



MODULE #2



Your Journey to Outdoor Learning!

This module invites you to reflect on:

- How children's thoughts, ideas, and interests are represented in your indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- The relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces and how they complement each other.
- What lies beyond the fence and how these extended spaces contribute to your overall learning environment.

***Module Length: Approx. 2 – 2.5 hrs to complete.**

Reflection

Take some time to reflect on the following quote. We encourage you to write down your responses and come back to it from time to time as you complete the modules!



"A foundation principle of How Does Learning Happen? is that children thrive in indoor and outdoor spaces that invite them to investigate, imagine, think, create, solve problems and make meaning from their experiences -especially when the spaces contain interesting and complex open-ended materials that children can use in many ways."

(HDLH 2014 Page.20)

What does this quote make you think about?



Reflection on Bringing Nature into the Classroom

Integrating elements of the natural environment within the classroom creates a calming, engaging space that supports children's curiosity and well-being.

By incorporating natural materials such as wood, stones, and shells, we provide tactile experiences that foster sensory development and creativity.

What are the benefits of brining nature indoors?

What challenges might arise when trying to bring nature indoors, and how can they be addressed?



Ways to Bring Nature Into the Classroom

Use the space provided below to share example of how you bring nature into the classroom.

What is one new way you could enhance or build on this practice?
(For example: adding a plant care station, creating a seasonal nature table). Draw, journal or document your ideas below:



Click here to explore **THRC**
Resource Library bins to
further support your journey!

"The learning that takes place in classroom experiences can be explored in the "extended classroom" that nature provides. Similarly, the natural environment can be reflected in the indoor learning environment."

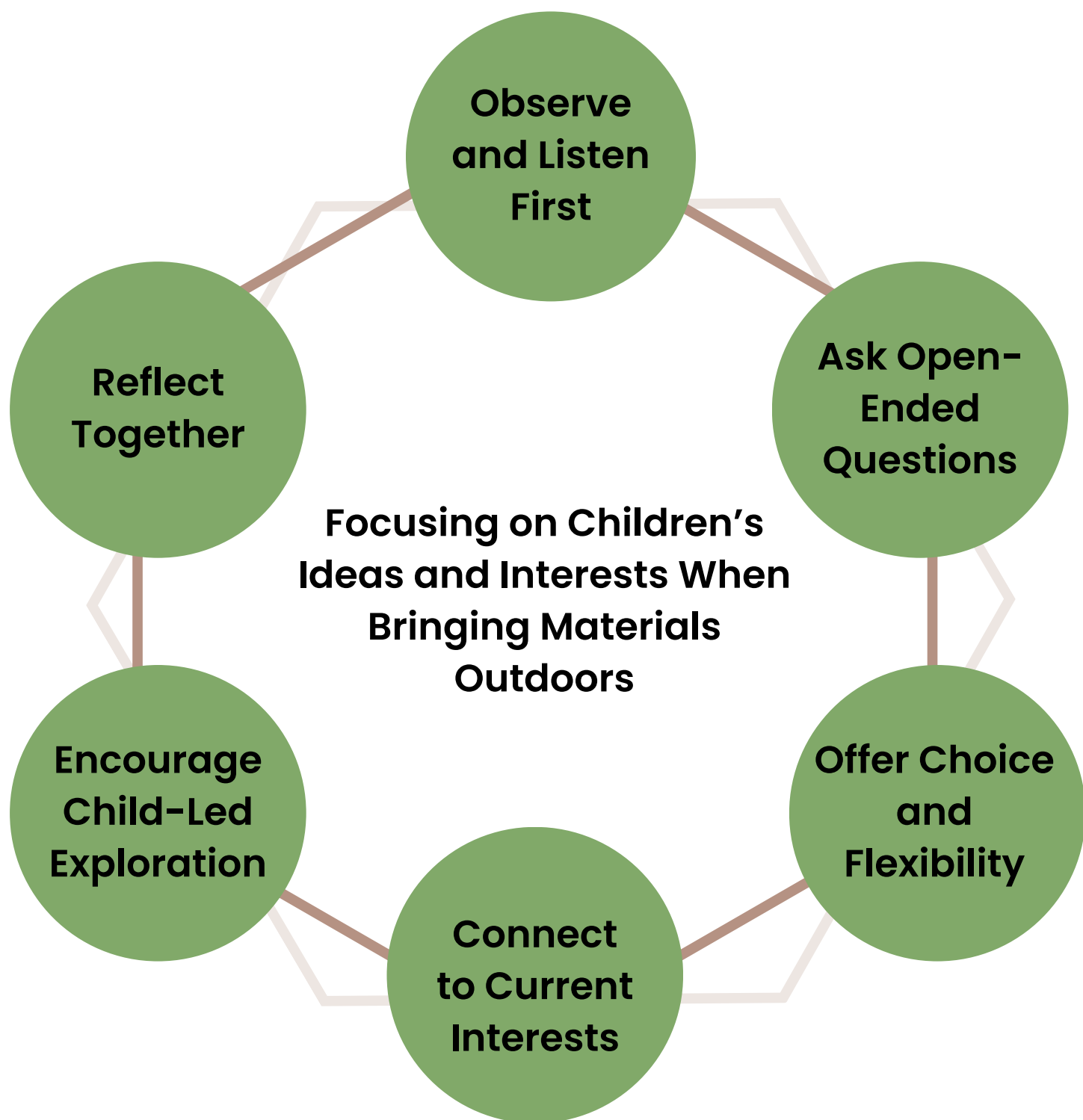
The Kindergarten Program pg.34



What are your thoughts on this quote?

Do you see indoor and outdoor environments as separate spaces? If so, why?

Wondering how to thoughtfully extend classroom materials outdoors in ways that honour children's ideas and interests? Take a moment to reflect on the image below and consider how outdoor environments can inspire curiosity, creativity, and deeper exploration.



Explore each of these ideas in more detail on the following pages!

Observe and Listen First

Take time to notice what children are curious about indoors—are they gravitating toward building, art, sensory play, or problem-solving experiences?

By carefully observing and listening to their conversations and actions, educators can use these insights to intentionally select and bring materials outdoors that reflect and extend children’s interests.



Ask Open-Ended Questions

Before transitioning outdoors, invite children to share their ideas by asking questions such as, *“What would you like to explore outside today?”* or *“What materials do you think we might need to build or create outdoors?”*

These open-ended conversations empower children to take ownership of their learning, encourage decision-making, and help educators plan outdoor experiences that are meaningful and responsive to children’s interests.



Offer Choice and Flexibility

Provide a variety of materials and allow children to choose what sparks their interest. Offering flexible options encourages autonomy and creativity while supporting different learning styles.

For example, if children show a strong interest in painting indoors, set up easels and water colours outdoors to extend their artistic exploration in a new environment.



Connect to Current Interest(s)

Use children's existing interests as a starting point when planning outdoor experiences. For example, if children are fascinated by insects, bring along magnifying glasses, bug viewers, and sketch pads to support close observation and documentation.

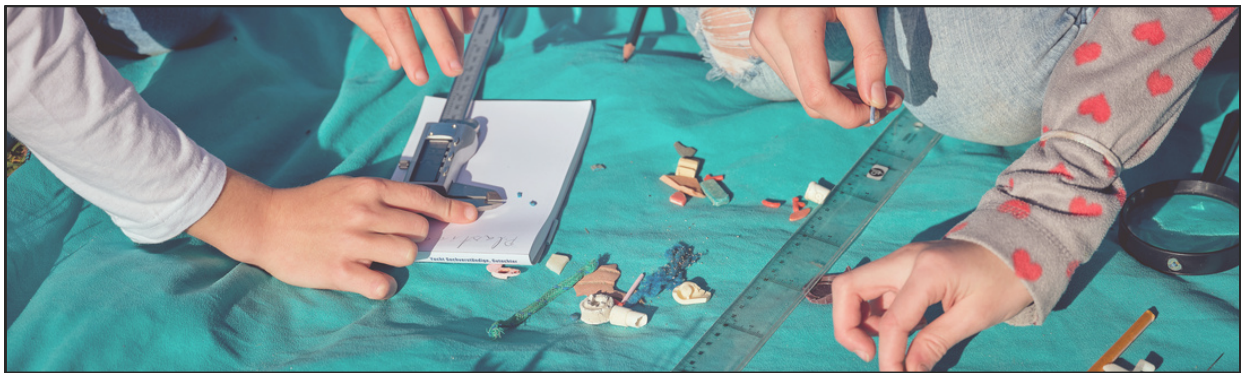
If construction is a popular interest, provide blocks, loose parts, or recycled materials outdoors to encourage building, collaboration, and problem-solving in a larger, open space.



Encourage Child-Led Exploration

Allow children the freedom to decide how they want to use the materials rather than directing the activity or outcome.

By stepping back and following the children's lead, educators support creativity, independence, and problem-solving, while honoring children as capable and confident learners.



Reflect Together

After spending time outdoors, invite children to share what they enjoyed, what challenged them, and what they might like to explore next time.

Listening to their reflections helps children feel valued and heard, while also providing educators with meaningful insights to guide and plan future experiences that build on children's interests and ideas.



Exploration Activity:

Part # 1

This activity will help you to practice identifying children's emerging ideas and using them to guide decisions about which materials to bring outdoors.

Observe the image and identify at least three clues that reveal what the children are curious about or attempting to investigate.
(Ex. of clues: Body language, chosen materials)



Step #1: Interpret the Children's Thinking:

1. What ideas or interests do you think the children are exploring?
2. What learning themes might be emerging (e.g., construction, storytelling, problem-solving, sensory exploration)?

Exploration Activity:

Part # 2

Step #2: Decide What to Bring Outdoors:

Create a list of materials that would extend the children's ideas and plan an outdoor invitation (ex. How would you design a simple outdoor setup?). Write your examples or sketch/draw your ideas below.

Dont forget to think about your role as an educator:

- *How will you stay responsive to children's shifting ideas outdoors?*
- *How might you document their thinking?*

Beyond the Fence:

New Possibilities for Play and Discovery

Outdoor learning doesn't stop at the boundaries of the playground.

Beyond the fence lies a world of opportunities—community spaces, natural areas, and environments that can enrich children's experiences.

Exploring these spaces can help children develop curiosity, confidence, and a deeper connection to the natural world.

What spaces beyond your fence could offer meaningful learning experiences?

What lens do the children bring when exploring outside the fence?





“Beyond the wall, there is always a beyond”

Loris Malaguzzi

WHAT IS YOUR COMFORT LEVEL WITH VENTURING BEYOND THE FENCE?



Very
Comfortable!



Comfortable!



Somewhat
Comfortable!



Not
Comfortable!

WHAT BARRIERS/FEARS DO YOU HAVE WITH
VENTURING BEYOND THE FENCE?

WHAT ARE THE BENIFITS OF VENTURING BEYOND
THE FENCE?

HOW MIGHT YOU SAFELY AND INTENTIONALLY INCORPORATE THESE AREAS INTO YOUR
PROGRAM?

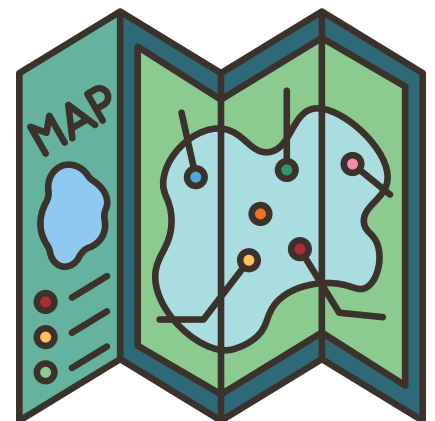
Mapping Beyond the Fence

Create a simple map of your outdoor environment and mark areas beyond your immediate play space that could be explored.

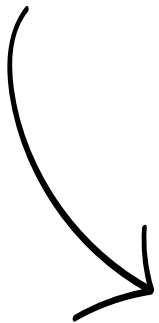
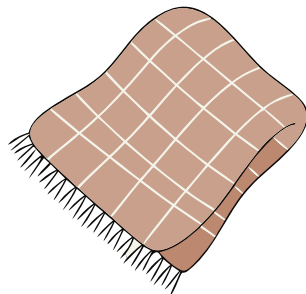
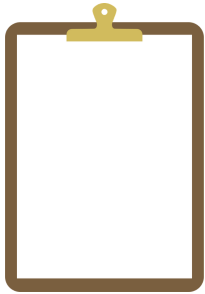
How can the children participate in creating this?
What perspectives and ideas will they bring to the development of this map?

Helpful Tip:

Take a short walk beyond your playground and document potential learning spaces (parks, gardens, trails etc.). Note safety considerations, accessibility, and opportunities for exploration.



BEYOND THE FENCE CHECKLIST



In order to venture into the beyond you need to be prepared! Sometimes these spaces are close by but sometimes they require you to travel farther to access them. How do you set the children and yourself up for success?

What's in your backpack to explore beyond the fence?

- ☐ First Aid Kit
- ☐ Extra Clothes
- ☐ Attendance
- ☐ Phone/Contact Information
- ☐ Blanket
- ☐ Journal
- ☐ Wagon
- ☐ Tools to explore
- ☐ Bags to collect items
- ☐ Magnifying glasses

[illegible]

Video Reflection

This video highlights a program that embodies the connection between the Inside, Outside and Beyond!



Nature-Based Education Outdoor Preschool Forest Kindergarten



Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqzUSPyt_N8

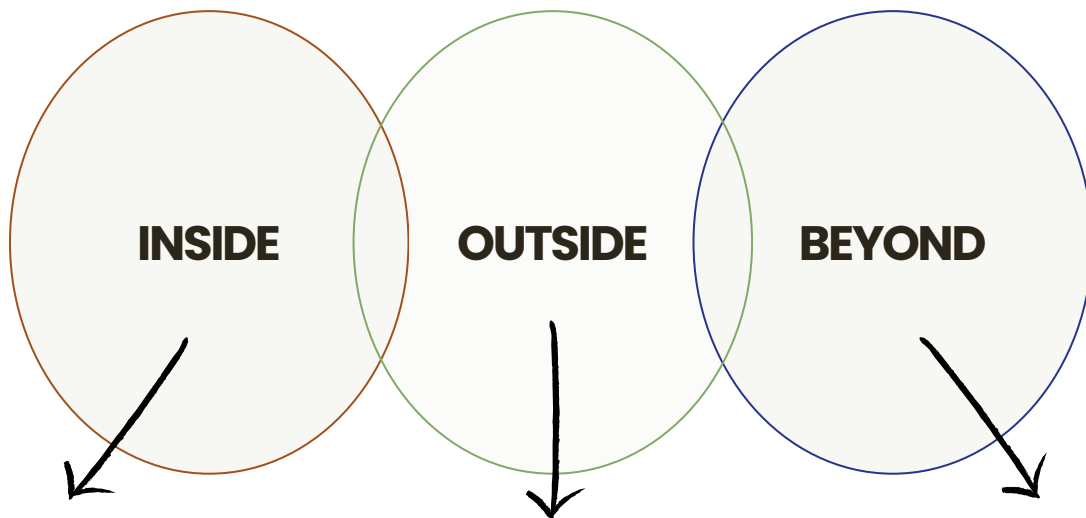
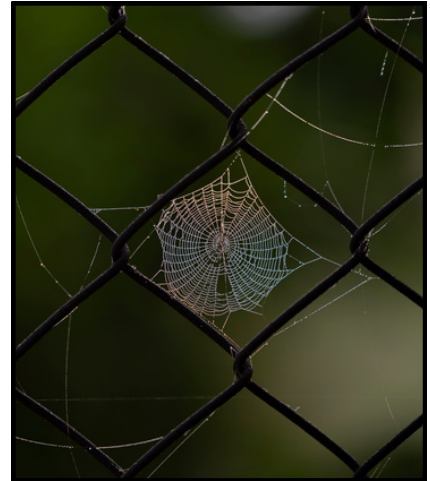
What reflections do you have after watching this video?

MODULE 2 TAKE AWAY

REFLECTION

Reflect on the following scenario, how would you support the children's investigations to ensure a seamless flow from the indoors to the outdoors and beyond!

"In early Autumn, the educators notice that the children are taking an interest in the spider webs they are finding on the playground. Several children discover the strands reflecting the sunlight on a fence. The educators know the findings have sparked the children's curiosity when the children ask to take pictures of the webs".



How could you continue to support this interest **indoors** ?

What next steps would you take to extend their learning **outdoors?**

How can this interest continue **beyond** the indoor and outdoor spaces ?



MODULE #2

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



THRC Information & Inspiration Sheets:

Exploring Literacy Outdoors

Exploring Math Outdoors

Our Senses in Every Season

Supporting Outdoor Play in All Types of Weather

THRC Resource Library
has a variety of resources
to support your Journey.

THRC Resource Library **Books to Borrow:**

- Nature's Playground
- Dirty Teaching: A Beginner's Guide to Learning Outdoors
- Messy Maths
- Let Them Eat Dirt

THRC Table Talks Podcast's:

- Exploring the Outdoors with Rusty Keeler
- Your Classroom without Walls



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