

The Outdoors as a Learning Environment: Fostering Positive Inclusive Interactions

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Why is Outside Play Important?

(What do Children Learn when They are Playing Outside?)



Environmental Considerations during Outside Play

Outside Environment

Physical world of objects, space, sensory stimuli, and social interactions and events that influence the young child's experiences in the outside environment

Evaluating the Outside Environment

1. Physical

2. Materials

3. Scheduling

4. Social/Interactions

Describe these components and how each one can impact your program.

Your Outside Play Area

- Draw a picture of an outside play area in your school or one that you have visited. Include props that are permanently attached as well as those that teachers bring out for children to use.

Accommodations for Children with Disabilities

Adaptation Continuum

Adapted from Source: Cara's Kit, Milbourne & Campbell, 2007

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- Adapt Physical Space
 - Adapt Activity

- Adapt Materials
- Adapt Instruction

- Provide Assistance

Physical Space Adaptations

Changes or modifications to the physical environment or the addition of selected equipment.

Examples

- Rearrange outside equipment for easy wheelchair or walker access
- Put wind chimes near the water table to alert a child who is blind about its location

Adaptations to Activities

Changes or modifications to the learning activity to enhance the child's participation.

Examples

- Modify sections of an obstacle course to include both easy and difficult areas so all children can be successful

Adaptations to Materials

Changes or modifications to the materials used in an activity to enhance children's participation

Examples

- Use a ball that beeps so that a child who is blind can hear the location of the ball.
- Provide modified swings and tricycles

Instructional Adaptations

Changes or modifications to the instructions or requirements of the activity to support the child's participation.

Examples

- Shorten the length of time a child participates in an activity (e.g., the parachute game) so that he doesn't lose interest
- Provide extra time for a child to finish an activity, as needed

Providing Assistance

Adult provides the child direct assistance to accomplish the activity, when required.

Examples

- Adult puts shovel in child's hand as a prompt to initiate the activity in the sand box
- Adult moves materials closer to a child so that he can independently reach and grasp

Questions for Evaluation of Your Outside Play Area

- What skills can children really practice in your play area? How many different kinds of play can occur?
- What equipment or props can you add to inspire additional and more imaginative kinds of play?
- How do the pieces of equipment or areas of the playground encourage children to interact?
- Do children have opportunities to change the space?

REMEMBER!!!

- Primary avenue for learning is PLAY!

Instruction should be based in play activities.