Innovations in Nature-Based Play

Nice to Meet You!

Innovations in Nature-Based Play
Poll

What are your biggest challenges with nature-based play?

A. Our outdoor space has no natural areas.
B. It’s too hot/cold to be outside so much of the year.
C. Other teachers and administrators aren’t quite there yet.
D. I’ve gotten started with nature-based play. What’s next?

Theory and Nature-Based Play

• Developmental Theory
• Interational Theory
• Constructivist Theory

Pathways to Nature-Based Play
Many Roles of the Teacher in Nature-Based Play

- Learning Supporter
- Resourceful Problem-Solver
- Emotions Validator
- Play Partner
- Learning Observer
- Learning Facilitator
- Partner to Families
- Guide and Limit Setter
- Role Model
- Partner to Families
- Guide and Limit Setter
- Role Model

Teacher as Learning Supporter
Supporting Nature-Based Play

• “It’s common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.”
  – Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Some things are better outdoors!

• Making berry pies for birds is so fun outside!
Water Play!

• Incorporate natural loose parts.

“In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it.”

- Simon Nicholson

Keep Materials Accessible
Keeping the Momentum

• Use documentation to engage children and families, and to keep the conversation going.

• Talk daily about what you find in the natural world.
• Make predictions about what might happen next!
• Explore changes together and document your findings.

• Use the outdoor space to build community in your program.
• Invite families to join in.
Considerations for Staff

- If your program does not have an Outdoor Classroom Coordinator, who will be responsible for the play and learning opportunities outside?
- Who will decide which materials will be offered, rotated, and replenished?

Early Childhood Educators Partner with Environmental Educators

- PDF available online: https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/final_ecee_guidelines_from_echinodermatics_lo_res.pdf

Explore Activities in Nature

- Master Gardeners
- Master Naturalists
- State Park Naturalists
- Nature Centers
- Arboretums
- Zoo
- Landscape Designers
- Nature Explore
- Forest Service
- Project Learning Tree
- Project WILD

- Add Environmental Education to your professional development.
Developing Your Outdoor Playscape

Good design often means creating something that is both functional and beautiful.

Create places to spark the imagination.

- Design places for children and adults to be together in your outdoor playscape.
• Make the most of fences!

• Gardens are wonderful additions to your nature-based playscape.

• A hay bale maze can provide long-lasting fun!
• Bring art and music outside.

The Child’s Point of View

Considering Safety

To play is to risk; to risk is to play.
- Diane Ackerman
• Allow developmentally appropriate risk-taking.

• Implement risk assessments.

Conclusion: Who Benefits from Nature-Based Play?

Benefits for Children
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* Learn more about Innovations in Nature-Based Play at www.innovationsinece.com