

In this assignment AI was used in the form of ChatGPT only to correct grammar errors and placement of commas.

Part One-Personal Reflection

Part Two-Academic Section

Link to Presentation-

[VID 20260712 195139.mp4](#)

Introduction-

Hello, my name is Emma Jones and I am here today to present my scrapbook and to also critically evaluate research that was conducted for sustainability in the Early Years. For my scrapbook, the location I chose holds a special place in my heart, as I was fortunate to grow up in the area and visit my Nan's garden every weekend. My Nan's garden is in a village named Pennant, which is located around ten minutes from a coastal town called Aberaeron. It is a great location for nature as nearby are farms, lakes, and woodland. There is also a wide range of natural resources that could be used to preserve nature and protect it, using natural materials such as wood, sticks, or leaves to create bug dens.

Creating the scrapbook and actively researching for it helped link outdoor learning to Friedrich Froebel's (1852) theory of allowing children to interact with the outdoor world by exploring textures, colours, and natural forms, as well as outdoor play being essential for holistic development. Also, being able to observe my children discovering the natural world made me reflect on my own childhood and how I played out in the natural world. In my childhood, I would go on a bug hunt and create homes for the bugs, finding and picking up any bugs that I would find and placing them in their new homes. However, from observing my children, they were much more interested in sensing textures, shapes, and colours of the natural world, and using the natural resources they had collected to create their own creations such as food, drinks, and even potions.

I also found a quote that really gave me an understanding of children's learning about nature; Jan White (n.d.) quotes that as a child, "one has the magical capacity to move among the many eras of the earth, to see the land as an animal does, to experience the sky from the perspective of a flower or bee and to feel the earth quiver and breathe beneath us." Being able to create this scrapbook and doing it with my children gave a bigger sense of belonging for myself and really makes me think

that as a family, I know we do our little bit to help towards sustainability, but we could really do so much more, especially as I know it would help make the future better for my children and the next generation.

Part Two-

Moving on to the next part of the assignment, I will be explaining sustainability in the early years and critically evaluating its relevance in early childhood education. Sustainability in the early years is about helping younger children develop a lifelong respect, care, and empathy for the environment through age-appropriate and hands-on experiences. The Curriculum for Wales (2022) promotes environmental sustainability by mandating that pupils learn directly in, about, and for their local and global landscapes. Structurally driven by the core purpose of creating ethically informed citizens, this educational framework embeds ecology, climate change, and resource management across multiple areas of learning and experience, particularly the Humanities and Science and Technology. Cynefin (2022) was introduced into the Welsh curriculum to create a sense of local environmental belonging, which encourages hands-on experiences such as habitat tracking and pollution sampling.

In early childhood education, sustainability is a critical and rights-based obligation that directly protects a child's fundamental human rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UN's General Comment No. 26 establishes that every child has a right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable world. Being able to integrate eco-friendly practices into early years settings fulfills Article 6 (Survival and Development) as well as Article 24 (Health and Environment) by directly safeguarding vulnerable, developing bodies from environmental toxins, climate disruptions, and pollution. Furthermore, by being able to embed nature-based play and resource care into daily routines, educators can satisfy Article 29 (The Right to Education), which mandates that early education must foster deep respect for the natural world. When settings promote the empowerment of young children actively taking part in green choices, they uphold Article 12 (Respect for the Views of the Child), which converts potential eco-anxiety into a powerful sense of agency during the most critical neurological developmental window of young children.

Sustainability in the early years directly aligns with UNICEF's global mission to safeguard children's development, as the organization recognizes that environmental health is inseparable from a child's survival and well-being. Through campaigns such as *The Climate Crisis is a Child's Rights Crisis* (2021), UNICEF emphasizes that young children are the most vulnerable to climate shocks. Making eco-sustainable early years environments a necessity protects developing minds and bodies. Early years educators must therefore transform daily routines, such as water conservation, into rights-based, protective habits.

Building a hedgehog home through the John Muir Award framework serves as a practical application of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by grounding macro-environmental concepts into local, tangible action. By engaging with the award's Conserve challenge, learners shift away from passive eco-anxiety and move into a more active, hands-on approach to learning. This experience fosters holistic development by using a Head, Heart, and Hands approach, which requires learners to intellectually analyze ecological needs, build emotional empathy for vulnerable wildlife species, and manually build a physical solution. Furthermore, once the challenge has been completed, learners feel fulfilled by sharing their achievements. This allows them to cultivate true eco-agency, solidifying the fundamental ESD principle that local, practical choices can be meaningful in protecting and improving the wider global ecosystem.

The John Muir Award (1997) engages futures thinking by using hands-on nature connections to instill long-term ecological responsibility during a child's most critical developmental window. Using the award's core challenges of Explore and Discover, young children are able to build a deep emotional attachment to local wild spaces, establishing the foundational empathy required to care about the planet's long-term survival. Physically engaging with the Conserve framework, such as creating a wildlife habitat, shifts children away from short-term thinking and allows them to understand how their present-day actions directly shape tomorrow's ecosystems. Finally, by using the Share component of the John Muir Award (1997), children are able to cultivate a powerful sense of early eco-agency, transforming them from passive observers into active, forward-thinking citizens who feel capable of designing and advocating for a sustainable global future.

The John Muir Award(1997) is fundamental to the sustainability of early years because it translates complex ecological needs into tangible , sensory experiences that shape a child's foundational worldview. by encouraging young children to explore,discover and care for wild places , the award instils a deep seated emotional connection to nature during such a critical stage of the child's developmental journey. This early bonding moves sustainability away from abstract classroom rules and instead turns it into a lived , joyful habit which allows for the fostering of early eco literacy and active conservation through simple acts such as litter picking or wildlife gardening. The framework also demonstrates that even the youngest of children have the capability of being environmental stewardesses, successfully planting the seeds for a lifetime of conscious , sustainable learners.

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