

A LETTER TO FAMILIES ABOUT OUTDOOR PLAY

What We Do and Why

Physical exercise and fresh air are important for your child's health and well being. We take children outdoors every day so they can run, jump, swing, climb, and use all the large muscles in their bodies. They run around, breathe in the fresh air, look at the clouds, or catch a ball or a bug. They lie on the ground and watch clouds and birds, or they climb high and look down. We also talk about the things children see, hear, touch, and feel so they become aware of changes in the weather, the seasons, the growth of plants, and the animals.

Playing outdoors your child can learn

- to notice and appreciate changes in nature
- to discover how water puddles after a rain and disappears when the sun comes out
- to follow shadows around
- to use his or her body in increasingly skillful ways

We encourage children to wonder about what they see by asking questions:

What do you notice?

Where do you think they are going?

How are they different or the same?

What You Can Do at Home

Fresh air and exercise are very important to your child's health, and to yours. Try to spend time with your child outdoors every day except when the weather is dangerous. Take walks in your neighborhood, go to parks together, explore nature with your child. Watch what your child notices and show you too are interested.

Children love to collect things and then play with them, sort them, and make patterns with them. Bring along a container or plastic bag when you go outdoors so your child can collect treasures along the way—seeds, leaves, rocks—and bring them home to examine. You also can plan special activities outdoors. Here are some ideas:

- Bring drawing paper and crayons outside so children can draw what they see.
- Take a pail of water and large brushes so your child can paint the sidewalk or fence.
- Bring colored chalk, which is perfect for sidewalk art.
- Play catch with balls of all sizes.
- Bring bubble-blowing solution and different-shape blowers.

Make time each day to be outdoors with your child, exploring, making discoveries, and appreciating nature.