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Learning Doesn’t End When Children Go Outdoors

Nancy P. Alexander, MEd

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial Disclosures: Nancy P. Alexander received an honorarium for presenting this course. Non-Financial Disclosures: Nancy P. Alexander has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.

- **Content Disclosure:** This learning event does not focus exclusively on any specific product or service.

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Course Description

- You know the value of outdoor time for physical development, but how can you use that valuable time to enhance children’s learning and support your curriculum? Learn ways to incorporate learning experiences in the outdoors.

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Name a minimum of five ways to incorporate learning experiences in the outdoors.
- Identify at least three benefits of activities in the outdoors.
- Describe the role of the teacher in expanding children’s learning outdoors.
Recall your experience outdoors as a child.

Remembering Your Favorite Times

- Think about times with special friends outdoors. What did you do? Why was it important to you?
- What large muscle activities did you enjoy? What equipment did you use? What games did you play?
- Who were your friends? What activities did you do together?
Remembering Your Favorite Times

- Think about some independent projects you completed such as craft, art, or other creative activities. Why was it fun for you? What did you learn?
- What “treasures” were important to you as a child? Did you have a special place for them? Did you have collections?

How Children Benefit from Group Activities
How Children Benefit from Group Activities

- Cooperation
- Language and literacy
- Social skills such as sharing and taking turns
- Planning and problem-solving
- Using skills and knowledge
- Creativity

Cooperation
Academic Learning in the Outdoors

- How is academic learning included in games like hopscotch or jump rope?

1. What are some typical indoor activities that you can bring outdoors?
2. How can you expand your curriculum into the outdoors?
Theme-Based Activities

- Outdoor time can supplement theme activities such as transportation, community helpers, and many others allowing additional time for children to explore concepts and implement new skills.
- Some activities are better outdoors because children can be more active and noise is not a problem.
- Some examples are dramatic play involving community helpers like firefighters or police.
Manipulatives and Math

Activity Areas
Consider setting aside areas of your playground for specific activities such as:
- Dramatic Play
- Music
- Art
Dramatic Play

- Provide opportunities for children to expand language skills
- Require cooperation
- Stimulate creativity
- Planning and problem solving
Music

- Can be noisier than indoors
- Create and repeat patterns

Art

- Less concern about messes
Science

- Growing a garden
- Enjoying seasonal changes
- Noticing the weather
- Experiencing nature
The Teacher’s Role in Increasing Learning Opportunities

- Provide interesting materials and equipment
- Suggest activities
- Share ideas
- Participate in activities
- Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions
- Support the activities by demonstrating interest

Learning Opportunities Handout

- Use the handout to assess your playground for learning opportunities. How can you add to your playground to enhance children’s learning?
References

