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# Summer Nature Suncatcher

## Materials Needed:

- 1 clear plastic or paper plate (the kind with a flat center and a raised rim works best)
- Clear contact paper or clear packing tape
- Scissors (adult supervision recommended)
- A collection of natural materials: colorful flower petals, small leaves, blades of grass, small twigs, thin slices of citrus (optional)
- A hole punch
- A piece of string or yarn for hanging
- A sunny window

## Learning Objectives (30-60 minutes)

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Create a unique piece of art using natural materials found outdoors.
- Arrange objects to create a simple, balanced composition.
- Describe how light passes through different natural objects (transparency/translucency).
- Practice fine motor skills through careful placement of materials.

## Alignment with Standards

- **Visual Arts:** Creating artwork using a variety of materials and understanding concepts like color, texture, and composition.
- **Science (NGSS K-PS3-1):** Making observations to determine the effect of sunlight on Earth's surface (in this case, on our art materials!). Exploring how different materials interact with light.

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## Lesson Steps & Instructional Strategies

### 1. The Nature Hunt (10 minutes)

**Instruction:** "Let's go on a treasure hunt in our yard (or a nearby park)! We are looking for beautiful, interesting, and colorful things from nature to use in our art project. Look for things that are thin enough for light to shine through."

- Take a small bag or basket outside.
- Encourage the student to find a variety of items: bright yellow dandelion petals, deep green clover leaves, thin blades of grass, delicate fern fronds.
- **Engage curiosity:** Ask questions like, "What color is that leaf?" "Do you think the sun will be able to shine through this thick twig or this thin petal?" This encourages critical thinking from the start.

## 2. Preparing the "Canvas" (5 minutes)

**Instruction:** "Now we'll get our suncatcher frame ready. This will be like a sticky window for our nature treasures."

- **Adult Step:** Carefully cut out the flat center of the paper plate, leaving only the rim. This rim will be the frame for the suncatcher.
- Cut a piece of clear contact paper slightly larger than the hole in the plate.
- Peel the backing off the contact paper and press it firmly onto the back of the plate frame, so the sticky side faces up through the hole. You can also achieve this by creating a "window" with overlapping strips of clear packing tape.

## 3. The Creation Station (10-20 minutes)

**Instruction:** "It's time to be an artist! Arrange your nature treasures on the sticky surface. You can make a pattern, a picture, or just a beautiful mix of colors and shapes. Think about how the light will catch each piece."

- Let the student take the lead. They can arrange, rearrange, and press their collected items onto the sticky surface.
- **Encourage creativity & problem-solving:** If a piece isn't sticking well, ask, "What could we do to make it stick?" Maybe it needs to be pressed down more firmly or a different, flatter leaf would work better.
- Once the design is complete, seal it by placing another piece of contact paper (or more tape) over the top of the nature items, sticky side down. Press firmly to seal everything inside. Trim any excess contact paper from the edges.

## 4. Finishing Touches & Observation (5 minutes)

**Instruction:** "Let's get it ready to hang and see how our art looks in the sun!"

- Use the hole punch to make a hole in the top of the paper plate rim.
- Thread the string or yarn through the hole and tie it in a loop.
- **Show and Tell (Assessment):** Hang the suncatcher in a sunny window. Ask the student to describe their creation. Use the guiding questions below to assess their understanding.

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## Assessment & Guiding Questions

Observe the student's process and engagement. The finished product and their answers to these questions will serve as the assessment.

- "Tell me about what you made. What is your favorite part?"
- "Which material lets the most light through? Which one blocks the light?"
- "What happens to the colors of the flowers when the sun shines on them?"
- "If you were to make another one, what would you do differently?"

## Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a simple, pre-drawn shape on paper (like a heart or star) to place under the plate as a design guide. Use larger, easier-to-handle items like big leaves. The adult can

pre-cut the plate and contact paper.

- **For an Extra Challenge:** Challenge the student to create a symmetrical pattern (like a mandala) or a specific scene (like a garden). Have them write or dictate a short story about their suncatcher. They could also experiment with layering petals to see how it changes the color of the light.

## Cleanup

Return any unused nature items to the outdoors. Dispose of contact paper backings and any trimmings. This project is relatively low-mess, making cleanup quick and easy!

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