



Umbrella Program Excellence Team

Newsletter

Issue 3

2024

UMBRELLA CHRONICLES



OUTDOOR PEDAGOGY

Outdoor learning for children is an educational approach that takes advantage of the outdoors as a setting for learning and development.

This type of learning engages children in activities that occur outside of the traditional classroom environment, such as in schoolyards, parks, nature reserves, and other outdoor spaces.



WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR LEARNING?

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- Outdoor activities promote physical exercise, helping children develop gross motor skills and overall fitness.
- Exposure to natural sunlight helps in the synthesis of vitamin D, essential for bone health.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT:

- Outdoor environments stimulate curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- Nature-based activities enhance observation skills and foster an appreciation for the environment.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

- Outdoor learning can reduce stress and anxiety levels in children.
- Connection with nature promotes emotional resilience and mental well-being.

SOCIAL SKILLS:

- Collaborative activities outdoors encourage teamwork and social interaction.
- Children learn to communicate and negotiate with peers in a less structured environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS:

- Outdoor learning fosters a sense of environmental stewardship and respect for nature.
- Children develop an understanding of ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainability.



The Outdoor Environment: Design for Learning

The purpose of an outdoor environment is to encourage children to be active, to give them a break from being indoors, and to support learning in a variety of environments. Similar to an indoor learning environment, your outdoor space should be safe and organized and include planned activities as well as free time.

Outdoor Learning Areas

Carefully design outdoor learning areas to support the full range of children's play and activities. You can create activity areas, much like you do for your indoor space. These areas may include quiet, manipulative, physical, nature, social, dramatic, and art. Many of the same materials you provide indoors can be used to promote engagement outdoors.

You can reflect by asking yourself:

- As I observe children outdoors, do I notice differences in their attention and learning?
- What are their interests and are they represented?
- How do the children experience the different spaces or areas that have been designed outdoors?
- How does the outdoor environment support each child's development?
- In what ways do I create areas of inquiry, curiosity, challenge, wonderment, and movement?
- What ideas are emerging?
- How can I support their ideas with provocations?

Additionally, you should consider how to extend the learning that takes place indoors to the outdoor environment. Take note of the ideas, materials, or supports that are used by the children and think about how these can meet developmental goals and encourage similar learning in your outdoor space.

Think about the open-ended ideas you can offer children outside. Incorporating these types of ideas enables children and youth to have new experiences that might facilitate making connections or new discoveries.

WHAT IS THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE?

Set up a cozy reading corner with comfortable cushions, blankets, and outdoor-friendly bean bags. Provide a small bookshelf or bin with a variety of age-appropriate books for kids to enjoy in a quiet atmosphere.

Creating a language and literacy-rich outdoor environment for children is essential for their holistic development. Outdoor settings provide diverse opportunities for language exploration, communication, and literacy development.

Educators play a crucial role in engaging children in outdoor spaces, fostering their development and providing valuable learning experiences. Here are several ways educators can actively participate in and enhance children's engagement in outdoor environments:



Bringing art and creative expression outdoors for children not only enhances their artistic abilities but also provides a holistic and sensory-rich learning experience.

When we talk about manipulation in the context of activities for children, it typically refers to activities that involve using hands and fingers for fine motor skill development.

Outdoor block play and construction activities for children offer a fantastic opportunity for creativity, problem-solving, and physical development.

Outdoor science and nature activities for children provide hands-on experiences that foster curiosity, exploration, and a deeper understanding of the natural world.

Outdoor music and movement activities for children provide a fun and engaging way for them to explore rhythm, coordination, and creative expression.

Creating a sensory area outdoors for children provides a rich and stimulating environment that engages their senses and promotes sensory exploration.

Creating a math area outdoors for children is a fantastic way to make learning math concepts enjoyable and hands-on.

Educators to encourage and expand on children's ideas and ask open-ended questions.

Designing a dramatic play area outdoors for children encourages imaginative play, creativity, and social interaction. Educators to encourage and expand on children's ideas and ask open-ended questions.



Mount Hope

CURRICULUM CRUMB

OUTDOOR PEDAGOGY IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Ideas for Outdoor Learning Activities:



Nature Scavenger Hunts:

- Create lists of items for children to find in nature, encouraging exploration and observation skills.



Outdoor Art and Creativity:

- Use natural materials like leaves, rocks, and sticks for art projects.
- Let children express themselves through outdoor drawings, paintings, or sculptures.



Science Investigations:

- Conduct simple science experiments outdoors, exploring concepts like plant growth, water cycles, or soil composition.



Nature Journals:

- Encourage children to keep nature journals where they can record observations, sketches, and thoughts about the outdoors.



Gardening:

- Establish a school or community garden where children can learn about planting, growing, and caring for plants.



Outdoor Reading and Storytelling:

- Set up reading corners or storytelling sessions in outdoor spaces to combine literacy with nature.



Math in Nature:

- Use natural objects for math activities, such as counting leaves, measuring tree heights, or exploring geometric shapes in the environment.



Outdoor Physical Education:

- Incorporate physical activities like yoga, nature walks, or team sports into the outdoor learning curriculum.



Wildlife Observation:

- Learning about the different species that inhabit the outdoor environment.

LOOSE PARTS OUTDOORS

NATURE DONALDS

at Dundas Central



The children were using the natural items found to make a McDonald's restaurant. Asking if we wanted chicken nuggets and fries. "Welcome to our Nature Donalds."





Nature

Creating a nature area outdoors for children provides a space for exploration, connection with the natural world, and learning about the environment.

WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PLAYGROUND MORE NATURAL

Water



Trees



Rocks



Sand



Grass



Gardens





Nature kitchen

Gather leaves, flowers, and seeds in separate containers. Provide bowls or buckets, sticks, and water or sand to create a Nature Kitchen.



NATURE KITCHEN

Lincoln Alexander and Hillcrest



LOOSE Parts



Lids

Wooden blocks

Empty containers

Colander

Measuring spoons

Hoops

Plastic pots

Plastic bottles

Balls of wool

Marbles

Popsicle sticks

Buttons



Small rocks

Pieces of wood

Corks

Pieces of textile

Tiny animal figurines

Large beads

Pipe cleaners

Nuts and bolts

Empty ice cream tubs

Toilet paper rolls

Rope



A loose parts play area outdoors for children provides an open-ended and creative space where kids can use various materials to build, manipulate, and imagine.





RAINBOW WALK

COLOUR MATCHING WALK



TEXTURE WALK

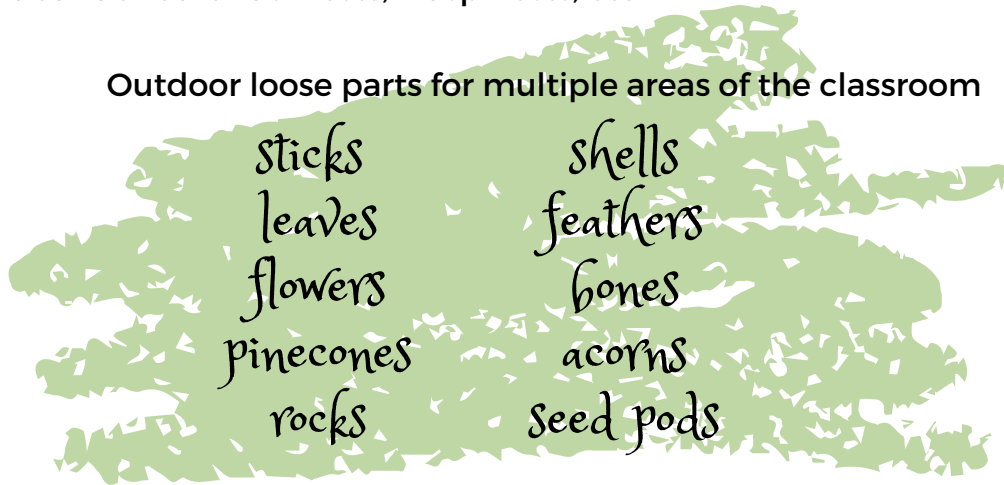
BRING THE OUTDOORS IN

Ways to incorporate things from outside into the indoors:

1. Have wood cookies and wood pieces in the block area
2. Put animal felts, antlers, horns, etc around the room
3. Bring in large branches and let kids decorate to hang from ceiling
4. Bring in dirt for the sensory table
5. Have plants around the classroom with a spray bottle and let the kids water them
6. Bring in snow
7. Bring in live insects/animals to observe
8. Plant grass for them to watch grow and then let them cut it with scissors
9. Bring in corn cobs for them to pluck out the corn pieces sunflowers for harvesting seeds
10. bring in abandoned birds' nests, wasp nests, etc



Outdoor loose parts for multiple areas of the classroom



BRING THE INDOORS OUT

Ways to incorporate things from inside into the outdoor:

1. Put bubble wrap or paper around a tree to paint/color
2. Laminate books so they are waterproof and put in a basket
3. Have waterproof babies so they can be left out
4. Have a bucket of dress up clothes
5. Have a table full of different art supplies
6. Bring out large but light fabric that can be hung on things
7. Trucks and cars in the mud and sand areas
8. All kinds of kitchen items (pots, cups, utensils, muffin tins, etc.)
9. Bring out huge boxes
10. Magnifying glasses and binoculars
11. Have an outdoor sensory table
12. Bring playdough outside
13. Large plastic animals
14. Scarves
15. Clipboards with paper
16. Instruments
17. Dollhouse with people



Winter Wonders



“Winter loose parts” is a collection of natural materials that children can move, manipulate, control, and change within their play. These “loose parts” are open-ended, meaning they can be anything the child wants them to be, which encourages creativity and imagination.

Creating winter art for children involves engaging them in creative and fun activities that capture the essence of the winter season.





Hillcrest

SUN CATCHERS

Creating sun catchers with nature items can be a delightful and rewarding activity with several benefits.

Connection with Nature: Collecting and using natural items like leaves, flowers, and twigs in sun catchers allows you to connect with nature. It's a hands-on way to appreciate the beauty and diversity of the natural world.

Artistic Expression: Making sun catchers is a creative process that allows for self-expression. Choosing different natural elements and arranging them in a visually appealing way can be a form of artistic expression.

Mindfulness and Relaxation: Engaging in a craft like making sun catchers can be a meditative and mindful activity. Focusing on the task at hand, such as arranging and gluing natural items, can help reduce stress and promote relaxation.

Educational Opportunity: Creating sun catchers with nature items provides an opportunity for learning. You can explore the characteristics of different plants, discuss their life cycles, or even incorporate educational aspects into the process.

Environmental Awareness: By using natural materials, you promote environmental awareness. It encourages a sense of responsibility for the environment and an understanding of the beauty that can be found in sustainable, natural resources.

PROGRAM EXCELLANCE TEAM

UPDATES

Ministry and Licensing -
Ashley Codispodi

✓ Exciting news from UFCC's Ministry and Licensing Corner – Sir Wilfrid Laurier has worked consistently at improving their process for “Administration of Drugs and Medication” (CCEYA 137/15 – Section 40) since 2020. This included daily checks from both educator and supervisor and reviewed dose, storage, signs/ symptoms and other areas as well. As you may know, the lower your Non-Compliance Score - the better! With all the attention to detail and focus from the entire team – Laurier has gone from a score of 77 to 39 and moved to a Tier 2! Congratulations Team!

✓ After a day long inspection with the Ministry at Ancaster Meadow, and a squeaky clean inspection, the Program Advisor provided notes on the Pedagogy and Programming of the site, that she was so impressed to see:
“It was noted that throughout the program the creative art posted throughout rooms was open ended, process-oriented pieces. It was also noted that there were no visible signs of Christmas - and this demonstrates the commitment to the Umbrella core value - "we respect the uniqueness of each child and their family, appreciating differences in development, culture, religion and origins." With the training on Product vs Process Art and the collaboration of the educators at Ancaster Meadow, we should be proud of the open ended, process based experiences we are providing the children at UFCC.

✓ Mount Hope Before and After Care program has officially moved to a tier 1 license from a tier 2 with having three years without any non compliances! Congratulation to the Mount Hope Team!

REMINDER

A reminder that the “Safe Arrival and Departure Policy and Procedures” is in effect as of January 1st, 2024. Please ensure you have signed off on the policy and have reviewed the “Brief Overview” of the policy as well.

PROGRAM EXCELLANCE TEAM

UPDATES

Manager of Program Excellence - Jen Allen

EDI Update

Communities of Practice -
Rebecca MacIsaac and Jenny Redmond

Interested staff can register through our training portal.

**Community Of Practice:
Supporting Visuals
Wednesday, March 6th, 2024
6:30-8:00 pm**

We look forward to connecting with you!