

Early Childhood Education Light and Chanukah Exploration

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Educator Background Information/ Knowledge

The #ShineALight Campaign

The #ShineALight Campaign is a national initiative to create a collective light of celebration spreading the Jewish joy of Chanukah. Sponsored by two New York-based funders and the UJA-Federation of New York, the campaign is designed as a counter-expression to antisemitism and other messages of hate acts towards Jews and Israel. The Jewish Education Project is a proud content partner of the #ShineALight Campaign and is delighted to provide these materials to Jewish educators. We encourage you to utilize this education content in the weeks leading up to and through Chanukah (this year and in the future), and if applicable, at other times of the year.

Educator Lesson Notes:

We are providing multiple pathways through this lesson. Outlined below are four Invitations for use as the children arrive. They are designed to help children explore light, properties of light, and how we interact with light. We encourage educators to put out at least two of the described set-ups. In addition, there are four Learning Activities that can be used in combination with each other, or on their own. Educators may choose to use them on different days, or combine them into one days' learning. The goal of the Learning Activities is to make the connection between light, Chanukah, and joy. We have provided links to relevant reading and music resources. Supplies are listed with each activity, and a comprehensive supply list is also located at the end of the lesson.

Supplies can be found under each activity and a comprehensive supply list is at the end of the document.



Social Media

If your social media and safety policy allow, please join the national #ShineALight Campaign by sharing photos and videos on a variety of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok), and let the world know what you and your learners did today to inspire and celebrate the light of Jewish joy.



Prep & Activity Time

Approximate Prep Time: Varies depending on activities chosen

Approximate Total Activity Time: Varies depending on activities chosen

Lesson Flow:

- Invitations Out (45 minutes to multiple days)
- Pre-Activity Exploration - Circle Time (5-8 minutes)
- Learning Activities (5-20 minutes each)
- Book or Music Extensions (8-15 minutes each)
- Conclusion/Wrap-Up (3-6 minutes)

Educator Activity Guide



Arrival Activity/Invitations

(45 minutes to multiple days)

We encourage educators to place at least two of the following invitations out for children to engage with as they arrive in the learning space.

Invitation Option One

Playsticks Lightboard, Playsticks Translucent Set

1. Place the translucent playsticks and the accompanying light board on a table.
2. Encourage children to experiment with the light sticks, combine colors, raise and lower the light intensity, etc.

Invitation Option Two

Lightboard, random objects that allow light to pass through them in different ways, for example: Leaves, tissue paper, colored films, Kleenex, buttons, organza cloth piece, burlap piece, colored Lucite box.

1. Place the light board and a tray/basket of items next to it.
2. Encourage the children to explore how the light
 - a. illuminates items differently (edges and insides)
 - b. changes their appearance in any way
 - c. passes through them differently

Invitation Option Three

Flashlights of different sizes, tent or large box for exploration with printed images of Chanukah taped to the inside of the tent or box.

1. Using blue tape, secure a variety of Chanukah-themed images to the inside of a tent or large box with a crawl-through hole.
2. Have the children take their flashlights into the dark space and look at the different images
3. They can explore how different sized flashlights give off different light beams as well as explore the images by flashlight.

Invitation Option Four

Dimmable and Color Changing Lamp, mirrored tiles of various sizes and shapes, magnifying glass, prisms of various sizes and shapes, aluminum foil.

1. Put out the lamps with a variety of reflective items.
2. Allow the children to explore how different colored lights as well as different strength of light can reflect off or through these items.



Pre-Activity Explorations (Circle Time)

(5-8 minutes)

- What do you know about light?
- What can light do?
- How does light help us?
- What will light do when combined with other light?
- How does light make us feel?
- What might light have to do with an upcoming Jewish holiday (Chanukah)?

Early Childhood **Light and Chanukah Exploration**



Learning Activities

Each of these learning activities are designed to be used as a discovery extension based on the outcomes of the exploration during the opening invitations:

Learning Activity Option One

(6-10 minutes)

Battery Operated Taper Candles, one per child. Miscellaneous items from the learning space.

1. Children sit in a circle in the dark with a few items (at least 3-5) placed in a stack in the middle of the circle (i.e. a stuffed animal, a book, a toy, a plant, rocks, a smock, etc.).
2. The first child is asked to turn on his/her light. Then children are asked what's in the middle of the circle?
3. A second child (from another part of the circle) is asked to turn on their light.
Ask children: what's in the middle of the circle?
4. A third child (from another part of the circle) is asked to turn on their light.
Then children are asked what's in the middle of the circle?
5. Continue this until the children can describe in detail the items in the center using color, shape, number of items, etc).
6. Discuss:
 - How does adding a little light from each of us help all of us to see better?
 - How could each of us adding joy to the universe about celebrating Chanukah help the world to see Chanukah better?
 - How is seeing the objects in the center of the room through different people's lights like seeing Chanukah through different people's experiences and viewpoints?

Learning Activity Option Two

(10-20 minutes)

Construction paper, hole puncher (shape varieties encouraged), scissors, flashlights, one per child, at least 1.5-2" diameter, rubber band, one per child.

1. Children are given circles of construction paper that fit over the top of their flashlights with a small edge around it (you will secure it later with a rubber band).
2. Children can choose hole punches and/or scissors to make openings in the paper
3. Secure their paper over the flashlight with a rubber band.
4. Have them showcase their light design in a dim room.
5. If there's time, children can alter their designs a few times to compare/contrast how they look.
6. Discuss:
 - What shaped holes gave off the most light? The least light?
 - Did the shape of the hole change the shape of the light shining on the wall? How?
 - Did you like to look at the lights that had more holes in their covers or less holes? Why?
 - How is shining our inner light (joy, happiness, kindness) through our unique bodies like the way the light of flashlights shined through the different cutouts in our papers?

Early Childhood **Light and Chanukah Exploration**



Learning Activity Option Three

(5-12 minutes)

Dreidels of different sizes and colors, 1"-2" diameter flashlights, one per child

1. Ahead of the activity, educators hide dreidels of different sizes, shapes and materials around the room. (Variation: Hide a variety of Chanukah artifacts around the space: Chanukiyot, Chanukiah candles, chocolate gelt, etc.)
2. Each child is given a flashlight.
3. The lights in the learning space are turned off, and the children conduct a scavenger hunt to find the hidden dreidels by flashlight.
4. Discuss:
 - a. Did anyone partner with someone else to combine the light from your flashlights so you could see better together? What made you think of that?
 - b. Why is it easier to find things in the dark if you work together to create more light?
 - c. How is sharing our Chanukah celebrations by video chat or inviting guests helping to share the light of Chanukah with others?
 - d. How might it make you feel to share your Chanukah joy with others? How might it make them feel?

Learning Activity Option Four

(8-15 minutes)

Laptop, projector, wifi, speakers, screen to play a short video

Optional: Whiteboard, markers or flipchart, markers

1. Take the children on a walk around the building, and ask them to point out all the sources of light they see.
2. Bring the children back to the room, and see if they can recall all of the different light sources from their walk. You may want to record their responses on a board or flipchart if you have some readers.
3. Show this short 3-minute video [Light Sources from Kids Academy](#) on YouTube.
4. Have children compare the list they made with all the light sources the narrator pointed out in the video. You may need to read the list back to them one item at a time, and ask them if that item was mentioned or shown in the video.
5. Discuss:
 - Did any of us find a candle on our search for light sources? (you may or may not have)
 - When do we use candles as a source of light in celebrating our Judaism? (Shabbat, Yom Tov, Chanukah)
 - Do you know what the special name for the holder of candles on Chanukah is? (Chanukiah or Menorah)
 - Do you know how many candles are on the Chanukiah? (eight plus Shammash)
 - Why do you think that we start with one candle (plus the Shammash), and finish with eight (plus the Shammash)? Why might we want to increase the light as the holiday goes through its eight days?



Conclusion/Wrap-Up

(3-6 minutes)

1. Discuss:
 - What words can we use to describe light?
 - Why did we talk about light and Chanukah today? What's the connection between them?
 - Which of our activities that we did today might you want to do at home with your family or friends?

**Resources:
Books,
Music & Video**



Book Links

[Hanukkah Lights Board Book](#)
[Sammy Spider's First Hanukkah](#)
[Grover's Eight Nights of Light](#)
[Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights \(Golden Book\)](#)
[Light the Candles \(lift the flap book\)](#)
[Chanukah Lights Everywhere](#)
[Toby Belfer Never Had a Christmas Tree](#)



[PJ Library Hanukkah Hub:](#)
[The Ultimate List of Children's Books About Hanukkah](#)



Music & Video Links

[15 Mins Hanukkah Songs for Children \(animated video with music\)](#)
[Hanukkah songs \(static cartoon image with music\)](#)
[Shaboom: Learn to Light the Chanukah Candles \(video\)](#)
[G-dCast Spins/BimBam: The Hanukkah Story for Kids: Maccabees, miracles and dreidels \(animated video\)](#)
[JKids Radio Spotify Chanukah Playlist](#)

Comprehensive Supply List

Invitation Option One:

Playsticks Lightboard
Playsticks Translucent Set

Invitation Option Two:

Lightboard
Leaves
Tissue paper
Colored films
Kleenex
Buttons
Organza cloth piece
Burlap piece
Colored Lucite box

Invitation Option Three:

Flashlights of different sizes
Tent or large box for exploration
Printed images of Chanukah
Blue tape

Invitation Option Four:

Dimmable and Color Changing Lamp
Mirrored tiles of various sizes and shapes
Magnifying glass
Prisms of various sizes and shapes
Aluminum foil

Learning Activity Option One:

Battery Operated Taper Candles (one per child)
Miscellaneous items from the learning space

Learning Activity Option Two:

Construction paper
Hole puncher (shape varieties encouraged)
Scissors
Rubber bands, one per child
1"-2" diameter flashlight, one per child

Learning Activity Option Three:

Dreidels of different sizes and colors
1"-2" diameter flashlight, one per child

Learning Activity Option Four:

Laptop
Projector
Wifi
Speakers
Screen to play a short video
Optional whiteboard or flipchart, markers

Books

Hanukkah Lights Board Book
Sammy Spider's First Hanukkah
Grover's Eight Nights of Light
Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights (Golden Book)
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