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# Lesson Plan: Leaf Print Masterpieces

## Materials Needed

- A collection of fresh leaves of various shapes and sizes (collected from outdoors)
- Washable, non-toxic paint in a few different colors (e.g., red, yellow, blue, green, orange)
- Paper plates or a paint tray to hold the paint
- Paintbrushes (one for each child)
- White or light-colored construction paper or cardstock
- A small bucket or bag for collecting leaves
- A protective covering for the table (like a plastic tablecloth or old newspaper)
- Smocks or old t-shirts to protect clothing
- Paper towels and a cup of water for rinsing brushes (optional)
- Wet wipes for easy cleanup of hands

## Lesson Plan Details

### 1. Part 1: The Great Leaf Hunt (10-15 minutes) - Introduction & Exploration

**Goal:** To engage the children with a fun outdoor activity and introduce the main material for our art project.

- **Gather the Explorers:** Announce, "Hello artists Viviana, Reggie, Allegra, and Florence! Today, we are going on a special mission. We are going to be nature detectives and find the most interesting leaves in our yard (or park)!"
- **Set the Mission:** Give each child a chance to hold the collection bag. Explain, "We need to find leaves with different shapes and sizes for our secret art project. Look for big leaves, small leaves, pointy leaves, and round leaves. Let's see what we can find!"
- **Explore and Discuss:** As you walk, encourage observation. Ask questions like:
  - "Reggie, feel this leaf. Is it smooth or bumpy?"
  - "Allegra, look at the lines on this leaf! Those are called veins."
  - "Florence, what a beautiful red leaf you found! What other colors do we see?"
  - "Viviana, can you find a leaf that is bigger than your hand?"
- **Collect Treasures:** Help each child collect 3-5 interesting leaves and place them gently into the bag.

### 2. Part 2: Painting Our Nature Treasures (15-20 minutes) - Main Activity & Creation

**Goal:** To practice fine motor skills and creativity by using leaves as stamps to make prints.

- **Set Up the Art Studio:** Transition inside. Have the children wash their hands while you cover the table and set out the paper, paints on paper plates, and brushes. Help everyone put on their smocks.
- **Show and Tell:** Demonstrate the process clearly and simply. Say, "Okay artists, watch this!
  1. First, I will choose one of my special leaves. I like this one with the bumpy veins.
  2. Next, I will choose a color. I think I'll use blue!

3. Then, I'll gently paint the bumpy side of my leaf. We want to cover it all up!
  4. Now for the magic part! I will turn my leaf over and press it down hard on my paper.  
Pat, pat, pat.
  5. Finally, I'll peel it off slowly... and look! A leaf print!"
- **Time to Create:** Let the children begin. Give each child a piece of paper and let them choose their first leaf and paint color. Offer gentle guidance and encouragement.
    - "Great job holding your paintbrush, Viviana!"
    - "Reggie, what happens if you use two colors on one leaf?"
    - "Allegra, I love how you are pressing that leaf down to make a print."
    - "Look at the beautiful pattern you are making, Florence!"
  - **Encourage Experimentation:** Let them explore. They can use different leaves, different colors, and make prints all over their paper. The process is more important than the final product.

### 3. Part 3: Our Little Leaf Gallery (5 minutes) - Closure & Sharing

**Goal:** To build confidence and practice communication skills by sharing their artwork.

- **Clean Up Song:** Sing a simple clean-up song together as you put away brushes and wipe hands. Leave the paintings on the table to dry.
- **Gallery Walk:** Once hands are clean, have everyone stand up and walk around the table to look at all the masterpieces.
- **Share and Celebrate:** Point to each child's artwork and ask them to share something about it. Say, "Tell us about your painting, Reggie. What is one color you used?" Give specific praise to each child for their effort and creativity.
- **Display the Art:** Let the children know you will hang their beautiful leaf prints up for everyone to see once they are dry.

## Adapting for Our Little Learners (Differentiation)

### For Extra Support

- If holding a paintbrush is tricky, encourage finger painting directly onto the leaf.
- Use larger, sturdier leaves (like maple or sycamore) that are easier to hold and press.
- Offer to guide their hand when they press the leaf onto the paper to ensure a clear print.
- Focus on the sensory experience of touching the leaves and the cool paint.

### For an Extra Challenge

- Encourage color mixing. Ask, "What do you think will happen if we mix some of that yellow paint with the blue paint?"
- Introduce the concept of patterns. Ask, "Can you make a pattern with your prints? Maybe red leaf, green leaf, red leaf?"
- Ask them to use the stem of the leaf to paint lines or dots after they have made their prints.

## Learning Objectives & Assessment

### Objectives (What we want them to learn)

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Children will practice holding a paintbrush and using a pincer grasp to pick up and place leaves.

- **Scientific Observation:** Children will observe and touch different types of leaves, noticing variations in shape, size, and texture.
- **Creativity & Expression:** Children will use natural materials to create a unique piece of art, choosing their own colors and placement.
- **Language Development:** Children will use vocabulary words like "leaf," "veins," "print," "press," and the names of colors.

### **How We'll See What They've Learned (Informal Assessment)**

- **Observation:** I will watch to see if they can follow the steps: paint the leaf, turn it over, and press it down.
- **Conversation:** I will listen for their use of new vocabulary during the activity and ask questions like, "Can you show me your favorite leaf print?"
- **The Final Artwork:** The finished painting serves as a record of their participation, experimentation with color, and ability to use the leaf as a tool.

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