

Introduction

Hello, my name is Aimee Robinson, my student number is 2314197, welcome to ECEY6005 Regaining Paradise? Sustainability in the Early Years.

The aim of this presentation is to talk about sustainable landscaping and the idea is for children to learn to look after their environment around them.

For the content of my scrapbook, I explored a local reservation woodland called Palmers Rough, situated in Shirley, Solihull which is a local nature reserve that consists of woodland and fields that join the two sections of woodland together, which dates back to 900 years. This woodland is situated in a built-up area. Years ago, there was more land that was a part of the woodland but unfortunately parts of it were built on and what was left was then protected. I chose this site because I know it very well and it was a special place for me growing up. Spending time in the woodland, I visited Palmer Rough a lot, even on my own and eventually bringing my own children to play and explore there.

As a Personal Reflection, I have always cared for and loved the natural wildlife and growing up I would see hedgehogs, badgers and foxes around the area where I live, including in my own back garden. Over time it has become quite noticeable that the natural wildlife has declined, and these animals are struggling, especially in the urban environment. While out walking my dog early in the mornings and at night I see foxes everywhere and I wondered why people don't seem to look after these animals and I feel strongly empathic about how they survive. I regularly have a fox that will follow me on my dog walks and even though my dog does not like the animal I will always show kindness towards it and try to give the fox some sort of food as it is clearly hungry.

Experiencing this has made me think about how people should be taking care of the natural world around them, to support and help the English wildlife thrive. This is when I started thinking about palmers rough, I wondered how this environment supports local wildlife, and I started thinking about how individuals could support wildlife within the area and in the environment that they in, and the environment that is around them. From creating habitats for foxes to birds and even supporting bees and butterflies as all wildlife is declining due to the human impact on the world. (David Attenborough 1960s- present) quoted "We need to work with nature, not against it".

This is when I wondered what could be done and came across sustainable landscaping, after visiting Palmers Rough and taking photographs of the woodland, I witnessed how the landscape supported potential wildlife, even witnessing a family of coots living in the pond. Being in the woodland I listened to the birds and noticed how the sunlight sprayed through the tree branches creating rainbows of light. I noticed how relaxed I felt and remembered

how I felt when I used to visit as a child. Being in nature, I started to think more about how myself and my school setting could lead to sustainable landscaping.

Sustainable landscaping can be brought into the early years' settings by practitioners; by being educated on sustainable landscaping, practitioners can support children with sustainable education it can be introduced to children in many ways, such as creating sustainable landscapes in forest school and in the outdoor areas in the settings. Children can be involved in planting wildflowers for pollinators; they can be taught how to make bird feeders, bug houses, and create an environment that enables wildlife to flourish. This education can be brought into activities in outdoor settings and be adapted to the EYFS curricular, understanding the world. By educating children in this way it will enable them to explore the natural world around them, giving the opportunity to grow a passion for the outdoors and for them to pass on what they have been learning to their family members potentially enabling them to recreate sustainable landscaping within their home environment.

Academic section – 15 min

Sustainability in the simplest form is taking responsibility for the local environment, it is important that children learn and appreciate the local impact they can make, practitioners can support this by understanding the ability of a child and allowing for child-led learning from them. (Dunlop, Vanliene, Mertig and Jones 2000) Values that are taught today will become habit tomorrow, children should be in educational conditions that assist children to develop cognitively, physically, spiritually and ethically. Also stating that the existence of life forms depends on developing the knowledge and awareness of educating for sustainability.

Practitioners in schools and early years settings should investigate how they can create positive actions as an educational community, to work with children and parents to help societies be guided towards a sustainable living. (OEDD 2001) recommends promoting a strong and equal partnership between early childhood education and primary school. It is argued that researchers agree that a successful approach to sustainability depends on how societies around the world educate the next generation. What children learn about the world around them should be addressed and taken seriously. (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2016). (White

and Pramling Samuelsson 2014; Pramling Samuelsson and Wagner 2012; Pramling Samuelsson 2016) stated that sustainable learning and a sustainable world depends on each other and should be integrated into everyday practices with young children.

According to the (2007) Global Environment Outlook GEO4 report (United Nations Environment Programme, 2007) Land and ecosystems are being degraded, including deteriorating water and air quality. Vanada Shiva (2000) stated that 'sustainability demanded that we should move out of the economic trap that is leaving no space for other species and other people'. Stating that threats are great, but opportunities are greater. Thomas Berry (No Date), 'The greatest gift we can give our children is to assist them in their dreams of a planet of pure air, water, sun light and soil where the community of all living beings can flourish in the celebration of existence'.

The Intergovernmental Panel on climate Change (IPCC), (2021) reported that there was a need for early childhood educators to become part of a solution to bring the importance of sustainable development goals (SDGs) into their setting and early childhood pedagogy. Children should be aware of their actions and the actions of the community around them positively or negatively impacting the environment and natural world. Children are in ecological context of the family and the community, according to the NCFE (2021) children must not be framed as "saviours" of the planet, but the foundations should be laid down in early childhood so that fundamental values and attitudes are formed, emphasizing the importance of early childhood education on sustainability.

Nelson Mandela (1990s) quoted that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"

Also, the

(1997 UNESCO Report, Education for a sustainable future) states that 'Education is in humanities' best hope and the most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development'.

Early Childhood education for sustainability was recognised by the key pioneers such as Froebel, Montessori, Owen, and Stienner, who advocated for the empowerment of all children, also recognising that the environment was an importance of valuable resource and the interconnectedness of the child to their world. In 2015, all United Nation Members States provided recognition of the importance of caring for the planet.

The UN's Sustainable development goals (SDGs) have been created as topics for exploration within all educational settings.

Every Child Matters outcome helps practitioners set targets against sustainability; the outcomes can help children to work towards learning objectives. The practical nature of children gardening, making plants grow, building compost heaps and even taking care of or feeding animals such as chickens brings them joy. (Julie. M. Davis, 2008) states that the ethic of sustainability can be developed in an individual that is thinking and acting sustainably permeates deep into culture, suggesting that children can critically respond to nature and the environment to become productive participant in environmental and educational decision making. (Fisherman, 2001; White, 2004) suggested that learning to enjoy and love nature is considered one of the premises for motivating people to preserve nature.

All of these activities make sustainability an enjoyable aspect of learning. Practitioners should have an Eco Champion that can take on the role of sustainability and lead to champion green projects in the setting.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (EYFS)(2024) in England supports education about sustainability and the natural world. The framework and sustainability are linked within, Understanding the World, Expressive Art and Design, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Physical development. Which have set early learning goals to achieve, by taking children out into nature to learn they are also learning communication, to develop critical thinking and resilience. Exploring the natural world brings links into learning about science and maths . Children learn to work in teamwork and develop physically. Learning in the natural world can bring the curriculum outdoors. Froebel strongly believed that the foundation to learning was to view that play was an essential part of childhood and the exploration of the natural world through play (Brehony 2010, Manning 2005). Froebel (1837) also believed that children grow in harmony with nature.

Practitioners bringing in curriculum-based learning experiences out in the natural world and then modelling these experiences can encourage children to take the lifelong steps of sustainability. Watching adults turn lights off, conserve water, produce less waste and recycle and reuse will have an impact on the child learning about the world around them and encouraging them to learn modeled behaviour.

By bringing in sustainable landscaping into a setting children can experience learning about how eco systems work, for example learning about birds, what they eat and the nesting habits, they have, this could lead to creating and making bird boxes and bird feeders. Children can learn about setting up the environment to encourage birds to nest by providing this environment, also children can be taught how instead of throwing away old fruit they can feed it to the birds. Allowing children to water the outdoor garden in setting in and involving them to take part in forest school activities gives them the chance put

sustainability into practice, by adding to the curriculum the learning objectives and making sustainability apart of every day practice children will make a change for the better as it becomes habit for them. David Attenborough (1960s) Argues that learning about nature should not be confined to the classroom and textbooks but to extend outdoors. He states that it is crucial for young people to foster responsibly and appreciation for the natural world. Also, advocating for practical activities such as gardening and studying plants and animals is an integral part of the curriculum. John Muir (1892) greatly influenced sustainable landscaping through his advocacy for protecting wild places and his emphasis on understanding and respecting natural ecosystems.

Equally Montessori (1907) and Stienner (1919) advocated for sustainable development in early childhood education Montessori strongly believed that the child was the 'constructor of cultivation' resonating with the idea of a strong capable child who listen 'attentively' and 'responds appropriately'. Stienner sought to foster key attributes to ensure that children have a 'inner voice of conscious and a sense of responsibility and justice'

By referring to my scrapbook I have included how a school setting can look when children are carrying out sustainability in the setting environment. At my setting there are a lot of opportunities that can provide children with the experience of learning sustainable landscaping. My scrapbook shows that wildlife now relies on people to help their environment, it is important that I reflect on the scrapbook as, it is a reminder of how a natural woodland can change due to human impact, for the reason of building houses or adding in allotments.

To summerise children need the help of adults to learn about how humans are impacting the environment, it is important for them to understand what is happening and the prevention that they can take as we share this earth it does not belong to us. John Muir (1892) influenced later generations to adopt sustainable practices. He believed in the use of natural materials, minimising the environmental impact and respecting ecological balance, which are all central to sustainable landscaping.

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