

1  **Learning Environment for Young Children**
CLDDV: 123


Outdoor Environment

Agenda

- Announcements
- Lecture: Outdoor Environments
- The Dirty Dozen
- Group activity: Outdoor plans
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2  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**


Is the outdoor learning environment as important as the indoor learning environment?

3  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**


- Benefits of the outdoors
 - Nature...
 - connects all life: universal and timeless
 - unpredictable: a breeze, clouds, wetness
 - multi-dimensional: shapes, sizes, colors, textures, smells, tastes
 - beauty and art: rocks, sand, rainbows, hills, leafs, flowers

4  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Benefits of the outdoors
 - Nature...
 - provides sound: birds, wind, rain
 - creates spaces: with grass, bushes, trees, boulders
 - lives and dies: real life bugs, birds, flowers
 - nourishes and heals: our bodies need sunlight and fresh air

5  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Benefits of the outdoors
 - children show a natural enthusiasm and curiosity when they play outside
 - adds balance to the day
 - allows children to experience the freedom of open space
 - allows children to use muscles in new ways

6  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- movement and change of atmosphere reduce stress
- using the outdoors and the indoors as a classroom bridges the two environments
- teachers can enhance their growth through observation, interaction, and planned activities

7 **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- Reluctance to use the outdoors...
 - surroundings may be harder to control
 - weather is uncomfortable
 - perception of exposure to harm
 - openness of area may be hard to supervise
 - liabilities (playground equipment)
 - the rationale that children need to spend more time indoors " learning " and less time outdoors "playing"

8 **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- In general, direct experiences with nature are shrinking
- T.V., video games, fear of strangers, traffic, living spaces, lack of adult presence
- "Nature Deficit Disorder" Richard Louv
- Nature is being used as a type of therapy for ADHD

9 **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- Environments should provide the child with the chance to be good at something...
 - opportunity to have challenges
 - opportunity to have mastery
 - opportunity to practice a new skill

We do this through...

- activities
- activity areas
- child size equipment
- natural surroundings

10 **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- Outdoor Space should have...
 - easy access
 - a variety of surfaces and textures
 - opportunities for movement
- Consider pathways and barriers
 - they direct traffic
 - create boundaries


- separate sand from sidewalk
- need path from water to sand

11  **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

Role of the adult

- Adults should reflect on attitude towards the outdoors
- Provide opportunities for exploration
- Observe and make changes accordingly
- Be aware of any safety hazards (risk management)
- Repairs and maintenance are ongoing
- Avoid creating crowded areas

12  **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

Adults role continued...

- Ask what is the purpose or goal of area?
- Create spaces that meet the various developmental needs

13  **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

Areas of a child's development are enhanced through outdoor play and exploration

Physical development, social skills, cultural knowledge, emotional development and intellectual development

- Physical Development
 - outdoor environments support
 - large muscle development
 - space allows for running, skipping, jumping,
 - outdoor equipment encourages climbing, balance, coordination, and development of upper and lower body strength

14  **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- Small motor skills
 - develop as children dig in the sand, collect small objects, and garden
- Spatial awareness
 - children discover how their bodies operate in space by swinging, climbing, and crawling
- Social skills
 - outside voices allowed
 - negotiate for riding toys
 - cooperate by giving pushing starts on swings, build and dig in the sand together

15  **Creating Outdoor**

Learning Environments

- Children learn about their community by taking walks
 - observations

- Emotional Development
 - mastering a challenge
 - prolongs instant gratification
 - trust in self and others is fostered through real life experiences
 - expand dramatic play
 - appreciation of beauty leads to environmental awareness

16  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Intellectual Development
 - children learn through direct interaction
 - science can be observed
 - children learn to observe and analyze
 - language development is expanded
 - expands imagination
- Safety
 - visibility/supervision
 - proper ground cover
 - boundaries of play areas are well defined
 - use visual cues: cones, signs, rope

17  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

Safety Continued

- quiet activity area available
- shaded areas available
- rules established for climbing equipment, swings
- first-aid kit in close proximity
- enough equipment so children don't have to wait
- assign yard areas for staff to supervise
- remember that outside time is not teacher "break" time
- staff support children to learn at their own pace
- * Do not force children to go beyond their ability

18  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Safety
 - be plant smart, plant nonpoisonous plants
- Conduct safety checks
 - visually scan several times daily
 - check for debris
 - remove cracked or broken toys/equipment
 - rake sand, wood chips, cover at night
 - empty water tables after activity. Do not leave water tables unattended.

19  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- look for tripping hazards
- check for entrapments
- provide appropriate signs for safety

20  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Playing areas
 - climbing structures (permanent and portable equipment)
 - sand and water
 - transportation (wheel toys)
 - quiet areas (blankets under shaded trees, tents with books)
 - woodworking
 - garden
 - storage
 - indoor areas extended outdoors
- Materials for Climbing Area
 - obstacle courses, ramps, bridges, platforms, slides, swings, teeter-totters, trees, tunnels

21  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**


- Sand Area
 - close to water source
 - cover sand area at the end of day
 - rake each daily
 - should be shaded
 - spray with water to limit dust
- Materials:
 - buckets, shovels, scoops, trucks, plastic dishes, funnels, sifters, molds, natural objects, cardboard boxes


22  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Things to consider...
 - Alternatives to sand
 - using bird seed, rice, cereal, corn, fabric scraps
 - * the use of food may be difficult for young children who have props that encourage pretend eating
 - * financially struggling families may view the use of playing with food wasteful
 - * consider what staff and families feels comfortable using
- Providing sand play outdoors can support the child with limited motor skills by providing larger areas to work in. focus should be on exploration instead of worrying about a mess!

23  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**

- Woodworking Area
 - requires careful supervision
 - in an out of the way place
 - specific instruction for tool use
- Materials
 - blocks, saws, cardboard boxes, boards, scraps of soft wood, steering wheels, large spool, wood sawhorses

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- 24  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**
 - Transportation Area
 - area should have a hard surface to allow for children to balance, pedal, negotiate turns, start and stop
 - include a variety of sizes
 - add props: signs, dress-up clothes, have a bike parade, bike wash, gas station.

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- 25  **Creating Outdoor Learning Environments**
 - Garden Area
 - small sunny area or use pots and containers
 - child size tools
 - seeds and plants (check for toxicity)
 - wheelbarrow
 - string and wood to mark off rows
 - access to water
 - markers, recycle plant containers, tongue depressors
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