

No Child Left Inside!

Extending the Curriculum Outdoors



Playing is Learning!

Ask a child what their favorite part of the school day is and they will most likely say OUTSIDE! Open the door and turn your learning environment inside out. Discover how to maximize outdoor play by moving interest centers outdoors, opening up new possibilities for stimulating children's creativity, self-discovery, and imagination. Share the wonders of nature and the environment with children even with limited outdoor spaces and resources.

Remembering Our Own Childhood



- Played outside with my friends from sun up to sun down
- Playgrounds with swings, monkey bars, slides, teeter totters
- Climbed trees, played in the woods, built forts, fished or looked for life in ponds or creeks, turned over rocks to discover insects, dug in dirt and mud, rolled down grassy hills, scrambled down ravines
- Early childhood is the time to plant the seeds of wonder

Ills of Modern Childhood

- Public schools eliminating PE and recess
- Homework, sports, music lessons fill up children's time
- Loss of contact with nature—"Nature Deficit Disorder"
- Fear of strangers, being kidnapped, lack of access to open spaces and safe play spaces
- Obesity—lack of physical activity, unhealthy eating choices
- "Couch potatoes are raising tater tots"
- Many grandparents raising their children's children and they on the average are less active
- Children spend an average of 21 hours/week watching TV plus the time spent in front of computers or video games— Screen time equals 30-40 hours/week
- Learning disabilities/attention disorders—ADHD
- Low social skills/depression/stress/low self-esteem
- Lack of creativity and problem solving

Teacher's Role

- Teachers are the role models for children. We need to respect and respond to the naturally active nature of the young child.
- The outdoors offers many ways to enrich the curriculum and support children's development and learning—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive
- Increase the amount of time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity during daily routines.
- Include at least 30 minutes daily of structured physical activity as well as 30 minutes daily of unstructured physical activity.
- Think of outdoor time as an extension of what children learn through indoor play activities.
- Create the appropriate outdoor environment—a challenge, especially when you may be limited by the available space and funding...but you can transform the outdoor environment into a creative learning area.

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- Check on the safety of the outdoor area—CPSC Playground Safety Handbook
- Provide tools for investigations: binoculars, magnifying glasses, yardsticks, measuring instruments, prisms, bug jars, tweezers, nets, clipboards with paper and writing tools to document discoveries, record information and observations, make signs. Bring out field guides and nature magazines so children can identify their discoveries.
- Create Prop Boxes or Play Crates to store and transport materials that connect to outdoor activities and dramatic play—Police Officer, Firefighter, Super Hero Capes, Camping Crate (tent, blanket, firewood, metal dishes, blankets); Building Crate (PVC pipes and elbows in all sizes including some clear tubing so children can observe water and sand as they flow through)

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

- Fosters creativity and imagination
- Promotes scientific exploration as children observe and explore nature firsthand
- Builds self-confidence—allows children to take risks and try out new skills
- Activates the senses—seeing, smelling, hearing, and touching
- Promotes gross motor skills—run, jump, slide, swing, and climb
- Enhances fine motor skills—pour sand through a funnel, use tools in wood-working, collect bugs and plant seeds
- Provides opportunities for children to problem solve
- Encourages cooperative social play
- Provides opportunities for children to play freely and loudly
- Develop a sense of responsibility for taking care of the environment
- Cultivate an appreciation of nature

Outdoor Activity & Interest Areas

1. Sand Play
2. Water Play
3. The Arts—dance, music, theater or performing arts, visual arts
4. Carpentry/Woodworking
5. Nature and the Environment
6. Caring for Living Things
7. Wheeled Toys
8. Games, Obstacle Courses and Play with Balls, Parachute, Jump Ropes and Hula Hoops

Sand Play

- Sandbox or sand table
- Items to enhance digging, pouring, constructing, and dramatic play with sand: funnels, sifters, pails, mixing bowls, pots, pans, colanders, rolling pins, molds, shovels, rakes, spoons, scoops, cups and saucers, muffin tins, sand wheels, dump trucks, small cars and trucks, plastic people and animals, Pop-sicle sticks, small cardboard boxes and plastic blocks, natural objects such as shells, sticks, stones or leaves
- Wheelbarrows, diggerators
- Use only sanitized play sand

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- Should have access to water—locate a tap on the edge of the sandbox
- Protect from cats using garlic powder or protective mesh covering (Bird Block)



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Water Play

- Water Table—different temperatures—frozen (add ice, snow)—ice sculptures
- Play props: floating toys, measuring cups and spoons, scoops, funnels, squirt bottles, basters, whisks, egg beaters, eyedroppers, tongs, tweezers, sponges, waterwheels, watering cans, buckets, paint brushes, fishnets, gutters, ladles, plastic squeeze bottles, pitchers, jugs, plastic tubing, spray bottles
- Bubbles—use different kinds of bubble blowing frames
- Sink & Float—corks, stones, feathers, marbles, Ping Pong balls, pinecones, scales, sticks, driftwood
- Dishwashing—soap, plastic dishes, sponges, rubber-gloves, dish rack, towels
- Ocean—aquarium rocks, white sand, plastic fish, shells, seaweed, fishnets
- Rock Garden—different types of rocks, scrub brushes, nail brushes, scoops, pails, magnifying glasses
- Car washes—hose, buckets, sponges, soap suds, rags, bikes, and wagons, etc.
- Wash the babies and wash the doll clothes
- Spring cleaning—wash classroom chairs

The Arts

- Have a parade—bring out the musical instruments
- Streamer Ribbon or Scarf Dancing—bring out the CD player
- Musical Games—“Farmer in the Dell” and “Hokey Pokey”
- Drama--Act out the story “Caps for Sale” using the climbing structure as the tree for all the monkeys

1. Bubble prints
2. Finger painting/Foot painting
3. Chalk drawing
4. Fly swatter painting
5. Weaving on chain link fences
6. Painting with water
7. Tree branch painting/leaf rubbings/bark tracings
8. Nature collage
9. Easel Painting/Mural painting/Box painting



Carpentry/Woodworking

- Workbench--belongs outside under a covered shelter
- Can also use a discarded spool, child-sized table with plywood secured to the top, old tree stump
- Safety is essential—needs constant supervision—one adult to two children
- Eye safety—wear goggles
- Tool selection—hammers, saws, roofing nails (large heads), egg beater drill, “C” clamps
- Sources of wood—cabinet shops, lumber yard scrap bins—pine is best

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- Children love to saw large pieces of Styrofoam (packaging for large items—computer, TV)



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Can also hammer golf tees into Styrofoam

Nature and the Environment

- Outdoors provides emergent curriculum because you never know what might be awaiting you when you are tuned into nature—"teachable moments"
- Explore worms and dirt and mud and leaves and sticks and rocks and bugs and birds and the endless wondrous classroom that is the outdoors.
- Take a Walk—"Let's Find Out" activities and, each time, have a different focus.
- Find different leaves, seeds, grasses, etc and make a "Nature Bracelet" using masking tape.
- Digging Area—in soil with shovels, spades, rakes, pails, scoops, molds, pie tins
- Water added to soil makes wonderful mud pies
- Make Friends with 3 Square Feet—piece of yarn and a magnifying glass
- Plant a Garden—in containers, tractor tires, wheelbarrows
- Compost box
- Scavenger Hunts/Buried Treasure/Geocaching (using a GPS unit to hunt for a hidden cache)
- Weather—changeable and initiates many activities
- Sunny Day Play—Shadows; Clouds; Sun Prints; Swimsuit Days
- Rainy Day Fun--Puddle Jumping; Umbrella Walk; Raindrop Painting



Caring for Living Things

- Chickens and rabbits can live outdoors
- Birds—Bird feeder, birdbath, put out materials birds can use to build nests: twigs, straw, string, ribbon
- Worm gardens (in an old aquarium)

Wheeled Toys

- Provide a wide range of vehicles for children to ride on, push, and pull
- Tricycles, big wheels, pedal cars, scooters, wagons, trikes that accommodate two passengers, bikes with training wheels, doll strollers, shopping carts
- Builds muscle strength while promoting balance and coordination
- Provide bicycle helmets that meet CPSC standards
- Designate a bike path with directional arrows and a "parking lot"
- Set up traffic town/ gymkhana—traffic signs, cones, etc
- Use wheel toys to act out dramatic play themes: Mechanic's shop, mail delivery, first aid ambulance, police, car wash, taxi service, towing service

Games, Obstacle Courses, and Play with Balls, Parachute, Activity Ropes & Hula Hoops

Kids don't need fancy expensive playground structures or sports fields outside. Kids need inexpensive equipment— balls, jump-ropes, hula hoops—and teachers who are trained to provide and encourage more physical activity.

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Group Games (noncompetitive, all inclusive)

- Hit the Deck (Book: "Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children")
- Scrambled Eggs & Icebergs (Book: "That Was the Best Party Ever!")
- People Friendly Red Rover, Red Rover

Parachute Play (Book: "Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children")

- Hi and Hello Come
- Under My Umbrella
- Mushroom
- Make a Tent
- Volcano
- Class Picture
- Exchange Places
- Apples, Oranges & Bananas
- Exercise Dice
- Ring around the Rosie
- Popcorn
- Talk like the Animals

Activity Ropes (Book: "Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children")

- Movement Exploration using Ropes
- Rope "Riting" Geometric Designs with Ropes
- Rope Games
- Rope Jumping

Balls (Book: "Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children")

- Over and Under
- Pass and Count
- Ghost Guard



Hula Hoops

- Merry Musical Hoops (Book: "Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children")
- Driving with Hoops (Book: "That Was the Best Party Ever!")
- Hoopla

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Resources:

- Berry, Pauline. *Playgrounds That Work: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for Children Birth to Eight Years*
- Dodge, Colker, Heroman. *Creative Curriculum for Preschool (4th Edition)*.
- Elkind, David. *The Power of Play: How Spontaneous, Imaginative Activities Lead to Happier, Healthier Children*
- Greenman, Jim. *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments That Work*
- Griffin, Sherri. *My Big World of Wonder: Activities for Learning about Nature and Using Natural Resources Wisely*
- Krull, Sharron. *Play Power: Games & Activities for Young Children*. www.sharronkrull.com
- Krull, Sharron. *That was the Best Party Ever! How to Give Birthday Parties Kids Will Never Forget*.
- Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. *Appropriate practice in movement programs for children ages three to five*. www.aahperd.org/NASPE
- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. *Active start: A statement of physical activity guidelines for children birth to five years*. www.aahperd.org/NASPE
- Ratey, John. *SPARK: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*
- Rivkin, Mary. *The Great Outdoors: Restoring Children's Right to Play Outside*
- Sanders, S.W. *Active for life: Developmentally appropriate movement programs for young children*.
- Themes, Tracy. *Let's Go Outside! Designing the Early Childhood Playground*
- U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*. www.cpsc.gov
- Action Based Learning: www.actionbasedlearning.com
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
- Peaceful Playgrounds: www.peacefulplaygrounds.com
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: www.smallstep.gov
- Discount School Supply: www.discountschoolsupply.com
- Play Power or Playful Connections: www.sharronkrull.com

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