

Take STREAMin³ Outside

Your Outdoor Learning Environment

Outdoor time should be planned with as much intention as time spent indoors. Think of outdoor spaces as an extension of your classroom. Well-planned outdoor experiences and areas provide children (and educators) with just as many opportunities for active engagement, Core Skill support, and intentional interactions. Ideally, one hour minimum is spent outside every day.

Intentionally Arrange Your Outdoor Space

Consider which materials you can bring outside or make weather-proof. Think about creating spaces for running and active play, as well as more secluded spaces for reading, sitting, and gathering. As children grow and change, so should your environment! Rearrange your space based on children's interests and needs.

Change Your Environment with the Seasons

Embrace the new activities that come with rainy, snowy, or sunny days. First, ensure that children have the right clothing for playing in ALL types of weather. Encourage families to send in extra clothes. Consider the conversations and activities that you can support during changing seasons, such as rakes in the fall or sleds in the snow!

Incorporate Nature

Natural materials offer open-ended fun! Check for safety and allow children to collect and manipulate materials from plants growing in your space. Also consider bringing in other natural materials like pinecones, rocks, sticks, and dirt. Gardens, trees, and more provide low-cost and easy ways to incorporate natural materials and processes into your outdoor space for children to engage with.

Consider Access and Safety

- Ensure all children can access the outdoor area (i.e., ramps for wheelchairs, smooth surfaces for walkers or visual impairment).
- Include low-tech communication/core boards for children outside.
- Offer a variety of seating for sensory accommodations (e.g., bouncing chair, hammock) and physical impairments (e.g., supportive chair with table attachment).
- Provide tactile cues for children with visual impairments (e.g., mark changes in terrain, upcoming structures).
- Use electronics (e.g., alarm on your phone, amplification, flashlights) to alert children with hearing impairment about changes and transitions.
- Enclose the outdoor space so children cannot wander outside the monitored area.

