Playing with Nature: Fostering Children's Creativity and Problem- solving

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Sharing the work of Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and Outdoor Classroom Project



Making the case for creativity

Why creativity? The world is changing at a fantastic speed. The future requires people who can **problem-solve**, **adapt** and **communicate** in workplaces and environments that are increasingly complex.

Creativity maximizes human potential.

Children with high "creative self-efficacy" are better able to handle stress and are more confident about their futures.

~Bronson & Merryman, 2010

Description of Study

- Qualitative study investigated how outdoor environments supported children's creativity
- Conducted at two separate natural outdoor classrooms with preschool-aged children from three to five years old
- Focused on creativity with regard to problem solving, ingenuity, and construction

Child Educational Center | La Cañada, CA



Dimensions Education Programs | *Lincoln, NE*



Sparking Creativity



- ♦ Time
- Materials
- Adult role

What's important in the space?

Large scale
Flexibility
Predictability



The Motorcycle











Large blocks of time

- Choice and opportunity to revisit ideas
- Consistent use



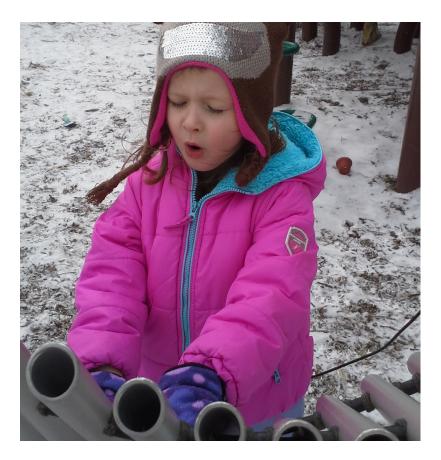
The Dinosaur







Outdoors in all kinds of weather





"Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul." ~Friedrich Froebel

Materials

- Non-standardization encourages divergent thinking
- Open-ended and natural materials both suggest ideas and allow children to bring their own ideas
- Knowing where to find materials empowers freedom of use

Creating Ramps





Corn Pie









Adult Role

- Desire to support
- Access to information and practice
- Recognition of what is needed in each situation



Planting Children



Adult Role



International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education

Addressing Policy, Practice, and Research That Matters

HER DISI-Date Instant | Million & Munder | | Warner 2014



Playing with Nature: Supporting Preschoolers' Creativity in Natural Outdoor Classrooms

Kiewra, C. & Veselack, E. (2016) *The International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education,* 4 (1), p. 70-95



Questions?

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