

## **Our Neighborhood Trees: A Unit of Study**

**You can create a fascinating and purposeful unit of study around the trees in your neighborhood. Such a unit can be easily integrated across the curriculum. Here are some ideas for getting started, some suggestions for lessons and some advice for a smooth investigation. Have fun!**

### **Getting Started / Creating the Classroom Environment:**

**\*Use your library card to bring tree books into the classroom. Did you know that you can borrow 30 books at a time and keep them for 3 weeks? There are many excellent fiction, non-fiction and poetry books on the subject of trees.**

**\*Create a K-W-L chart about trees. On a large sheet of chart paper, draw a K, a W and an L in 3 columns. Under the K, list the things your students know about trees. Under the W, list the things they wonder about trees. These questions in particular can launch your investigation. Finally, as you learn about trees, list these discoveries in the L column for things you have learned.**

**\*Set up an Observation Station. Have students bring in leaves, seeds and fallen twigs. Better yet, take a neighborhood walk and gather tree bits in plastic baggies. Assemble these items on a table with a few hand lenses. Encourage students to examine, sketch and write about them.**

**\*Create tree scrapbooks, or *herbariums*. Use 4 or 5 sheets of paper folded between a cover of construction paper. Let students sketch, write and glue in leaves, seeds, etc.**

### **Lesson Ideas:**

#### **Science**

**\*Research the 3 main parts of a tree – roots, trunk/branches, leaves.**

**\*List the ways trees are important and brainstorm ways to protect our neighborhood trees.**

**\*Launch a leaf investigation. Categorized, classify and use them to identify local trees.**

**\*Plant a small tree and care for it.**

**\*Assign small groups to research a common street tree and present their findings to the class.**

**\*Use tree evidence and resources to identify local trees.**

## **Math**

**\*The Tree Mapping Project will provide many opportunities for practicing math skills.**

**\*Estimate the height of local trees and determine ways to prove these estimates.**

**\*Count the numbers of trees in a specific, local area.**

**\*Graph the different types of trees in your area.**

**\*Investigate the relationship between diameter and circumference (Preparation for determining age of trees).**

**\*Brainstorm different ways of measuring a long distance (Preparation for determining height of trees).**

**\*Estimate canopy density using proportions.**

## **Literacy**

**\*Work trees into our read-alouds. *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein is a great book to launch and close your study.**

**\*Put several tree books in bins and rotate them between tables.**

**\*Create “tree poetry”.**

**\*Build a tree vocabulary list and have students be on the lookout for these words in their readings.**

**\*Adopt a tree and write about it both scientifically and creatively in your tree scrapbooks or writer’s notebooks.**

**\*Write a letter to Trees New York, 51 Chambers Street, Suite 1412A, New York, NY 10007 to learn how to get a new tree planted in your neighborhood.**

## **Social Studies**

**\*Create a map of your school block and add the trees.**

**\*Organize a committee to clean up and care for the tree pits around your local trees.**

**\*Create a flyer explaining your tree mapping project and hand out to passersby and people in your community.**

**\*Check out [www.oasisnyc.net](http://www.oasisnyc.net) to examine aerial maps of your own neighborhoods.**

### **Tips for Smooth Mapping**

**\*Start small. Select one or two trees to measure and map, and visit the trees beforehand to insure the safety of the area.**

**\*Familiarize yourself with the tools and how to measure. Practice with a colleague.**

**\*Enlist the help of parents. Give them specific tasks to do while supervising their 3-4 students.**

**\*Consider a smaller group. Perhaps you can take out a part of your class during recesses.**

**Above all, have fun! And don't forget to check the website [http://www.oasisnyc.net/resources/street\\_trees/resources.asp](http://www.oasisnyc.net/resources/street_trees/resources.asp) for other helpful information about this project.**

**The Discovery Institute  
Presenter: Kimberly Colbeck  
PS 45  
Staten Island**