Charleston) Conference <i>"Look at Me! I'm a Tree: A Literacy-Based, etc."</i>	
Author(s): Karen E. Mayo, Ed.D.	
Corporate Source: <i>East Texas Baptist University</i>	Publication Date: October 31-Nov. 3, 1996

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents.



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Sample*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2

Check here  
**For Level 1 Release:**  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

Check here  
**For Level 2 Release:**  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but *not* in paper copy.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here → please

Signature: <i>Karen E. Mayo, EdD</i>	Printed Name/Position/Title: Dr. Karen E. Mayo; Assistant Professor	
Organization/Address: <i>East Texas Baptist University Dept of Teacher Education 1209 N. Grove Marshall, TX 75670</i>	Telephone: <i>(903) 935-7963 x439</i>	FAX: <i>(903) 938-1705</i>
	E-Mail Address: <i>Kmayo@etbu.edu</i>	Date: <i>10/10/97</i>



### III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

### IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

### V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:	<i>Acquisitions</i> ERIC/REC 2805 E. Tenth Street Smith Research Center, 150 Indiana University Bloomington, IN 47408
---	--

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility**  
1100 West Street, 2d Floor  
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080  
Toll Free: 800-799-3742  
FAX: 301-953-0263

e-mail: [ericfac@inet.ed.gov](mailto:ericfac@inet.ed.gov)

WWW: <http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com>