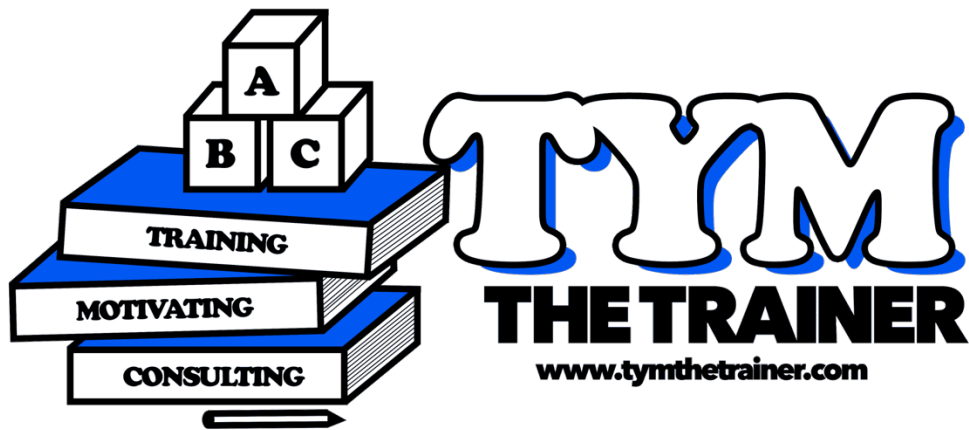


Taking Curriculum Outdoors

-Resource Guide-



Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of taking curriculum outdoors! Through out this resource guide, you will find many different ideas on how you can take curriculum to a whole new level. Some of your favorite indoor activities can be re-born when you take them outside.

Through out this resource manual, you will see activities, supplies needed for each activity, the age group the activity can accommodate, and the skills learned from the activity.

Please take note that as you gather supplies, pay close attention to the recommended age restrictions and allowances for each piece of material. This may alter the age group targeted for each activity. Always follow manufactures age recommendations for art supplies and equipment.

You will also need to pay close attention to the children's developmental and emotional age when determining if an activity is suitable for an individual child.

Remember, the success of an activity all depends on the teacher's interactions and excitement of the activity. As an Early care and education professional, you must choose your attitude each day that you walk into your classroom.

Let's get started!

Indoor Activities that are fun outside!

Lego's

Supplies

- Lego's or Duplo Blocks (age appropriate)
- Shower Curtain, tarp, or blanket

Skills

- Cognitive and thinking skills
- Fine motor skills
- Imagination and creation
- Sorting and math skills

Age Level

3 and up

An old time favorite with every child. This typical table top manipulative can be fun and stimulate new creativity when taken outside. Lay your shower curtain, tarp, or blanket in an open area where children can be easily supervised. Take the building blocks outside in a portable bucket, preferably with a lid for easy storage when not in use. Set the expectation with the children that the building blocks remain on the blanket, tarp, or shower curtain and are not thrown. The children will love this new experience with an old favorite.

Additional Activity

Take pictures of the children whose parents have given prior permission. E-mail these pictures of the children playing outside or the final creation to the parents while they are at work. The parents love to get these surprise e-mails and will share the moment with co-workers and peers.

Board Games

Supplies

- Children's favorite board games (recommend those with few pieces)
- Shower Curtain, tarp, or blanket

Skills

- Cognitive and thinking skills
- Fine motor skills
- Learning cooperation and teamwork

Age Level

4 and up

Need an extra enhancement on those nice days when the wind is low and the sun is not too hot. Take your shower curtain, blanket, or tarp outside and place in a general area that is easily supervised. Allow the children to bring a favorite board game outside that only requires 2-4 players. The relaxation of playing the game outside will allow the children to concentrate more on these games designed to challenge the children.

Remember, if an adult chooses to participate in this activity, it is not recommended that the person counted in ratio sit on the playground unless the entire group is all sitting. Adults must be zoning and supervising the playground at all times.

Puzzles

Supplies needed

- Developmentally Appropriate Puzzles
 1. Toddlers and Two's - wooden puzzles with pegs, no more than 6-8 pieces
 2. 3's - larger puzzle pieces that is made of thick material, no more than 10-15 pieces
 3. 4's and 5's - 25 piece puzzles
 4. School Age Children - 50 piece puzzles
- Shower Curtain, tarp, or blanket

Skills

- Cognitive and thinking skills
- Fine motor skills
- Cooperation and patience

Age level

18 months and up

Mother Nature has a great way of bring out the best in children. Allow them to take a simple puzzle outside and sit on the curtain, tarp, or blanket in an open, supervised area. Set the expectation with the children that these pieces must remain on the designated area. Puzzles should be simple and ones that can be completed during a typical outside time for the age group.

Books and Magazine

Supplies

- Basket
- Age appropriate books or magazines
- A nice shade tree (if possible)

Skills

- Cognitive and pre-reading skills
- Fine motor skills
- Cooperation, sharing, and story telling

Age level

All

The best thing we can do for children is expose them to literature. Parents and teachers are recommended to read to children daily. This will spark an interest in books with the children. Never discourage a child from reading. Teachers should always take a basket of books and magazines out on the playground and allow the children to sit under a nice shade tree and read the material. Younger age groups should take hard paged books that do not easily tear. Set the expectations that when the children have the books and magazines, they remain seated and not allow running around the playground with the material.

Additional Activity

Take the children outside and sit in a nice shaded area and have your circle time!

Musical Instruments

Supplies needed

- Age appropriate musical instruments
- Alcohol wipes (if the children plan to share the instruments)

Skills

- Appreciation for the arts
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Stimulation of senses (hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling)

Age Level

All

Worried about classroom noise? No worries here! Take your musical instruments outside and let the children perform for you. Whether it is a summer concert or a marching band, the children can bang and blow as loud as they want without your classroom becoming too loud. Let your neighbors know ahead of time that your children will be putting on a special show just for them.

Additional Activities

Parents would love to see these photos come across the e-mail system. Also, with photo consent, you can video tape this show and play for your parents as they come to pick up!

Easels and Paint

Supplies Needed

- A-frame art easel
- Variety of paints
- Easel paper
- Smocks
- brushes

Skills

- fine motor skills
- cognitive and creativity
- appreciation for the arts

Age Level

18 months and up

This is an all-time favorite. Take your easels outside. Place under a nice shade tree if one is available. Have multiple colors of paint available for the children with large and small brushes. Let the children use their imagination and inspiration to create wonderful pictures of what they see on the playground.

Additional Activity

Get some fun French painters caps to put on the children as they paint. This is a great photograph that can be shared. Also, when visitors and members of the community pass by your program and see this activity, they will be impressed.

Hand Held Electronic Games

Check your programs Policies and Procedures on Electronic games before initiating this activity

Supplies Needed

- Basket
- A variety of hand held electronic games. Would recommend the program to purchase these games that range from \$10-\$15 at your local department store

Skills

- Eye-Hand coordination
- Cooperation and teamwork

Age Level

4 and up

Allow the children to find a nice spot to sit on the playground and play their favorite hand held electronic games. Set the expectation that the children cannot move around the playground with the games, they must remain in one place. Only use games that are owned by your program. Personal hand held games are not recommended.

Only allow this activity on occasion. It is not recommended to do this everyday. Children need physical play and development. Teachers are encouraged to engage the children in fun outside games and play.

CD players

Supplies Needed

- Cd Player

Skills

- Music and Movement
- Verbal skills
- Fine and gross motor development

Age Level

All ages

Take your CD player with pre-recorded music outside to play while the children are enjoying the playground. Teachers can engage the children in fun dances and exercise. Allow the music to play at a comfortable level, so that you do not disturb neighbors.

This is also fun during water play and special events.

Outside Activities

Yoga

Supplies Needed

- Mats, small blankets, or beach towel
- CD Player
- Teachers educated on yoga for small children

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Relaxation and concentration

Age Level

2 and up

Join the yoga revolution! Studies have shown that yoga for young children have been beneficial in the emotional, physical, and developmental growth. Teachers should purchase a DVD or book on simple yoga techniques for young children. Allow the kids to take a mat, small blanket, or beach towel onto the playground to define their space. Since this activity is outside, it is recommended that children keep shoes on. As an enhancement to outdoor play, teachers can do a short 10-15 minutes yoga session with the children. Allow free play in addition to this activity.

Check children's individual special needs before performing this activity.

Garbage Art

Supplies Needed

- Toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, plastic coffee cans with lids, etc,
- Yard or string
- Paper clips
- Glue
- Age appropriate scissors
- Small and large boxes
- Paint and brushes

Skills

- Creative thinking
- Fine and gross motor skills

Age Level

3 and up

When out on the playground, set up an art station with a variety of the items listed above. Allow the children to think freely and create art work that can be placed along sidewalks, hung on the fence or trees, or taken out into the community. The outdoors will stimulate thinking that normally is not seen inside the classroom.

For older children, you may also break the kids up into small groups and let them create structures together. This helps with team work and cooperative play.

Giant Maze

Supplies Needed

- Boxes that are knee high or long blocks from your block center

Skills

- Thinking and problem solving

Age Level

2 and up

In an open area of the playground, design a maze based on the developmental age group of the children. You may want to start simple, and get more difficult as the children get use to the game. Use boxes that are no more than knee high so that you may still supervise the children at all times. You may also use blocks or 2x4's, if available. Set the expectation that the children must find their way through the maze without crossing over the boxes or blocks.

Additional Activity

Add tricycles or bikes to the maze for the children to ride!

Broom Ball

Supplies Needed

- A broom
- A ball, such as a recreation ball, soccer ball, or volleyball

Skills

- Eye hand coordination
- Teamwork and cooperation

Age Level

2 and up

Children are to move the ball from one side of the playground to the other using a broom. This is similar to a hockey puck, but the bristles on the broom add an additional challenge. Once the children have successfully moved the ball along from one side of the playground to the other, you can have the children pass the ball to each other using the broom.

Additional Activity

You can add this to relay races; however it is recommended that children not be labeled as "winners". For every winner you have, you also have a loser.

Paper Airplanes

Supplies Needed

- Paper
- Markers or crayons

Skills

- fine motor skills
- creative thinking

Age Level

2 and up

This is an old time classic that is often forgotten. With your assistance, allow the children to create paper airplanes. Younger children will need you to do most of the folding, however, let the children help you by pressing on the folds. Allow the children to decorate the planes if desired. When the children are outside, line the children up shoulder to shoulder. Allow enough space in-between the children to avoid accidents. Have the children fly the planes forward. Lining the children up will prevent planes from flying at the other children, avoiding accidents and planes being stepped on or crushed.

Decomposing Station

Supplies Needed

- a piece of fruit or vegetable
- a box large enough to place item in

Skills

- science and matter

Age Level

2 and up

This activity is a long term project designed to teach children how items decompose over a course of time. Cut a piece of fruit or vegetable in half and place the item in a box, with the top exposed. Place the item on the playground, exposed to the sun. This will need to be placed in an area that is not accessible to the children. Label the project as a "Decomposing Project" with the date you started the project. Each day you take the children to check on the item, have a clip board and paper handy. Document the children's comments as they observe the item that is decomposing.

Additional Activity

Take pictures of the decomposing item and date each picture. The children can make a scrapbook of this science experiment.

Rain Charting

Supplies Needed

- Rain gauge
- Clip board and chart
- Pen or pencil

Skills

- Science enhancement
- Cognitive knowledge of rain
- Measurement

Age Level

All ages

Place a rain gauge on your playground that is out of reach of the children. After each days rain, take the group outside the measure the amount of rain that fell for the day. Chart the rain fall for the day on your clip board. During your circle time, you can talk about the rain fall. You can also keep track of the weekly, monthly, and annual rain fall amounts with the children.

The best part of this activity is that it will distract the children from the fact that they are loosing outdoor play when it rains. Instead of being disappointed that they cannot go outside, they will be excited that the rain will fill the gauge and that they will then get to measure the rain fall.

Cloud Observations and Charting

Supplies Needed

- Blanket
- White construction paper
- Blue crayon

Skills

- Science and nature
- Observation skills
- Creativity and imagination

Age Level

All ages

Lay your blanket down on the flat surface of your playground. Watch for bugs and insects. On a nice day with lots of clouds, have the children lay on their backs and look up at the sky, avoid looking directly into the sun. Have the children talk about the clouds and what they see. Do the clouds make the shape of some fun animals? Give the children the white paper and have them draw the clouds and what they see. You may find that the children scribble or just draw bog circles. This is okay! Let the children freely draw what they think they see. Assist the children in labeling the art work.

Creating Messages with Drums

Supplies Needed

- Drums from your music center or drums made in the classroom with items such as coffee cans or oatmeal boxes
- Drum sticks

Skills

- Fine motor skills
- Listening skills
- Patterns
- Non-verbal communication

Age Level

2 and up

The teacher will make a simple pattern with his or her drum and ask the children to repeat the pattern. Once the children get use to this fun exercise, you can teach them patterns that represent particular comments, such as one tap followed by two quick taps may be a way for a child to say, "I am thirsty"!

Football Toss

Supplies Needed

- Football (soft or hard)
- Hula Hoops
- Rope

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Eye-hand coordination

Age Level

18 months and up

Hang your Hula Hoops in a tree or from a piece of equipment. Children are challenged to throw the football through the hoops. Start off standing about 3 feet from the hoops and back up as the children are successful making the throws.

For an extra challenge, you can hang various sizes of hoops for the children to throw through. Make sure the sizes of the hoops are appropriate for the children and a size that everyone can be successful.

Bird Watching

Supplies Needed

- Construction paper
- Crayons and pencils
- Bird bath (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)

Skills

- Appreciation of life and animals
- Patience
- Science and nature

Age Level

All ages

Place a bird bath and bird feeder on your playground if possible. Make sure the bird bath is in an area not accessible to the children to prevent un-invited water play or accidents. Hang a bird feeder from a tree on your playground. It is recommended to hang one by classroom windows so that children can also see the birds from the inside.

Children will learn to keep watch for birds who take advantage of these treats. Over time, the children can start to recognize the different birds that will visit the baths and feeders. The children can draw pictures and document the dates and times a bird visits the baths and feeders. Children can use binoculars for an added feature to this fun science activity. Teachers can assist the children in charting the amount of bird feed used in a day, week, or month.

Evaporation Experiment

Supplies Needed

- Bucket or bowl of water
- Box (optional)
- Hot sun!

Skills

- Science
- measurement

Age Level

2 and up

Fill a bowl or bucket up with water. Place the water outside directly in the sun. You may place a box around the water with the top open to prevent children from having direct access, otherwise place the water in an area of the playground not accessible to the children. Each day, have the children measure how much water has evaporated due to extreme heat and sunlight. Chart each day's findings. Discuss with the children what happens to water when it evaporates.

Like rain charting, this activity will also help distract the children from not going outside due to high heat. Children will be excited to go outside and measure evaporation.

In the event of rain, you will need to cover or bring your water inside so that the rain fall does not alter your experiment.

Frisbee Toss

Supplies Needed

- Frisbee's
- Hula Hoops (optional)

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Eye-hand coordination
- Cooperation and teamwork

Age Level

3 and up

Work with the children on how to throw a Frisbee. Children will learn that this is different from throwing a normal ball or object. Frisbees are thrown with a flick of the wrist and adds an additional benefit to growth and development. It will take the children time to master this technique. Do not give up on them!

For an added enhancement, lay Hula Hoops on the ground in different areas of the yard. Have the children attempt to throw the Frisbee so that it lands in the Hula Hoop.

Sandcastles

Supplies Needed

- sand
- buckets
- shovels

Skills

- creative expression
- fine and gross motor skills
- cooperation and teamwork

Age Level

All ages

Another classic that the children never out grow. Give the children buckets and shovels and allow them to build castle, roads, and buildings in the sand. Make sure you check your playground through out the day for animal droppings and other harmful items that may appear in your sand boxes. If you do not have a sand box, take a water table from inside and pour sand in the clean and dry table. Take this outside for the children.

Take photos of the children to share with the parents and other visitors of your program. Remember to have prior permission from parents before photographing the children.

Kick Ball

Supplies Needed

- recreation ball
- bases (optional)

Skills

- gross motor skills
- teamwork and cooperation

Age Level

3 and up

Divide the children in two teams. While one team will play defense and try to catch the ball that is kicked, the other team will take turns kicking the balls. Lay bases in three spots through out your field. As a child kicks the ball, they advance to one base. If the other team catches the ball, then the child does not go to a base. Have each team go through their roster once then switch offense and defense. It is not recommended for the children to throw the ball at other children or try to tag them out. This may cause harm to the children. Only play where catching a ball can cause an out.

Avoid having a winner and a loser.

Garden Hose Phone

Supplies Needed

- water hose
- alcohol wipes

Skills

- listening skills

Age Level

2 and up

Cut the ends of the water hose off to prevent burning or cuts from the metal. Stretch your water hose across your playground. Make sure the hose is not connected to a faucet. Sanitize each end of the hose after each child uses the hose. While one child holds the end of the hose to his or her ear and listens, another child will speak into the opposite end of the hose. The children will have a blast communicating through the water hose.

Supervision and management of this activity is critical. The hose should not be left on the playground during free play.

Make a Garden

Supplies Needed

- dirt and soil
- seeds
- hoe and shovel
- labels on popsicle sticks

Skills

- science and nature

Age Level

3 and up

As a class, designate an area of your playground or yard to plant a garden. After preparing the dirt and soil, plant seeds of plants or vegetables that are not toxic to the children in your group. Make sure you label each of the plants so that you know what they are while they are growing.

Make a watering schedule and have the children take turns watering their garden. You can chart the growth and development of the garden and plants as you progress.

Contact your local hardware stores or nurseries. Most of them are willing to donate the majority of the supplies needed to plant your garden with the children.

Chalk Art

Supplies Needed

- Sidewalk chalk
- stencils

Skills

- fine and gross motor skills
- creativity and thinking skills

Age Level

18 months and up

Designate an area of sidewalk or concrete and allow the children to draw and color. Let the children express creativity while coloring creations. It is not recommended that children color on walls or the building. Sidewalk chalk should stay for a limited amount of time. Once the children are done and the work has been displayed, teachers should use a water hose to wash the chalk off the sidewalks. This should be done well and with care. The chalk can become slippery if not washed up completely.

Leaf Collecting

Supplies Needed

- masking tape or plastic bags
- gloves
- wax paper
- crayons

Skills

- science and nature

Age Level

2 and up

Allow the children to explore the playground searching for special leaves. Encourage the children to look for different designs and colors on the leaves. Wrap masking tape around the children wrist so that the sticky part is opposite of the skin. As the children collect leaves, they can make a leaf bracelet. The children can also take plastic bags to place the leaves in. It is recommended that the children wear plastic gloves while searching for leaves. Keep an eye out for insects.

Once leaves are collected, give the children a piece of wax paper to lie over a favorite leaf. Take the paper off the crayon. Have the children rub the crayon over the wax paper, exposing a nice design found on the leaf.

Hula Hoops and Music

Supplies Needed

- Hula Hoops
- CD player

Skills

- Gross motor skills
- Music appreciation

Age Level

18 months and up

It is beach blanket bingo time! Take your class back to the fifties with this favorite. Take pre-recorded beach music outside with Hula Hoops. Challenge the children to see who can hula hoop the longest. This creative skill will work the children's gross motor skills and concentration. Don't let the children get frustrated, working a hula hoop can be hard and will take the children time to master.

This activity is a fun addition to water play.

Hula Hoops must be closely supervised at all times. It is not recommended that these toys be left out during free play.

Twister

Supplies Needed

- Twister game

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork

Age Level

3 and up

Twister is a whole new game when played outside. Challenge the children to stretch and bend as there colors are called.

Teachers should monitor this game and the twister set should not be left out during free play.

Bubbles

Supplies Needed

- Bubbles (silk bubbles if possible)

Skills

- Enhancement of the senses
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Imagination

Age Level

18 months and up

Bubbles is something that is always fun. It is recommended that bubbles are blown outside to avoid children and adults slipping and falling indoors. Silk bubbles are something that is great for programs. They are not as sticky and last longer. Children will love to see you blow large bubbles and then watch them float across your playground.

When blowing bubbles, avoid blowing them in children's faces. Eye contact with the bubble solution could cause injury.

Classroom Animals Outside

Supplies Needed

- Classroom animals in cages or tanks

Skills

- Science and nature
- Verbal skills

Age Level

18 months and up

This simple activity can create good open-ended conversations with your children. If possible and does not create a risk for staff or the pet, take your classroom animal cage or tank outside on the playground with you. Make sure you place this in an area that children will not pull on the cage and cause it to break open or harm the pet. Like children, all pets need outside time as well. Once the cage is outside, you may observe new characteristics and behavior from your pet. Ask the children open-ended questions about what they think the animal is doing or thinking. If small enough, you can even take your small fish tank outside!

Please research your pet on the internet or by calling a vet prior to performing this activity to ensure that outside time is appropriate for them.

Playground Inspections

Supplies Needed

- Child appropriate playground inspection form and a clipboard
- Pencil or crayon

Skills

- Fine motor skills
- Cognitive development
- Sense of appreciation and accountability

Age Level

3 and up

Your program is required to do daily and monthly playground checks. It is amazing what a child may see or find that you miss. Create a small checklist for the children with only 3 to 5 items on it, such as, "The slide is ready" or "no trash is on the playground". Have the children spend a few short minutes doing the check about once every two weeks. This will also engage the children to find new things on the playground that spark an interest in them, moving them out of their normal playground routine and into something new.

Juggling

Supplies Needed

- Various items for the children to juggle, such as balls, stuffed animals, or blocks

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Cognitive development
- Eye-hand coordination

Age Level

3 and up

Juggling is a great way to work on children's eye-hand coordination. Doing this outside will give the kids more space to spread out and avoid injury. Start by only giving the children 2 items to juggle, then as they progress, you can add a third. Encourage the children and motivate them.

Additional Activity

Dress up as a clown when performing this activity. Create a circus theme. You may even have the children dress as clowns. If you have a child that is afraid of clowns, this will be a great way to help overcome the fear.

Jump Ropes

Supplies Needed

- Long and short jump ropes

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Coordination skills
- counting

Age Level

2 and up

This activity must be closely supervised. Jump ropes should not be left out for free play. Children may jump rope alone, but it is encouraged to have a long jump rope, with the teacher holding one end and a child or co-teacher at the other, have the kids jump the long rope! For beginners this is a great way to get them motivated and feeling successful.

As the children jump, encourage the group to count out loud. Songs and CD players are another great enhancement.

Bug Collecting

Supplies Needed

- baby food jars with lids or thick plastic bags
- gloves
- tongs

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Science and nature

Age Level

3 and up

Summer time is a great season to take nature hikes with the children. You can even do this in your own playground or yard. Before taking the children on a hike, make sure bugs and insects that may harm the children are not present. Check also for plants such as poison ivy. Encourage the parents to dress the children in long pants or jeans on this day. Let the children wear gloves while going on the nature hike to avoid touching plants or bugs that may not be clean. Tongs are also encouraged so that children are not coming in direct contact with the bugs. Teachers can carry baby food jars with lids to store the children's collection. Markers can be used to label each jar with the children's names.

Sport Clinics

Supplies Needed

- Depending on the sport, balls and supplies that go along with the specific topics

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Sports enhancement
- relationships

Age Level

3 and up

You will see that parents will spend the summer time enrolling the children in sports camps to help with specific skills that the children need additional coaching. These are clinics that you can offer right in your program. This will save the parents time and money, plus give you the opportunity to gain more time with the children.

Pick the sport that best meets your children and parent's needs. Work closely with the children on basic skills and repetition. Give your parents a report of the progress made by each child.

This activity is normally done with the parents signing up the children for the clinics, and only done 2-3 times a week in addition to normal outdoor play.

Thermometer and charting

Supplies Needed

- Thermometer
- Chart and clipboard

Skills

- Science and nature
- Measurement and math skills

Age Level

3 and up

Place a thermometer outside on your playground. Talk with the children about what the thermometer measures and how it is used. Each day during the spring and summer months, chart the temperature during your outside time. During your circle time, you can talk about the differences in the temperature from day to day, week to week, and month to month.

This will also distract the children from being frustrated over the heat and be excluded from outside. When it is too hot for outside play, the kids will be excited to see what the temperature is so they can chart it.

Milk Jug Megaphones

Supplies Needed

- Old milk jugs
- Construction paper
- Markers or paint
- glue

Skills

- creative arts
- music appreciation
- motivation

Age Level

3 and up

Take a used milk jug, clean and sanitize the jug. Teachers will cut the bottom of the jug off for the children. Have the children decorate their megaphone however they choose. Once completed, take the group outdoors. Allow the children to sing, chant, or communicate using the megaphones.

Additional Activity

Plan a school pep rally! Allow your group of children to cheer your program on using their home-made megaphones. This is a great photograph moment.

Pom Poms

Supplies Needed

- popsicle sticks
- construction paper
- scissors
- tape

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Motivation skills
- Creative expression

Age Level

3 and up

Similar to the milk jug megaphone activity, you can use this activity to help build motivation and appreciation for your program!

Tape or glue construction paper to a stick. Wrap the construction paper around the stick. Make sure it is secure. Using age appropriate scissors, the children will cut the paper long ways down to the stick. This will allow the paper to stay stuck, but also toss around, giving it the pom pom effect. The more paper you use, the more full the pom pom will be. Multiple colors can be used for appearance.

Shaving Cream Cleaning

Supplies Needed

- Shaving Cream

Skills

- Responsibility and accountability
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Health and safety
- Stimulation of the senses

Age Level

18 months and up

Teachers often let children clean classroom tables and chairs with shaving cream, but who is going to clean the playground equipment? Ensure that playground equipment does not have splinters or sharp edges. Check the heat and make sure equipment is not hot. Let the children spray shaving cream on your equipment and help rub it down, cleaning while having fun! Take caution letting the children play or climb on the equipment while cleaning with shaving cream. Playground equipment will become slippery. Avoid having children injured by restricting playing and climbing.

After the children are done, spray your equipment down with a water hose.

This activity is good on days that the children will participate in water play.

Wind Chimes

Supplies Needed

- Bolts, nuts, bottle caps, etc
- String or yarn
- Plates or wood

Skills

- Fine motor skills
- Creative thinking
- Stimulation of the senses

Age Level

5 and up

This closely supervised activity is fun for the children and can make great Mother's Day or Father's Day gifts. Give the children a variety of items that cling and clatter, such as bolts, nuts, bottle caps, or pieces of pipes. Ensure that there are no sharp edges on any of the items. Using string or rope, have the children tie several items to the string, giving about 2-3 inches in-between each item. Have the children make 3-5 strings. Fasten the strings to a sturdy plate or piece of wood. The children can then hang the wind chimes from your playground tree's or the side of the building. Make sure you label each wind chime with the children's name.

This activity works best when the children build the chimes outside so that they can experiment with the sounds as they go along.

Scavenger Hunts

Supplies Needed

- Various items from your classroom
- List of the items that the children can look for

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Creative thinking

Age Level

3 and up

Collect various items from your classroom or purchase items that the children can keep once it is found. Make sure you have enough items for each child. Hide the items around your playground. Give the children an age appropriate list of items to look for and collect. They may need a basket or bag to put them in. Set a time limit for the children to hunt for the items. Make sure all items are age appropriate and do not create a choking hazard. Avoid hiding food or chocolate.

Additional Activity

For older children who may have digital cameras, you can give them a list of items or activities for them to take pictures of with point value. Break the kids up into teams and have them work together to complete the task.

Miniature Golf Course

Supplies Needed

- Coffee cans
- Blocks
- Golf balls
- Golf clubs

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Creative thinking and problem solving

Age Level

2 and up

Avoid taking field trips, you can create your own miniature golf course on your playground or yard. On a smooth surface, such as short grass, dirt, or concrete, use blocks to create a small course with simple obstacles. Place a coffee can with no lid down on the ground for the ball to enter. You may need to place a rock inside the can to prevent it from rolling around.

Giant Checker Board

Supplies Needed

- Black and red construction paper, butcher paper, or sidewalk chalk

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Creative thinking
- Problem solving Skills

Age Level

2 and up

On your basketball court or large cemented area, draw a life size checker board. You can cut square pieces from butcher paper or construction paper to make your red and black blocks, however it is recommended to use red and black sidewalk chalk to avoid slips and falls. Have the children break into teams. One team being the red checkers and the other being the black checkers. The children will be the checkers on the board. They will work together to move around the board. Instead of jumping each other, a simple tap on the shoulder will take a checker off the board.

Additional Enhancement

For advanced groups, you can do the same as above but the children will be chess pieces.

Life Size Tic Tac Toe

Supplies Needed

- Sidewalk chalk, blocks, rope, or water hoses

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking

Age Level

3 and up

Similar to the life size checker board, teachers will use sidewalk chalk, blocks, rope, or water hoses to make a giant tic tac toe board. Break the children up into two teams of X's and O's. The children will play the game and use themselves as the pieces.

Ensure proper supervision with the equipment used for this activity. Ropes, blocks, and water hoses should not be left out during free play.

Garbage Can Drums

Supplies Needed

- Child Size Garbage cans (depending on the age groups)
- Drum sticks

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Music appreciation
- Creative thinking

Age Level

18 months and up

Gather trash cans that are an appropriate size for the children you are caring for. Metal cans are the best for this activity. Take the cans outside and line them up, giving the children enough space to avoid injury. Turn the cans upside down so that they children can use the drum sticks to make beautiful sounds and songs.

Teachers can lead this activity with patterns asking the children to repeat each the teacher's example.

Some children make take the lids of the trash cans and use as symbols in addition to the drum sounds.

Pin Wheels

Supplies Needed

- Sticks
- Colored paper plates
- brads

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Science and nature
- Creative thinking

Age Level

3 and up

Children will use the sticks for the stem of the pin wheel. Teachers will assist the children fastening the brads. You can also use a separate piece of rounded stick and glue onto the stem. Cut your paper plates to make fans. Children may also decorate the plates using creativity and imagination. Fasten the plates on the stem.

Children can then place these along the playground or sidewalk and watch as the wind blows the pinwheels!

Time Capsules

Supplies Needed

- Sturdy box or trunk
- Items collected from the classroom

Skills

- imagination
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Memory skills
- Creative thinking

Age Level

3 and up

At the beginning of the school year or summer, collect some favorite items from your classroom or have the children each bring something from home. Have a circle time on the playground, giving the children a chance to talk about each item they have collected and then placing it in the box or trunk. After everyone has had a turn. Close the box or trunk and bury on your playground, yard, or flower bed. Mark the spot so that it can be found later.

At the end of the school year or summer. The class can dig up the time capsule and talk about the experience. The children will be excited to see their favorite items once again!

Mud Pies

Supplies Needed

- Chocolate cake
- Chocolate pudding
- Gummy worms
- Pie pans

Skills

- Science and nature

Age Level

18 months and up

Always check on children's specific restrictions before any food project.

Make your cake and pudding. In a large bowl or tub, mix the cake, pudding and gummy worms. Pour into individual or regular size pie pans.

Take the children outdoors to go on a worm hunt. Children will walk around the playground looking for our slimy friends.

Wash the children's hands and then enjoy eating your delicious mud pies!

Dinosaur Digs

Supplies Needed

- Small toy dinosaurs
- Sand box shovels

Skills

- Fine and gross motor skills
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Science and nature
- Creative thinking

Age Level

2 and up

Prior to getting the children involved in the activity, teachers take the toy dinosaurs outside and bury them in your sand box or loose dirt. Use smaller dinosaurs, but make sure that they are not a choking hazard for your children. Take the children outside and have them do a dinosaur dig. Do not tell them that you have buried dinosaurs! Once they discover one, the excitement will be wonderful!

Let the children take their findings home at the end of the day. This is another great activity to photograph with parents permission.

Recycling Station

Supplies Needed

- Trash cans or boxes for cans, glass, paper, and plastic

Skills

- Appreciation for the environment
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Parent involvement

Age Level

All ages

Set up a recycling station at your program where used classroom items can be discarded in the appropriate area. Parents are also encouraged to bring items from home. Work with your local city for pick up and disposal of your collected items. If you want parents to get active in the environment, then get the kids involved at your program. Children can be great motivators with our parents!

It is recommended to set up your stations outside in a covered area. Some items being recycled can cause odor and safety issues.

Adult supervision is required for all parts of this activity.