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# A "When I Grow Up" Adventure: A 4-Week Thematic Unit

This unit uses Tim Minchin's song "When I Grow Up" from *Matilda the Musical* as a springboard for exploring big feelings, community roles, creative problem-solving, and future dreams. The focus is on play, creativity, and conversation.

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## Week 1: Exploring the Big Ideas & Big Feelings

**Focus:** Understanding the core feelings in the song (being big, strong, brave) and connecting them to the child's own experiences. This week is about emotional literacy and gross motor skills.

### Key Learning Objectives:

- Student will identify and name feelings like "brave," "strong," and "small."
- Student will engage in gross motor activities that test their strength and coordination.
- Student will begin to express their own ideas about what it means to be a "grown-up."

### Materials Needed:

- Access to the song "When I Grow Up" by Tim Minchin
- Large paper or cardboard
- Crayons, markers, or paint
- Pillows, blankets, and cushions for an obstacle course
- Grocery bags (reusable totes) and safe, light items to fill them (e.g., stuffed animals, empty boxes)
- Building blocks

### Activities:

1. **Listen & Move:** Start each day by listening to the song. The first time, just dance and swing around freely. On subsequent days, create actions for key phrases: stretch up tall for "When I grow up," make muscles for "strong enough," climb a pretend tree for "climb the trees," etc.
2. **Feeling Faces:** Talk about the words in the song. What does it feel like to be "brave enough to fight the creatures"? Draw faces showing different feelings: brave, scared, happy, sad. Use a mirror so your child can see their own facial expressions.
3. **The Grown-Up Obstacle Course:** Create an indoor obstacle course to be "big and strong." Crawl under a "low bridge" (a chair), climb a "mountain" (a pile of pillows), walk a "tightrope" (a line of tape on the floor), and finish by being "strong enough to carry all the groceries" – have them carry a tote bag filled with stuffed animals from one side of the room to the other.
4. **Height Chart Mural:** On a large piece of paper taped to the wall, trace your child's body. Let them color it in. Then, measure and mark their height. Talk about how they have grown and how they will continue to grow. You can add handprints and footprints too. This is a great visual anchor for the whole unit.

**Differentiation Note:** If your child is hesitant about the obstacle course, do it with them! If they are

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advanced, add challenges like hopping on one foot or timing them with a stopwatch for fun.

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## Week 2: The Wonderful World of Grown-Ups

**Focus:** Exploring the different roles and jobs grown-ups have, inspired by the playful, kid-centric ideas in the song ("eat sweets every day," "go to bed late"). This week is about imaginative play and understanding the community.

### Key Learning Objectives:

- Student will engage in dramatic play, taking on the role of different grown-ups.
- Student will identify different jobs or roles in their community.
- Student will practice fine motor skills through crafting and building.

### Materials Needed:

- Cardboard boxes of various sizes
- Craft supplies: construction paper, scissors (child-safe), glue, tape, paint
- Dress-up clothes (old shirts, hats, scarves, etc.)
- Play food, kitchen items, or real (safe) pantry items
- Play-Doh

### Activities:

1. **Build a Grown-Up Town:** Use cardboard boxes to build a small town. What does our town need? A sweet shop ("eat sweets every day")? A library ("read the boring papers")? A post office? A fire station? Let your child lead the design and decoration.
2. **A Day in the Life:** Use the town for dramatic play. Spend the day pretending to be different grown-ups. Be a chef at a café, a builder fixing a house, or a teacher reading a story. Discuss what each person does and how they help others.
3. **Sweet Shop Fun:** The line "we'll eat sweets every day" is a child's dream! Set up a pretend sweet shop. Use Play-Doh to create colorful candies, lollipops, and cakes. You can practice counting by "selling" the sweets for buttons or beads. Or, for a real treat, bake simple cookies together.
4. **The Rule Maker:** The song mentions "go to bed late" and "watch telly 'til our eyes go square." Have a silly conversation: "If you were the grown-up today, what would the rules be?" Write them down. Maybe you have a "backwards day" where you have breakfast for dinner, or you read a bedtime story in the morning. This explores the concept of rules in a playful way.

**Assessment Note:** Observe the complexity of the dramatic play. Is your child creating simple scenarios or multi-step narratives? This shows their developing understanding of sequence and social roles.

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## Week 3: Clever Enough to Bend the Rules

**Focus:** This week is all about problem-solving, creativity, and STEM/STEAM, inspired by the line "clever enough to bend the rules." We will build, invent, and experiment.

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## Key Learning Objectives:

- Student will use critical thinking to solve a simple problem (e.g., how to build a tall, stable tower).
- Student will engage in a simple science experiment and make observations.
- Student will create an "invention" using recycled materials.

## Materials Needed:

- Building materials: LEGOs, Magna-Tiles, wooden blocks, recycled items (cardboard tubes, plastic bottles, yogurt cups)
- Art and craft supplies: tape, glue, string, pipe cleaners
- For the "potion": a tray, a jar or cup, baking soda, vinegar, optional food coloring or glitter

## Activities:

1. **The Tallest Tower Challenge:** Using any building material you have, challenge your child to build a tower that is "tall enough to climb the trees." How can they make it strong so it doesn't fall? Experiment with different bases and structures. This is a hands-on physics lesson in stability.
2. **Inventors' Workshop:** Gather a collection of recycled materials. Pose a problem: "We need something that can help a toy get from the sofa to the floor without falling. What can we invent?" Work together to design and build a slide, a parachute, or a pulley system. The goal is the process of thinking and creating, not a perfect final product.
3. **Bending the Rules of Science (Potions!):** Grown-ups in stories are sometimes "clever enough" to make magic potions. Let's be scientists! On a tray, put a jar with a few spoonfuls of baking soda (and a drop of food coloring/glitter for fun). Let your child pour in some vinegar and watch the fizzy reaction. Talk about what they see, hear, and feel. It's a safe and exciting way to "bend the rules" of what happens when you mix things.
4. **Story Scrambler:** "Bend the rules" of a classic fairytale. Read a familiar story like "The Three Little Pigs," but stop and ask, "What if the wolf was friendly and just wanted to borrow some sugar? What would happen then?" Co-create a new, silly version of the story.

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## Week 4: When I Grow Up, I Will Be...

**Focus:** A culminating week to synthesize all the ideas and focus on the child's own dreams and aspirations. This week is about self-expression, literacy, and reflection.

## Key Learning Objectives:

- Student will articulate their own ideas about what they want to be or do when they grow up.
- Student will create a piece of art representing their future self.
- Student will contribute to a simple, co-created book.

## Materials Needed:

- Several sheets of paper, stapled or tied together to make a book
- Art supplies: crayons, markers, paint, collage materials (old magazines, fabric scraps)
- A camera (phone is fine)
- Costumes and props for a "Grown-Up Day"

## Activities:

1. **My "When I Grow Up" Book:** Create a simple book together. Each page can have the prompt, "When I grow up, I will be..." or "When I grow up, I will..." Help your child brainstorm ideas based on our previous weeks. They might want to be "strong enough to carry the dog," "a builder of tall towers," or "a baker of yummy cookies." You write the words, and they create the illustration for each page.
2. **Future Self-Portrait:** Use a large piece of paper and a variety of collage materials. Have your child create a portrait of their future self. Are they wearing a special uniform? Holding a tool? Standing in a special place? Talk about their choices as they create.
3. **Interview with a Grown-Up:** Have your child "interview" you or another trusted adult. Help them prepare a few simple questions: "What is your job?", "What is the best thing about being a grown-up?", "Do you get to eat sweets every day?". This connects their imaginative ideas to reality.
4. **"Grown-Up Day" Celebration:** This is the grand finale! Let your child choose what they want to be for the day. Help them create a costume from dress-up clothes and props. They can spend the day "at work," showing you all the things they've learned. Take lots of pictures and celebrate their amazing imagination. End the day by listening to the song one more time and adding their own verse about what they will do when they grow up.

**Summative Assessment:** The completed "When I Grow Up" book and the future self-portrait serve as a wonderful portfolio of the unit. It captures your child's thinking, creativity, and development in a tangible and joyful way.

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