

Environmental Learning

Activity Plan		
Activity: Bug spotting, where the children will be taken to a wooded area and left to independently discover the wildlife within the area, providing them with the freedom of investigation the outdoor environment and developing their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.		
Number of children: Ten.	Age of children: Five to six years.	Number of adults: Five adults.
Location: Woodland outdoor area which is attached to the child setting.	Preparation time: Twenty Minutes.	Activity time: Until the children decide they no longer want to be outdoors or until it is time for the children to go home.
Resources: The main resource will be the outdoor environment, which includes bugs, sticks, logs, rocks. However, there will also be access to paper, pencils and colouring pencils for if a child decides they would like to use the resource, and any items the children would like to bring into the outdoors from within the setting. Additionally, children will have access to bug pots, magnifying glasses, nets to use to catch insects and other creatures. To ensure the protection of clothes, rainsuits will be provided by the setting and children will be encouraged to bring a spare set of clothes. If children are unable to bring a spare set of clothes, the setting does have additional clothing on hand.		
Aim/s of activity: The aim of this activity is to improve children's knowledge and understanding of the world around them, to improve their global citizenships, and introduce children to wildlife and nature, giving them the ability to ask questions and discover or explore the natural world within a hands-on approach. Children will also be encouraged to participate in sustained-shared thinking, to cooperate and communicate with other children and adults, in solving problems they have. An example of this, would be finding frogspawn in a pond and discovering how a tadpole becomes a frog within metamorphosis, children will not be expected to understand this word, however they may begin to understand that creatures such as tadpoles and caterpillars will morph into another creature through a cycle. This activity can be extended by communicating with the manager of the setting, into gaining permission to bring frogspawn onto the premises and observing the changes that will be made. Additionally, when		

developed enough, the frogs will be put back into their original habitat, in order to minimize the environmental impact.

An additional aim of this activity is to improve children's confidence and independent skills by enabling children to make their own choices. The activity will be child led, where the child chooses what they do and there is no set activities, this provides children with the opportunity to utilise their imagination skills, develop resilience and understand consequences of their actions. Such as, if a child falls because they wanted to balance on a slippery log, they understand why they slipped and when children are given the continuous opportunity to participate in risk children can develop a resilience, therefore, they are more likely to play another game afterwards rather than no longer participate in play because they think they are going to get injured again.

Links to outcomes:

Within the Foundation Phase Curriculum emphasises the importance of practitioners providing children with efficient learning opportunities, a topic which is considered beneficial and essential to children's learning and development is children's knowledge and understanding of the world (Welsh Government, 2015). This is included because it allows for children to develop life skills, which will assist them in their futures, this area of learning is in place to enable children to "learn to demonstrate care, responsibility, concern and respect for all living things and the environment" (Welsh Government, 2015, p.40). Through this understanding, providing children with the opportunity to engage in outdoor environment independently gives children the ability to discover the environment through a hands-on approach discussed by Piaget and Froebel, enabling children to know how to look after it, their responsibilities and why it is important to ensure we take care of the outdoors.

Furthermore Donaldson (2015) discusses the importance of encouraging children to become independent capable learners, through providing children with choice and efficient learning opportunities which is facilitated through the outdoor environment and firsthand experiences. Donaldson (2015) also believed that when children become independent capable learners, they become resilient in their own learning and can better understand that it is good to make mistakes because this is how they learn. Additionally, this enables children to have a positive future as it improves children's learning and development and allows for them to have the career they desire and luxuries they desire, rather than only having the necessities. Within this curriculum that will be implemented, it emphasises the importance of allowing child-initiated play, because this can develop

children's holistic development as they are choosing to engage in activities that they like, making them more involved within their own learning; encouraging and scaffolding children through the process of becoming independent learners. The outdoors expands the amount of opportunities to participate in challenging activities which are child-initiated.

Differentiation:

With the understanding that the adult-child ratio of children ages five to six is one to six, there is an additional understanding that in order to observe children during free play and free exploration there should be more adults to supervise because there is a larger space. This gives children the opportunity to discover and explore more areas, for the practitioners to engage with the children with permission and without interrupting their play cycle and expand children's knowledge and understanding through sustained-shared thinking.

Health and safety:

To ensure children's health and safety is upheld, practitioners will conduct a risk assessment to make practitioners aware of the risks within the environment, minimise potential risks or reduce the impact the hazard has on a child if they were to become harmed. This includes ensuring there is a first-aid box which is easily accessible by the practitioner or adults. Practitioners who will treat injuries must be Level 3 Paediatric trained to ensure the child has the best treatment.

Throughout the activity, practitioners will stay with children and the children will be informed that if they would like to go anywhere, they must ask a practitioner and ensure there is always an adult with children. This ensures children are observed and prevented from experiencing harm. As discussed previously, the adult-child ratio will be more than the guidelines to enable children explore and discover areas they may not be able to if there were less adults, this emphasises the importance on ensuring children are kept from potential high-level risks whilst allowing for children to explore and expand their knowledge and development.

Role of adult/adults:

The practitioner's role during this activity is to observe the children and to only participate in children's play when they are invited, this prevents children's play cycle from being interrupted. This ensures children are given efficient opportunities to learn and develop because they conduct the play, the decision process of participating in challenging or risky play is the child's responsibility and due to this

they can become more involved within their play, making it holistically beneficial to children's development. Additionally, children are less likely to participate in challenging activities when a practitioner becomes involved because they may feel like the practitioner has expectations for them to uphold. However, when a practitioner is invited to play with the child, the role of the adult is to facilitate the child's development by enabling the child to control the activity and by including sustained-shared thinking opportunities when there is a challenge or a problem that a child experiences.

An additional role a practitioner has is to prevent children from harm through conducting the risk assessment and minimising the potential hazards within the environment, and when practitioners cannot minimise the potential hazard, they are more aware of the possible situations which could take place; allowing for strategies to be put into place to reduce the effect of the injury. Practitioners will also observe children to ensure they do not participate in high level risks, because high level risk can cause severe or life-threatening injuries to children.

The activity:

Before the activity takes place two practitioners will assess the environment from any animal feces or potential additional safety risks to a child's health. This prevents children from becoming unwell, developing any infections and from having an injury. Red flags placed by children will also be put within the environment to provide a boarder, where children are not allowed to exceed which allows for practitioners to be more observant of children's actions and their safety. A discussion of the rules, including putting bugs and insects back in their original habits and being careful when holding them as to not cause injuries to the bugs and insects.

After children show an understanding of the rules involved, they will be given the opportunity to participate in child-led activities where they can express themselves freely and explore the forest area, discovering bugs, insects and different materials.

There will be an area dedicated to the resources that are provided by the adult and the items from the indoor environment which children chose to bring with them to the forest area and can be used freely by any child in what they choose to play. When adults and practitioners are invited to participate in the play activities, they will use sustained-shared thinking skills when children face a challenge or problem. This gives children the opportunity to discover the solution during their own hands-on experiences.

Risk Assessment

Location / Activity:	Bug Spotting within a Forest Area	Date:	06/05/2021
Assessor:	Ella Walsh	Review date:	06/06/2021

Activity	How will young people benefit from this activity?	Possible Hazards	Who is at risk?	Precautions in place to reduce the risk of injury	Overall risk rating: L/M/H
Pulling branches off trees.	Children can use the branches to build bug hotels and dens for children to be able to express themselves through their imagination.	Children can become hurt when pulling branches off, including falling over or having splinters. This can cause cuts and grazes.	The children would be at risk because they are pulling the branch off the tree.	To reduce this injury of risk, practitioners will provide an opportunity of sustained-shared thinking in understanding the risks of pulling branches off the trees. Additionally, within this discussion, children will be encouraged to use the branches from the floor of the woodland area.	Low.
Affordance theory with relation to hay fever, asthma and allergies.	Children will become more exposed to the outdoors, improving their immune system.	Within the setting, children have hay fever, asthma or allergies, which can be irritated from the pollen exposure and specific items within the	Children and practitioners are at risk to asthma attacks and anaphylaxis due to the exposure and susceptibility within the woodland area.	Parents will be informed prior and there will be an EpiPen also known as epinephrine within a first aid kit. This will be administered by a trained Level 3, paediatric first aider when an allergic reaction takes place.	Medium.

		woodland area. This can cause asthma attacks or anaphylaxis.			
Contaminated soil or water.	Frequent exposure to contamination soil or water can build children's immune system. Unless the contamination is from animal feces or other bodily harming factors.	If children ingest or are exposed to contaminated soil or water from their hands or cuts, it can cause them to develop an infection or become ill.	The children are directly at risk; however, it can expose others passively through contact.	To reduce the risk of injury, there will be a no mouth rule where children are not to put anything in their mouths. Additionally, children will be encouraged to wash their hands before and after eating or going to the toilet. This prevents cross contamination. Before the activity takes place, practitioners will check the woodland area for animal feces or other endangering factors to a child's health and safety.	Low.
Uneven ground.	Exposure to uneven ground provides children with the opportunity to develop their balance and coordination.	If children are not exposed to uneven ground, they are likely to trip, fall or slip, especially if the ground is wet or slippery. Muddy ground	Within this factor, children are at risk, however if practitioners do not approach uneven ground appropriately, this can cause them to be at risk of the hazard	In reducing this risk, children will have the opportunity to become exposed to uneven ground, which will develop their balance and coordination; enabling them to be less likely to fall or slip. Additionally, children	Low.

		in cuts can also cause children to develop infections.	factors additionally.	will have a sustained-sharing thinking opportunity discussion with practitioners when the ground is wet and muddy, this provides them with the understanding that they need to be more careful on the wet uneven ground.	
Exploration beyond the practitioner's visual abilities.	Children can explore the woodland area more in depth, where they may discover additional bugs and insects.	Children can become hurt without the knowledge of the practitioner, causing a risk to safety and life.	The children will be at risk or harm.	Children and practitioners will work cooperatively to place borders around the area which allow for children to understand that they are to not go any further. This allows for practitioners to safely observe children. Additionally, if a child does wish to explore further than the border, they are to communicate with a practitioner and they will go with the child to the area that they desire.	Medium.
Pond Dipping to search for bugs	Children can learn how to swim and become more	Children can slip or trip within the water, causing	Children will be directly at harm due to this; however, adults	Children will be included in a discussion to understand the risk of going to far into the	High.

	knowledgeable about the bugs and insects within the pond.	them to go too deep into pond, leading to drowning.	are under the same risk if they do not approach the pond without understanding the risks.	pond, and they will understand the importance of asking a practitioner first. The practitioner will accompany them in pond dipping to ensure children are not at risk of harm.	
Bug bites	This can build children's immune systems to become more accustomed to bugs; reducing the reaction they have to bug bites.	Bug bites can cause itching, rashes or unknown allergic reactions to the bugs.	Both practitioners and children are at risk to bug bites within a woodland area as it is highly populated with creatures.	A first aid kit will contain creams for bug bites, which will only be administered by a Level 3, paediatric first aid trained practitioner. Additionally, children will be encouraged to tell an adult if they do get bitten by an insect. An EpiPen, also known as epinephrine, will also be within the first aid kit.	Low.

Environmental Audit

Issue / environmental feature	Damage that could occur	How to lessen negative impact	Resources needed	Who is responsible
Removal of bugs or insects from their original habitat.	Changing cite biology due to insufficient habitat for their species needs. Possible endangerment of bug or insects that are low in population.	Discuss with children that they will need to put the bugs and insects back where they found them. Also, practitioners will discuss with children to not over collect the same bug or insect.	Bug pots for children to more easily transport bugs and put them back in their original habitat.	The children will be responsible for putting the bugs and insect back, however it will be the practitioner's responsibility to ensure children understand why they need to put them back. This will be completed through sustained-shared thinking as it gives children the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.
Pulling branches off trees.	Trees can become damaged, and with continued injury to trees this can cause partial deforestation of the trees within the area.	Through sustained-shared thinking, children and adults will discuss why they should not pull off the branches and they will be informed that branches off the floor should only be used.	There will be no resources needed for this.	Children will be responsible for not pulling branches however, practitioners are responsible for observing and encouraging children to use the branches that are on the floor of the wooded area.
Walking over areas that are covered in plants and branches.	This can cause children to trample over undercover plants and bugs	Children will be careful where they are stepping, especially in areas that have a lot of plants and branches on the ground.	No resources are needed for this.	Both children and practitioners are responsible for not trampling on overgrown areas, because they are

	within these areas.	Additionally, the next time this activity takes place, it will be in a different location within the woodland area to ensure plants can regrow in areas that have been trampled on.		both within the same areas. This also displays role modelling behaviour, reinforcing the importance of being careful when walking around within the woodland area.
Poor environment footprint caused by leaving litter and food waste.	Animals, bugs and insects can become injured from ingestion of litter or food waste, or they can become injured due to the litter left behind.	There will be blue recycling bags, white food waste bags and black non-recycle mixed waste bags to be kept in an area. Giving children the opportunity to understand how to recycle. These bags will be brought indoors within the child setting and kept with the setting rubbish bags. All food waste will be put into the compost bins located on the childcare settings premises.	The resources include recycling bags, food waste bags and non-recycle mixed waste bags.	Both practitioners and children will be held responsible for throwing away their litter into the correct bags. Practitioners will also observe the children, to ensure they put the correct items into the bags and to support children in understanding what items belong in the bags.

Evaluation

Froebel believes the outdoor environment expands children's learning opportunities by enabling children "to achieve their own personal learning potential", because within the outdoor learning environment children can experience the world around them and they can participate in child-led play, in which they are given the opportunity of choice where they can discover the world through physical experiences (Bruce, 2012, p.41). Additionally, Werth (2018) discusses, Froebel provided the understanding in which resources within the outdoor learning environment are open-ended which allows for children to develop holistically, as there are no restricted play opportunities and children can discover and explore with free choice activities which are not adult led.

In accordance with the understanding of the influence that play, and outdoor learning have on children, The Foundation Phase Curriculum states that the environment must include stimulating experiences for children which are to encourage exploration and discovery in children, to improve their confidence and independency in making logical decisions (Welsh Government, 2015). Additionally, the Foundation Phase curriculum also believes the outdoor learning environment is to be used as a resource to improving children development holistically because it provides children with the opportunity to explore the natural world which is under the Foundation Phase outcome "Knowledge and Understanding of the World" (Welsh Government, 2015, p.1). The aim of this outcome is to provide children with the knowledge they need to become a positive part of their community, to take care of the world around them and reduce their environment footprint.

However, the new curriculum Donaldson (2015), states that outdoor learning is to not only be used as a resource, but also as an everyday experience where children are given frequent opportunity to experience the outdoor learning environment through their own decisions and child-led activities which enables children to become "independent and capable learners". Within the Donaldson (2015) curriculum, it emphasises the importance of having child-led activities because child-led activities are created by the child and within their own interests. According to Craft, McConnon and Matthews (2011) child-initiated play promotes children's independency and

decision-making opportunities, whilst also enabling children to become immersed within their own play world. Children who are immersed within their own play can control the activity and decide what they would like to do, this allows for children to become part of their own development because they will build on their previous knowledge; therefore, expanding their development through repetition and discovery. Additionally, Woods (2017) discusses child-initiated activities allows for adventure play which improves children's participation because they are not pressured into participating in an activity they do not want to; therefore, children will become more confident and independent which will allow for children to develop initiative as to understand how to deal with situations that are unpredictable.

Brodie (2014) states, in order to facilitate children's development in curiosity and problem solving, during child-led activities a practitioner's role is to provide sustained-shared thinking opportunities because it allows for children to have a wider understanding of the world as they can participate in problem solving skills within a hands-on experience. Opportunities for sustained-shared thinking within the outdoor environment includes children being introduced to metamorphosis as they may not understand how a tadpole turns into a frog, or the different between each insect as some could be bright colours, long, short, sticky, or some live-in water whilst others live on land, however, to ensure children understand the sustained-shared thinking opportunities, practitioners must speak at the children's language level like not using the word metamorphosis as this is too complicated for a child to understand (Home Science Tools, 2017-2021). This can also increase children's sense of belonging because they can understand their input to their community, especially when being involved in sustained-shared thinking as they begin to understand the environmental footprint they have and how they can take care of the world which as Hanscom (2016) discusses, improves children's proprioception and allows children to feel comfortable in expressing themselves.

According to The International Montessori School (2021) During sustained-shared thinking experiences, practitioners are to not interrupt children's play and are to only become involved in sustained-shared experiences if they are invited by the practitioner

to participate in the child's play. King and Sturrock (2020) states there is six stages of a child's play cycle, including metalude, play cues, return, frames, flow and annihilation, and when either of these stages are interrupted children are unable to utilise their play to its full potential. Additionally, The International Montessori School (2021) states, Montessori believed if this play cycle is uninterrupted, they can become completely involved within the activity in their learning, which is efficient in improving their development as they are at their learning pace rather than feeling pressured into attempting an activity which is beyond their capabilities.

Understanding the play cycle, can also help to facilitate a child's development, because practitioners understand their role in providing children with free expression and choice, as children are more likely to participate in play experiences they choose to do, rather being presented with an activity by the adult, children can use their imagination in utilising the outdoor learning environment (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2021). Williams-Sieghfredson (2021) states Nordic forest schools provide children with an opportunity to discover the world through a hands-on approach as it allows for children to explore their environment; therefore, allowing for children to gain knowledge of consequences and outcomes from their actions and understand their own physical and emotional limits, an example of this is balancing on a fallen tree with moss will be slippery which they may understand through trying to balance on the tree themselves. Forest Research (2021) also believe forest schools educational approach develops children independence and confidence as they are given the opportunity of choice within the environment, and they develop balance, coordination, gross and fine motor skills because children can climb on items from the forest, they are on uneven ground and they are continually using physical actions like jumping.

The Reggio Emilia approach support this as it includes ensuring children have free access to the outdoor environment, because the principles include ensuring children have free choice to participate in any activities and ensuring children are given the opportunity and are encouraged to communicate with practitioners and other children, these allow for children's holistic development to be improved because children they display their full potential when they become involved in their own play (The Compass

School, 2017). Knight (2013) discusses within this approach there is a larger focus on what a child is interested, rather than what is expected within their norms, because they believe children develop at their own pace and should be enabled to be actively involved within their own learning.

However, Early Years Matter (2021) and Playground Centre (2021) state the indoor environment promotes children's creativity and critical thinking skills because practitioners can provide resources which may be unavailable outdoors because they are not waterproof, and children can craft items with the resources. Additionally, Playground (2021) state the indoors includes story time opportunities, board games and technology, which improves children language and communication skills, and their social skills. Additionally, whilst Froebel believes children's development is facilitated from the outdoor environment, Vygotsky believes practitioners responsibility is to facilitate children's development by supporting them through activities and resources in areas of their development in which they are struggling (Shvarts and Bakker, 2019). Shvarts and Bakker (2019) state Vygotsky believed when children are scaffolded by an adult, practitioners can implement strategies which focus on developmental areas in which children are struggling with, this enables children to be given equal opportunities in achieving the same opportunities as other children their age.

Waller (2017) shows the affordance theory in relation to indoor learning is minimal as whilst it is easier to provide resources, these resources are likely to be closed-ended and do not enable children to express themselves through their imagination. However, Waller, et al. (2017) expresses, the outdoor learning environment includes open-ended resources where children can use an item not only for its intended purpose, such as, using a stick as a wand or a wooden spoon to mix potions. Additionally, within the affordance theory, children can access the resources easily as they are around the environment and they do not need to ask the practitioner for specific items, instead they can find it which would scaffold a child's development through child-initiated play, self-discovery and sustained-shared thinking (Waller, et al. 2017).

According to Bruce and Dyke (2017) Froebel believed that adventurous play enables children to participate in risky and challenging play, which allows for children to be included in investigation and discovery as they can try new experiences to understand the consequences that will happen when they do something, this gives them a wider understanding of the world around them and allows for them to experience aspects of the world through a hands-on approach. Donaldson (2015) supports this as he believes experiencing risk and challenge also allows for children to engage in their own sustained-shared thinking as they can understand why something has happened, which develops children resilience when they experience something that is new which they are uncertain about; therefore, allowing for children to overcome challenges to become creative, confident and critical.

Ouvry and Furtado (2019) state adventurous play allow for opportunities for children to assess and manage risk through experiences where they can test their own capabilities and become more resilient. Ouvry and Furtado (2019) show practitioners roles within adventurous and outdoor learning is to plan effectively in ensuring the risks within the environment will not cause extensive injuries, they must have a positive attitude towards risk and challenge because it will encourage children to want to participate, and they are to scaffold a child's development by observing and encouraging children to participate in aspects of the environment which challenge the child.

During outdoor learning and children's free expression, they are enabled to participate in hands-on learning which as Piaget discusses, enables children to have a wider understanding of the world because he believes that children's personal experiences are influential to their long-term development because they develop children's understanding of aspects, such as the difference between right and wrong and how to become a member of society in looking after the environment (Lefa, 2014). Additionally, within Piaget's Constructivism theory observing and assessing children during their play enables practitioners to have a wider understanding of the developmental stage they are in because a child will display their full potential within their own child-led play, this will assist practitioners in understanding how they can

facilitate the child's development and it can assist in identifying any additional learning needs a child could have (Ültanir, 2012).

Furthermore, McMillan believes whilst the outdoor enables children to present their full potential, it also has health promotion because they become more exposed to the outdoors (Martin, 2021). Ouvry (2001) supports this and states that the outdoors provides children with positive memories and feelings in which they may associate with the outdoors, this can cause children to understand the importance of having a positive environmental footprint, encourage children to want to play in the outdoors and participate in physical activities. According to Liebovich (2019) McMillan's strategy to children's development in the outdoors also states the positive attitude to the outdoors improves not only children's physical health, but their mental health as the outdoors has been proven to improve mood, reduce stress and anger through self-expression and therefore feeling more relaxed and improves confidence and self-esteem with support and encouragement.

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