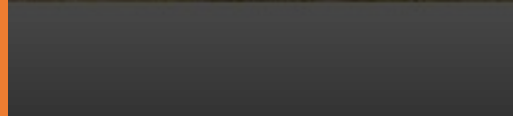


Outdoor Play Spaces in Child Care



Project Host

Community Literacy of Ontario

Research & Writing

Summer Burton

 communityliteracyofontario.ca

 @CommunityLiteracyOntario

 (705) 733-2312

 @love4literacy

 info@communityliteracyofontario.ca

 @love4literacy

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According to **How Does Learning Happen?** Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years...

Children thrive in programs where they can engage in **vigorous physical play** in natural outdoor spaces and playgrounds that present **manageable levels of challenge**.



According to How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years...



While these environments need to be safe, it is also important for them to provide children with interesting opportunities for a **reasonable degree of risk-taking.**



According to How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years...

In addition to providing **physical benefits**, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as **perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.**



According to How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years...



Through active play and physical exploration, children gain increasing levels of **independence**, learn to **persevere** and **practice self-control**, and develop a sense of **physical, emotional, and intellectual mastery** and competence.

According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...



When designing an outdoor play space, it is important to consider the **layout**. For example, L-shaped playgrounds prevent the entire outdoor play space from being **supervised at the same time** so should not be used.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...

It is important to consider **different surfacing**, such as natural grass and rubberized surfaces, for outdoor play spaces to prevent injuries during outdoor play. Hard surfaces, such as concrete, may not be suitable for young children who are crawling or learning to walk.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...



Riding areas for the use of bicycles and other equipment and **areas for water or sand play** may also be included to support children's developing interests.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...

Consider designing an outdoor play space that incorporates a **quiet, shaded grass area** with books or puzzles to allow children the opportunity to participate in **rest** or **quiet activities** in addition to gross motor play.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...



It is also important to consider ways to make the play space **accessible** for all children to encourage the meaningful participation of children of **diverse ages** and **developmental abilities**.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...

Program adaptations and physical accommodations must be made to **allow every child to participate fully** and be challenged in meaningful ways.

For example, when installing fixed-play structures, consider equipment with varying heights and opportunities for exploration.



According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...



When designing the outdoor play space, consider ways to use the environment as a teacher. This provides opportunities for children to **experience, care for** and **interact with the natural world.**

According to Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres...

Consider using the following equipment and furnishings in your outdoor play space:

- **rocks** or **tree stumps** to sit on or use as a table
- **logs** to walk along
- **stepping stones**
- a **garden** where children can learn about plant life cycles



References

- How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
<https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/showAttachment.do?postId=20628&attachmentId=30713>
- Ontario's Child Care and Early Years Act
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11>
- Planning and Design Guidelines for Licensed Child Care Centres
<https://files.ontario.ca/edu-childcare-centre-design-guidelines-en-2022-03-30.pdf>