




Presentation by Kathy Walker

■ REMOVING THE BOUNDARIES IN OUTDOOR PROGRAMMING



*Creating a sense of wonder for children outside reflects their natural state.
A child moves around the space with a sense of relaxation and freedom that is often not provided for them.
Look up, look down, outside is full of things to think about, to explore and to imagine.*



Children's learning

- Children require:
 - Time
 - Space
 - Exploration
 - Investigation
 - Focus
 - Engagement
 - Links to real life



The learning environment

- Needs to promote:
 - Imagination
 - Creativity
 - A sense of wonder
 - Personal space
 - Sensory experiences
 - Fresh air



Perceptions of Outdoors

- The outdoor environment as a learning opportunity in early childhood has always been significantly different from that of the traditional primary school.
- In school, outside was escape, time out, not linked to learning, a time for rest for teachers.



Outdoors

- **In early childhood, value was recognized in relation to being outside.**
- **However, often, outdoor learning is described by staff as:**
 - ***Too cold***
 - ***Too unstructured***
 - ***Parents don't understand its importance***
 - ***We often run out of time***
 - ***They just run riot!!!***

Other comments and perceptions

- *It is good for the boys to let off steam*
- *It gives us a chance to sit and observe*

Teaching and learning Early childhood pedagogy

- Children learn through active exploration and investigation of their environments.
- Sitting on the mat is not the most important part of learning in preschool.
- Long uninterrupted time to play, particularly outdoors is especially important for young children

Turning the myths around

- Children can still be directed outdoors
- Design briefs and plans are a useful tool before going outdoors or at the commencement of outdoors
- Play can continue over time outdoors

What studies say about children outside

- Less behavioral disturbance
- Less frustration
- Increased levels of imagination
- Increased cognitive function
- Opportunities for literacy and numeracy such as: positional language

What might it look like?

- Cubbies
- Caves
- Hideaway places
- Rich materials and resources in sand pit
- Tables with pull apart objects
- Paper, clip boards to write on
- Dramatic play areas (3)

What might it look like?

- Carpet squares to define spaces
- Individual sand trays and water trays
- Defined spaces/make shift fences
- Digging, gardens, vegetables, herbs
- Wood work
- Collage
- Construction



What might it look like?

- Sounds
- Objects hanging from tress
- Music
- Natural materials for investigation and adding too



Adult role outdoors

- Focusing in
- Promoting imaginative play
- Modeling design briefs
- Being with the children, involved in some of the play
- Scaffolding the language



For consideration

- What is my attitude about outdoors?
- How much do I value it?
- What stops me from exploring it as much as I might wish to or think I should?



Discussion with parents

- Articulate the learning
- Share information about importance
- Demonstrate that learning takes place both inside and outside
- Avoid compromising due to parents



Indoor and outdoor

- Enabling children to move between the two provides balance, movement, a flow of the day for children without too many interruptions.



Challenges

- Always start with a philosophical commitment
- Never let regulations stop you from thinking first
- Remember that children don't feel the cold like adults
- Remember that children don't catch a cold from the cold