2317654. ECEY5005. Words.

AI acknowledgement- basic spell check on word, Moodle, University reading list and Google

Awe and Wonder- Science. Mathematics and The Outdoors.

Part 1.

(Source: Google Image Search, 2024)

Part 2.

The outdoor environment I have chosen could be used to develop lots of scientific and mathematical concepts for children in many ways. However, I have chosen to discuss four concepts that I believe could be used with twenty children in a nursery class aged three and four, who would be supported and facilitated by five enabling adults. The children would be made aware of rules and boundaries of the environment before beginning to explore to ensure their safety was paramount. Each child would be given the opportunity to explore as an individual or as a pair or group, to ensure that they had the confidence to use the area as a learning environment and to be comfortable exploring and experimenting.

Pattern

The environment chosen would be an ideal space for children to explore with the mathematical concept of pattern. If I were to visit the environment with my nursery class, I would firstly encourage the children to take some time to explore the area to find out what natural materials they show interest in. Next, I would model collecting the materials that I found interesting myself and then model how to make a simple pattern using them. I would then encourage them to collect some materials that they would like to use for their own patterns and the children would then be able to use the natural materials, such as flowers, leaves, sticks and stones, bark from the trees, sycamore seeds, pinecones etc, (depending on the season) to create their own designs of a pattern. They could explore with the natural materials that they are interested in personally to create simple patterns to begin with, such as flower, stone, flower, stone, flower, stone. They could then be encouraged to continue to more complex patterns when or if they feel confident in doing so, for example, flower, stone, stick, flower, stone, stick. Before allowing the children to progress with the more complex patterns I would ensure that this was modelled to them if it was needed, to deepen their understanding. Allowing the use of natural materials that they have been given the chance to choose personally and exploring and finding the natural materials themselves would make it more interesting and enjoyable for the children, which should in turn allow the learning to be more memorable, enabling the concept of pattern to be ingrained in the brain and remembered for future reference. Whilst the children were exploring

with pattern, I would use open-ended questions to confirm their understanding, for example, “How do you know the flower comes next?” or “Why did you chose the pink flower?”. Allowing the children the chance to explain their understanding and ideas ensures conceptual understanding (Welsh Government, 2021).

(Source: Google Image Search, 2024)

Counting

The above picture of the outdoor environment could also be used to explore the mathematical concept of counting using the natural materials available. If I were to visit the area with my nursery class, I would allow them to explore the area and model counting objects as I wandered around to ensure I was enabling the children’s engagement with the area. Before visiting the environment, I would print off some number cards from one to ten, that for example, asked the children to “find 2 stones”, “find 5 leaves” or “find 8 Flowers”. When showing the children the number card that had been chosen, I would ensure to model to the children how to count out the number on their fingers first using the “grow it, show it, throw it” method, where together we would *grow* the number one at a time, then we hide our fingers and *show* the number as a whole and then finally, show the number as a whole and pretend to *throw* the number forward. Using this method of counting to model how many objects they would need to find beforehand, would help to reinforce the fact that the individual numbers shown on the cards represent the

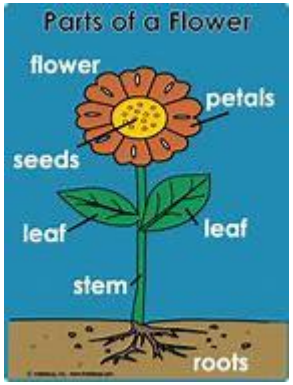
number of objects they would need to find (Welsh Government, 2021). Whilst choosing the number cards I would ensure that I was using numbers to match the children's ability and always ensure that I was encouraging all children to be involved and have a go. I would ensure there was an adult available to those children who required a little more help and guidance than others. Whilst searching for and collecting the natural materials, the children would also be able to explore the area and follow their own interests as adults would be available to make sure they were safe doing so. When the children had had a few turns each, I would bring them together in a circle and ask if anyone would want to show their friends a number that they had found, we would then celebrate the children's achievements together always ensuring the use of praise. I would then allow the children to continue with the activity further if there was interest in doing so, so that they could consolidate their learning using other loose parts of individual interest.

(Source; Google Image Search, 2024)

Parts of a flower

The outdoor environment chosen would be a suitable area for developing knowledge of the scientific concept of parts of a flower. If I were to visit the area with my nursery class, I would allow the children time to explore the different flowers. I would ensure I was using metacognition to

ask questions about the flowers to children, for example, “I wonder if all flowers have stems?” Before the visit I would ensure that I had a printout of the words that we could use to label the parts of a flower, so that the children could also see the written word and I would use this to show the children the names of the parts of the flower as we discussed them during the time spent exploring. As we discussed the parts of the flower with the children, when telling them the names, I would ensure I used the method of clapping out the syllables of the words using “my turn, our turn, your turn”, this is completed by them listening to me say the word first, then we say the word altogether and then they are encouraged to say the word alone, all whilst clapping out the syllables, which gives the children three chances to hear the word which should then enable them to remember the word more easily. When discussion and explanation of the parts of the flower began to come to an end, I would encourage the children time to explore the environment to see if they could find the parts of the flower in the area themselves. I would allow each child a chance to use a digital device to take photographs of the parts that they found and if they wanted to, record themselves saying the word with the picture using an app called Book Creator. I would also offer the children the chance to use chalk to draw their own flower onto the floor. I would then encourage the children to name the parts verbally to reinforce the language element of the activity. With the encouragement and support from an enabling adult, an enabling environment and allowing exploration and experience of scientific concepts, Welsh Government (2021) agree that this will allow children to increase breadth and depth of knowledge.



(Source: Google Image Search, 2024)

Lifecycle of a butterfly

Before visiting the above outdoor environment with my nursey class, I believe that some children would be interested in searching for insects so I would ensure to take some equipment that they could use when exploring, for example, magnified bug boxes, bug catching scissors and insect nets. On arrival, I would encourage the children to explore and use the equipment to see what insects they can find and whist exploring discuss each one found, asking open-ended questions such as “How do you know that the caterpillar cannot fly” or “Where do you think we may find a woodlouse?” in order to develop their curiosity about the insects that may be found in the outdoor space provided. On discovering a caterpillar or a butterfly, I would encourage discussion about the lifecycle using metacognition by saying things such as “I wonder where butterflies come from”, or “Why do you think caterpillars do not have wings?”. I would reinforce the concept of the butterfly lifecycle by reading them the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar. To extend the learning even further I would then ensure to order a butterfly growing kit so that the children could experience growing their own caterpillars and watch them transform into butterflies at school whilst learning about how to look after and take care of them to enable them to become strong butterflies that can be released into the environment by the children when ready.

(Source: Google Image Search, 2024)

Whilst scaffolding the children's learning I would observe the children throughout their play to recognise how we could further the activity if possible to develop the children's learning, for example, using other loose parts to explore pattern, using other mathematical equipment to support counting, adding scientific equipment such as magnifying glasses so that he children can explore leaves and petals in more detail or exploring life cycles of other insects or animals that interest the children.

Part 3.

Location / Activity:	Visit to Clyne park.	**Date:**	30th September 2024
Assessor:	Claire Lewis.	**Review date:**	19th September 2024

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph.	How will young people benefit from this activity?	Hazards and associated risks.	Who is at risk?	Precautions in place to reduce the risk of injury.	Overall risk after precaution rating: L/M/H
Children exploring outdoor area	• Allowing them to explore the area will support their gross motor skills, increase their physical activity, movement and balance whilst walking, climbing, running and jumping on different surfaces of the ground. • Allowing them to feel the different textures under their feet whilst exploring different surfaces. • Help with awareness of how their bodies react to exploring different surfaces such as becoming more breathless on hills or slopes or whilst running instead of walking. • Children may become lost or disorientated whilst exploring the area.	• Children may fall whilst running, climbing and jumping causing cuts or bruises. • Possibility of bumping heads with others or objects whilst climbing and exploring.	• Children. • Possibly adults.	• Explain to children before allowing them to explore that the ground may be uneven and for them to check that it is safe for them to climb over tree stumps or low walls and discourage them from climbing up anything that they feel may be too high whilst exploring. • Explain that hills or slopes should be approached whilst walking instead of running until they feel comfortable that they can do so without causing themselves injury. • Ensure that we have a first aid kit. • Discuss rules and boundaries and distance that is acceptable to explore within. • Ensure each child is wearing a high visibility vest over their clothing so they can be easily spotted if they did venture too far. • Ensure each child has appropriate footwear to limit trips and falls. • Discuss a meeting point and model a whistle blow that tells the children they need to come back to the meeting point if they hear the sound. • Explain that if they get thirsty, they can come back to the meeting point to get a drink of water.	Low Risk

Experience exploring outdoor space in photograph.	How will young people benefit from this activity?	Hazards and associated risks.	Who is at risk?	Precautions in place to reduce the risk of injury.	Overall risk after precaution rating: L/M/H
Children searching for insects	• This can support children's learning about where different insects may live or be found. • It will encourage children to be mindful of insects and help them to learn that they are living things just like them and need to be handled with care and put back into their natural habitat when the children have finished exploring them. • Learn about life cycles of certain insects. • Help to develop fine motor skills when using the bug catchers or tweezers to catch the insects. • Help to develop gross motor skills when moving small logs or small rocks to look under when searching for insects.	• Children may be bitten or stung by certain insects which could cause swelling, infection or allergic reactions in some cases. • Children could drop logs or small rocks on their toes whilst searching beneath them. • Children may come across litter whilst searching for insects. • Children could come into contact with plants, such as nettles, that could cause stinging, irritating or allergic reactions in some cases.	• Children. • Adults.	• Check before visiting that anyone with an allergy is aware and encourage them that they should look out for and try to avoid the allergen as much as possible. • Explain to children that they should ask an adult for help to lift anything that is too big or heavy if they are struggling to do so themselves such as small logs and small rocks. • Ensure that children know that they should not pickup any litter or anything that they are unsure of using their hands and to tell an adult if they think that it should be moved before proceeding with their exploring. • Ensure that we have a first aid kit.	Low Risk.

Children collecting items for pattern	• Gross motor skills and physical movement will be developed during exploring. • Children will gain knowledge of the mathematical concept of pattern. • Children can have discussions with friends and adults about the properties of the items and may sort them how they feel fit. • Children can explore similarities and differences in the items collected. • Children can learn new vocabulary whilst exploring such as the names of flowers they find. • Explore with textures: rough bark, soft grass, spiky pinecone etc. • Children can learn to look after plants and flowers and that they should not pick flowers or petals that are still on their stems and only use them if they have fallen off already.	• Trips or falls whilst exploring. • Could discover litter. • Could gain a sting or allergic reaction to certain plants or flowers.	• Children. • Adults.	• Ensure sensible and appropriate footwear by al attending before beginning the visit. • Ensure we have a first aid kit. • Explain to children that they should not pick up any litter found and if they feel it needs to be moved tell an adult. • Ensure that anyone with known allergies is aware of the allergen and tries to avoid it as much as possible.	Low Risk

Part 4.

This assignment will discuss how adults working with early years children can support, encourage and facilitate children's learning of mathematical and scientific concepts in an outdoor environment. The key focus will be on how adults can create enabling environments, the benefit of using loose parts in play and how to encourage children's curiosity.

According to Tovey (no date) Froebel stated that outdoor play helped children to develop an understanding of the natural world, appreciate it and learn to take care of it. Similarly, Welsh Government (2020) believe that outdoor learning is essential for children to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world. However, they both agree that children need an enabling adult to facilitate outdoor learning by providing the opportunity and an effective environment to ensure authentic and purposeful learning takes place. Furthermore, Duglan (2015) agrees that a stimulating outdoor environment should reinforce the importance of movement-rich experiences that underpin all learning, however, she believes that there can sometimes be some constraints to outdoor learning such as organisation of resources, time and the weather. Similarly, White (2016) and MacKintyre and Mcvitty (2004) suggest that good physical development in children will take place through experiences that mould the neurological structures in the brain and body needed for awareness of the body, balance and co-ordination and agrees that physical development is also about increasing the ability to manipulate materials and objects and being able to use tools with ease. She agrees that physical development is not only about brain development, well-being, mental health and physical functioning but it also underpins the child's attitude to the world and defines the characteristics to effective learning. She believes that they all require movement, action and physicality and states that they will not develop if a child is still. She states that it is the adult's responsibility to ensure that the physical experiences that children seek are safely accessible for as much time as possible.

Bilton (no date) states that the views and attitudes that a practitioner holds can influence the experiences they provide for children. She believes that the practitioners' own experiences of outdoors can help to shape the way they provide opportunities and experiences. She questions whether only practitioners who have had good outdoor experiences themselves will be able to provide good outdoor experiences for young children. She

believes that the values that the practitioner holds of the outdoors will dictate what they believe a child should and should not do when using the outdoors as a learning environment.

According to Nicholson's (1971) loose parts theory, practitioners should provide children with enabling environments that encourage the use of open-ended loose parts, that they can use to model-make, measure, construct, build and experiment. He agrees that natural loose parts such as stones and rocks or logs and sticks should be provided if possible but if not, loose parts such as tubing, tyres and ropes can also be beneficial for children to explore mathematical and scientific concepts such as gravity, length and weight. He agrees that children enjoy planning and problem solving and believes that whilst playing with loose parts this is made available to them to explore with. Similarly, White (2011) agrees that open-ended loose parts outdoors, are a valuable tool to children because they allow more flexibility and encourage them to investigate and explore with their imagination. For example, one child may use a stick as a weapon, and another may turn it into a wand or a lollipop. Furthermore, Ephgrave (2018) states that the use of loose parts can help practitioners with the aspect of planning in the moment, as they can support children in their next steps when the child first shows curiosity using the loose parts, enabling children to play, learn and develop in the here and now.

Gibsons theory of affordance (1966 cited in Waters, 2017) states that play affordance in the outdoors must be provided by practitioners. He agrees that the environment must be based on the children's activity rather than what the adult believes the child may do whilst using the space. He agrees that adults will see a woodland area as what is present, for example oak trees, but a child will see a woodland area as a place to climb, run, jump, to experiment and explore. He states that the affordance of an object is decided by the child who is engaging and not the adult who provides the resources or environment. Furthermore, Campbell and Speldewinde (2020) agree that natural outdoor environments will supply children with materials, both loose and fixed, that enable them to learn science concepts, such as gravity while den building, through open-ended play. Moreover, they agree that adults should be available to observe children through their play so they can facilitate and adapt the learning when needed. Atherton (2014) states that practitioners who are attentive to the development of behaviour patterns can better understand a child's thinking. She believes that an awareness of patterns and consistencies in a child's schemas and being mindful and receptive to them, can allow practitioners to be more attuned to the child's learning and progression steps.

Tucker (2014) states that teaching mathematics in the outdoors can be linked to something that the children already show an interest in or are enjoying, for example, if they enjoy finding insects, you could combine number or pattern with this. Similarly, Pratt (2011, cited in Tucker 2014) agrees that children need to develop a mathematical disposition and suggests that this can be supported by allowing mathematics to be outside which can develop the awareness of the mathematics around them already in the environment and encourage the connections with natural materials in the outdoors.

According to Harper (2017) the outdoors are identified for the inclusion of risky-play. He agrees that the outdoors is an ideal environment to help young children to understand the need and balance of risk-taking and safety and believes that in order for children to gain from things they also need to lose. For example, before a child learns to walk, they must first experience the risks needed to experience the trips and falls that come with the practice of learning to walk. Furthermore, Brussoni *et al.* (2015) believe that although risky play outdoors can be associated with children causing injury or harm to themselves, the positive results of health indicators such as physical activity, social and mental health and behaviours and aggression, out-weigh the negatives. However, they agree that there is a need for supervision and support from an enabling adult who can explain the boundaries that children have, to enable them to keep themselves as safe as possible.

Tunnicliffe (2015) suggests that the key to teaching children science concepts is to observe them in their play and provide them with cues to develop their ideas and questions. She agrees that it is essential for practitioners to understand children's use of words to help develop their learning. She believes that adults should not guide children in what or how to do something but scaffold them using appropriate actions and questions. Similarly, as stated in Purden (2014) Vygotsky suggested in his zone of proximal development, that the role of the adult contributed to the child's learning and development and without providing them with thinking skills, children would not be able to do. Therefore, adults need to support children to help them to think and make sense of the world. Purden (2014) also states that using sustained shared thinking with children can contribute to their outcomes and progress positively, and suggests that with this interaction, it can deepen the level of learning for children as they are able to solve problems for themselves through the metacognitive questions provided by the enabling adults. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2023) agree that the role of the adult is integral to children's progress by them understanding the developmental needs of children

and believe that it is essential for adults to observe, notice and respond to them and recognise when and how they should intervene with their learning to support them in constructing meaning. They also believe that adults should make connections with other practitioners and parents and share their observations with one another to get a better picture of the holistic child and enable themselves to deliver a more personalised experience for the child.

Knight (2013) believes that using the outdoors for learning scientific concepts is beneficial to children and be used in many ways, for example, children can search and discover minibeasts to help with the development of the knowledge of life cycles or trees and plants can be investigated to encourage the development of biology knowledge. She also agrees that the outdoors can be used to develop many other concepts for children. For example, natural materials can be used to develop their creativity by making things and trees and trunks can be used to develop physical skills and confidence by climbing and swinging. Moreover, Knight (2012) suggests that the outdoor environment is important for promoting proprioception and the vestibular sense. She agrees that the opportunity to pull, push, stretch and feel boundaries is inevitable whilst outdoors and can help to develop proprioception, whilst the opportunity to move, balance, spin, tip, roll and fall will promote vestibular development, which can all be met using outdoor environments such as the forest or a woodland area.

According to Welsh Assembly Government (no date) as children spend time outdoors, they should also be observed and assessed outdoors to build a good holistic picture of the child. They argue that children can act differently outdoors from what they do indoors, so it is important to gather information through observation, record and discuss with all members of staff. They agree that observing children outdoors will help to determine where they are on their learning continuum and will help practitioners to identify any difficulties or misunderstandings that need addressing in future. They also believe that observing children outdoors will help practitioners support children's learning and help to provide opportunities for progression. Similarly, Te Whariki (cited in Alexander 2021) agrees that practitioners can use learning stories to document and record a child's learning in the outdoors. It states that the practitioner can add their own interpretations of the child's competencies and dispositions towards their learning and should the learning story to describe what the child can do well. However, they agree that to asses a child, the practitioner needs to know the child well, understand their behaviours, well-being and experiences outside of the context.

In conclusion, it is evident to see that science and mathematical concepts can be developed using the outdoors as they provide a variety of open-ended materials, being loose parts or fixed, that can be used by children to explore and experiment to enable their learning of concepts such as physics, biology, number and pattern. However, it is important that adults facilitate the learning by providing the environments and resources and whilst children are exploring, that they encourage and help develop their knowledge using scaffolding, modelling, metacognition and sustained shared thinking to help them to learn as much as possible. Practitioners working with children should also ensure that they can observe children and recognise strengths and weaknesses to ensure they know how to help a child progress with their learning.

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