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Outdoor Learning Environments for Preschool-Aged Children

Viewer's Guide

This viewer's guide gives you ideas for creating learning environments for all preschool-aged children. The reflection questions and activities will help you think about ways to support children's learning. Helpful resources can be found in the Resources section of this guide.

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)

We'd like to encourage you to use the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) as your guide to understanding how the outdoors can help support children's development across domains. Follow the link below to explore the interactive ELOF, especially the Preschooler Domains.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>

ELOF2Go Mobile Apps



English. Need to access the ELOF on the go? Check out ELOF2GO, a mobile app that includes the ELOF developmental progressions: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elof2go-mobile-app>



Spanish. Need access to the ELOF2GO in Spanish? The mobile app MiELOF is available here: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/preparacion-escolar/articulo/aplicacion-movil-mielof-en-espanol>



Home Visitors. ELOF@HOME is an app for home visitors that provides on-the-go access to effective practices you can use to support learning goals within the ELOF. Learn more and download the app here: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/mobile-tools-home-visitors>



National Center on

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Benefits of Being Outside

What are some of the many benefits of time spent outdoors for preschool-aged children? Do you have any to add that were not covered in the webinar?

Video Reflection: Fun in the Rain

As you watch this video, what do you notice?



Focus On Equity and the Outdoors

Who Comes to Mind When You Picture Someone Who Is “Outdoorsy”?
Describe below.



Who Is “Outdoorsy”?

What are some of your ideas for how to make outdoor learning environments safe, welcoming, and engaging for all children? How can you incorporate the languages and cultures of the children in your program into your outdoor play spaces? Write your ideas below.

Video Reflection: Engaging the Senses

As you watch this video, what do you notice? How does this teacher support outdoor exploration?



Video Reflection: Allow for Cozy Spaces Outdoors Too!

As you watch this video, what do you notice? How did this program create an engaging learning environment for children?



What Are Your Key Take-Aways?

What are some ideas from this webinar that you would like to share with staff or implement in your own outdoor learning environments or adapt with the resources you have available? You don't have to have a big budget available for this: little changes can make a big impact when done with intention. Use the space below to record your ideas.

Summary

What Do Engaging Outdoor Environments Look Like?



- Welcoming and identity-affirming
 - Choice, play, and exploration
 - Variety of materials and spaces
 - Engagement of the senses
 - Adult-led and child-led activities
 - Active and quiet activities
 - Individual, small group, and large group activities
- Change! Weather, the seasons, and mixing up your materials and outdoor space are all great ways of adding novelty to your space.

Helpful Resources (* materials available in Spanish)

Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (*Many materials are also available in Spanish)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/preparacion-escolar/articulo/marco-de-head-start-sobre-los-resultados-del-aprendizaje-temprano-de-los-ninos>

ELOF2GO and MiELOF*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/elof2go-mobile-app>

ELOF@HOME

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/mobile-tools-home-visitors>

Effective Practice Guides: Social and Emotional Development*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/social-emotional-development>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/preparacion-escolar/effective-practice-guides/desarrollo-social-y-emocional>

Webinars

Front Porch: Using the Natural World to Support Children’s Development

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/using-natural-world-support-childrens-development>

Front Porch: Understanding and Using Evidence-Based Social Emotional Curricula

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/understanding-using-evidence-based-social-emotional-curricula>

Front Porch: The Importance of Peer Interaction and Social Pretend Play

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/importance-peer-interaction-social-pretend-play>

Loose Parts on the Playground

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/loose-parts-playground>

Creating Safe and Engaging Learning Environments: Active Supervision for Preschoolers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/creating-safe-engaging-learning-environments-active-supervision-preschoolers>

Videos

Nature-Based Learning and Development for Teachers

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/nature-based-learning-development-teachers>

Play Promotes Early Development: It’s Time for Play! Video Series

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/curriculum/article/play-promotes-early-development-its-time-play>

- It’s Time for Play! Outdoor Play: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/videocast/its-time-play-outdoor-play>

Briefs, Tip Sheets, and Tools

25 Easy Ideas for Nature Play for Early Childhood Centers*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/25-easy-ideas-nature-play-early-childhood-centers>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/25-ideas-sencillas-para-los-centros-de-la-primera-infancia-para-hacer-juegos-en-contacto-con-la>

Affordable Settings and Elements: Ideas for Cost Effective Solutions (for outdoor play spaces)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/affordable-settings-elements-ideas-cost-effective-solutions>

Play Space Assessment for Preschool

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/play-space-assessment-preschool>

10 Tips to Enhance Your Outdoor Play Space

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/10-tips-enhance-your-outdoor-play-space>

Benefits of Outdoor Play and Exploration*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/benefits-outdoor-play-exploration>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/beneficios-del-juego-al-aire-libre-y-la-exploracion>

Childhood in the Garden: A Place to Encounter Natural and Social Diversity*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/childhood-garden-place-encounter-natural-social-diversity>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/learning-environments/article/childhood-garden-place-encounter-natural-social-diversity>

The Current State of Outdoor Play and Exploration in the United States*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/current-state-outdoor-play-exploration-united-states>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/el-estado-actual-del-juego-al-aire-libre-y-la-exploracion-en-estados>

The Great Outdoors*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/blog/great-outdoors>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/blog/los-grandes-espacios-abiertos>

Nature Club Toolkit for Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/nature-club-toolkit-families>

Our Natural World (Teacher's Guide)

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/our-natural-world>

Outdoor Play Benefits*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/outdoor-play-benefits>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/beneficios-del-juego-al-aire-libre>

When Availability of Outdoor Play Space Is an Issue

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/supporting-outdoor-play-exploration-infants-toddlers/when-availability-outdoor-play-space-issue>

News You Can Use

These resources are infant-toddler focused

Environment as Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/news-you-can-use-environment-curriculum-infants-toddlers>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/hablemos-de-el-medio-ambiente-como-parte-del-curriculo-para-bebes>

Foundations of School Readiness: Social Emotional Development*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/news-you-can-use-foundations-school-readiness-social-emotional-development>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/preparacion-escolar/articulo/el-desarrollo-social-y-emocional-y-su-relacion-con-la-preparacion-para>

Outdoor Spaces*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/news-you-can-use-outdoor-spaces>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/hablemos-de-espacios-al-aire-libre>

Take It Outside / Take It Inside*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/news-you-can-use-take-it-outside>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/learning-environments/article/news-you-can-use-take-it-inside>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/hablemos-de-salgamos-afuera>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/es/entornos-de-aprendizaje/articulo/hablemos-de-llevar-la-naturaleza-al-interior>

Additional Outdoor Play Resources on ECLKC

Outdoor Play

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/outdoor-play>