

Outdoor Play as an Extension of your Indoor Classroom

Just as in our indoor play spaces, we want to consider the learning materials we offer outdoors for children that support learning in all areas of development. Outdoor playgrounds are optimal spaces to provide opportunities of open-ended materials for children to explore.

To help you in assessing your outdoor space we have provided suggestions of materials that will support engagement with the outdoor world in a meaningful way. ***We suggest you review Michelle Thornhill's Loose Parts and Intelligent Playthings, resource sheet in conjunction with this resource.***

Spaces and Materials to Consider:

- Sensory/Science/Math/Music (STEM) Play
 - Sensory bins, tuff trays, sensory areas (water, sand, mud, bubbles, etc.), shovels, pails, containers, scoops, tongs, scales, tubes, magnifying glasses, items from nature (rocks, shells, pinecones, leaves), musical instruments, trucks/cars, figurines, animals

- Big Body Play
 - Items for balancing, climbing, tumbling, twirling, crawling, riding, swinging movement, running, challenge and risk. Logs, balance beans, wooden pallets, wooden spools, slides, trikes, riding toys, swings, harnesses/pulleys, balls, frisbees, beanbags, hula-hoops, wheel- barrels, rakes, tires, sleds, etc.
 - Opportunity to explore on different textured surfaces

- Creative
 - Big body painting, clay, playdough, opportunities to create art from nature items (sticks, flowers, pinecones, shells, leaves, vines, snow), spray bottles, empty picture frames, yarn, dowels, plexiglass, string, tapes, glue, mark making tools, etc.

- Drama
 - Items for creative expression, dress up opportunities, scarves, blankets, sheets, clothes pegs, mud/snow kitchens with pots pans and accompanying utensils, pinecones, shells, rocks, opportunities for hiding (tents, tunnels, private spaces made from nature eg. willow structures), mirrors, hay bales, stages, puppet theatre, dolls, buggies, tools

- Block Play
 - Outdoor blocks, logs, sticks, twigs, cylinders, rocks, wooden pallets, wooden spools, rain gutters, boxes, wagons, wheel-barrels, trucks, figurines, animals

- Quiet Spaces
 - Books, puzzles, quiet toys, micro worlds and invitations, blankets, seating for small groups, hammocks, spaces that allow for time out of the sun (shade shelters)

- Garden Spaces
 - Flower gardens planted to attract insects and butterflies, vegetable gardens, micro worlds, bird houses, rakes, shoves, hoes, watering cans, bird feeders, etc.

Some questions for reflection on your outdoor space:

- Are there sufficient and varied materials for children to use?
- Are there materials that were intriguing and unique for the children to explore?
- Is the space intriguing with plants, paths, loose parts, natural materials?
- Are children given ample time to participate in the outdoor play?
- How much unstructured time and freedom to explore are children given?
- Did materials reflect the cultures of families and the community?
- Has consideration been given to all children's needs and abilities?
- Are the materials easily accessible to the children?

What might I change or add to the current environment?