



TOYOTA | EVERGREEN
LEARNING GROUNDS
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OUTDOOR PLAY: An Introduction

The Importance of Outdoor Play

The world of the child has changed enormously in recent years. Think about a time when we spent endless hours outside to freely explore the world around us and made decisions about our own play. Many of us have powerful recollections of imaginary games played outside, of **climbing** hills and **rolling** down to the bottom, of using found materials to **design** and **build**, and **construct**.

Benefits of Outdoor Play

Children need opportunities to demonstrate their development and to show what they know and what they can do. Going outside supports all expectations that we have for childrens' learning and growth across all domains.

We know that the benefits of outdoor play for young children are numerous:

- Enhancing their overall health;
- Supporting student engagement and helping to foster a love and connection to the outdoors;
- Supporting development of their large muscle groups, making them healthier and more adept, physically able and aware of what their bodies can do;
- Learning to **run**, **balance**, **hop**, and **swing** in a unique setting;
- Supporting independence, resilience and social skills as children become confident about their abilities in the outdoors and develop an "I can" attitude towards learning;
- Student engagement is fostered as they can become engrossed in their play.

These skills are transferable to the classroom and set the stage for future learning. Outdoor play develops a disposition for the outdoors, for physical activity, and for stewardship toward the environment.

There is a growing body of research that supports educators being intentional about outdoor learning, and a desire amongst parents and communities at large to ensure that children deserve rich outdoor learning time.



Landscapes that Teach

Children are experiential learners. They are compelled to investigate, examine and make sense of the world around them. The outdoors offers the perfect setting for young children's approach to learning and has numerous benefits.

Ontario's innovative Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten Program not only supports, but encourages educators to think of outdoor spaces as an integral part of children's learning environment.

High-quality outdoor play environments offer children opportunities to:

- Engage with their natural surroundings,
- Be sociable and solitary;
- Create pretend worlds;
- Test boundaries;
- Construct and alter their surroundings;
- Take acceptable levels of risk.

Designing Schools Grounds with Children in Mind

There is an understanding that children benefit from carefully planned outdoor spaces that can fulfill basic childhood needs, such as **jumping**, **running**, **climbing**, **rolling**, **hiding**, and **making a mess** that otherwise may not be addressed in their homes or schools.

By carefully planning outdoor learning spaces the way that we do indoor spaces, schools have the opportunity to create stimulating and challenging play environments that nurture childhood development.

As an example, by providing access to water, soil and plants, children have the opportunity to examine nature and develop their ability to observe, compare, predict, explain and draw conclusions.

Space for cooperative projects and access to loose materials provides an opportunity for children to build structures such as sand and snow forts. During the process, they develop their fine motor control; ability to problem solve; visual perception of space; understanding of structure and stability; and confidence to take risks and persevere.

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