



Child Care Resource

Child Care Resource Newsletter

Creating Outdoor Play Spaces

By Meghan Flanders

CCR Professional Development Coordinator

What is a playground? A contained area for gross motor play, some swings and a slide, maybe some balls to kick and throw around? Is it a place of wonder and discovery where children are able to explore, get dirty, yell and run? Is it a place to feel the wind in your hair, sunshine warming your body, flowers growing, mud puddles forming, snow piling up? It is all of these things and more; a place of learning, imagination, and fun where children build physical, social and cognitive skills. Creating outdoor play spaces with developmentally appropriate equipment aids children in developing both fine and gross motor skills, provides experiences that further cognitive development by letting children experiment, experience cause and effect, explore and question the natural world and learn the skills of social interaction.

Often the playground is filled with manufactured toys, equipment and materials. We need to remember the need for wide-open spaces to move and run about freely. Dirt to dig in that may yield rocks, worms, or buried treasure, leaves to jump in, grass to roll in, trees to lay under to take a quiet moment in the shade; these are all great learning materials for exploration and hours of fun. Often they already exist in your play area and provide a great foundation for outdoor experiences. Also think about how logs might be secured and used as stepping stones, bridges or balance beams, how ropes and pulleys could be incorporated, how a stone pathway could be set up to hop along or follow.

Now, what other things should be taken into consideration?

Many programs serve many different age groups, from

infancy to school aged. This means that some children will be sitting and taking in the world around them, some will be crawling, others cruising, then there is jumping, running, spinning, rolling, hopping, and galloping to be done. Leave wide-open spaces for this, have a variety and surfaces, grass, sand and dirt with varying topography in some areas. Small hills, slight grades or dips can enhance children's experiences, being mindful of different age groups abilities to navigate changing topography.

Children of all ages love to climb. We must provide safe and varied choices to nurture this love of climbing. These can include low wooden platforms, large rocks, rope and wooden ladders. New heights bring a new perspective of the world, but with new heights come safety measures. Ensure adequate ground cover under climbing equipment and in fall zones; that equipment

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Apr/May/June 2009

Child Care Resource Newsletter is published quarterly through the efforts of Child Care Resource staff and is sent to all licensed and registered child care homes, centers and school-age programs in the majority of Chittenden County.

Readers are encouraged to submit activity ideas, articles, reprints, and anything of interest to providers.

These should be sent to: Child Care Resource, 181 Commerce Street, Williston, VT 05495, (802) 863-3367. Your opinions and suggestions regarding content and format are always welcome.

CCR assures equal employment and services regardless of race, color, creed, sex, handicap, national origin or age in compliance with federal and state law.

Funded by the Child Development Division of DCF with additional support from the Child Care Food Program.

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is in good shape, that children are reaching heights suitable for their abilities, and that climbing areas of any height are well supervised. Higher does not mean better. Provide a variety of levels and vantage points.

Push toys and riding equipment help children with coordination and for younger children can aid in learning to walk and run. A harder surface in an open area for riding and pushing toys can provide hours of enjoyment and gross motor play. Regulations prohibit riding toys with spokes and require that children riding bicycles or scooters wear helmets.

Many playgrounds offer the opportunity to slide and swing if space and budget allows. These provide more opportunity to reach new heights and see a new view of the world while aiding in physical and cognitive development. They are also a lot of fun! Again, be mindful of cushioning materials underneath, equipment maintenance and anchoring, spacing of fall zones and careful supervision.

Water tables, woodworking areas, and art materials transfer well into the outdoors and the natural world can inspire children to create and play in new ways. Have some outdoor easels available with paper and paints and crayons. Let children paint the fence with washable paint that washes away during the next rain storm.

They can build and create small structures with sticks and glue. Provide buckets, plates, cups, water, boats and sponges for water tables or just fill it with water and watch as children see if leaves, sticks, and stones float or sink.

Some other things to keep in mind when planning your outdoor space are the ability to adequately supervise all areas, storage needs, and the ability to separate age groups if necessary to ensure safety from the sometimes more intense activity of older children.

When considering supervision of the playgrounds, ensure that adults can see all areas and that staff to child ratios are appropriate with each area being attended to when in use. A shed or large storage compartment adjacent to the playground can house materials to be brought in and out easily and help to protect equipment from the elements. When considering the needs of infants and toddlers, think about having an area that allows them to sit, crawl, pull-up, swing and climb on appropriate size equipment in space that is free of choking hazards. Infants need time to explore the natural world and enjoy the fresh air, ensure that they are given this opportunity.

The National Program for Playground Safety has a four-point plan called SAFE which stands for: Supervision, Age-appropriate

-design, Fall surfacing (surfaces deemed safe for falls), and Equipment and surface maintenance. They also offer a kit for playground supervisors (www.uni.edu/playground). Also consider having a Certified Playground Safety Inspector come and inspect your playground. Contact the National Playground Safety Institute, National Recreation and Parks Association 703-858-2148; there is a fee for this service. This can determine safety, age-appropriateness, and accessibility of both the equipment and surfacing.

Engage children in creating outdoor play space. Observe the activities they most enjoy and ask questions about what they would like in their outside world, then find a balance of open-ended equipment and “stuff” with the wide open spaces to move, yell, and explore. Do not make it a space that is adult created and has little of the natural world. Those leaves, grass, pebbles, bushes and trees are just as exciting as swings, tricycles and balls. Let’s make sure that children have ample opportunity to experience and explore both.



Provider Appreciation Day is May 8th

Provider Appreciation Day is a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers and other educators of young children everywhere. Started in 1996 by a group of volunteers in New Jersey, Provider Appreciation Day is appropriately celebrated each year on the Friday before Mother's Day. The founding organizers saw the need to recognize the tireless efforts of providers who care for children of working parents. Momentum and support for this event has grown each year and recognition presently includes individuals and government organizations throughout North America, Europe and Asia. A national study, *The National Economic Impacts of the Child Care Sector*, sponsored by the National Child Care Association, found that there are at least 2.8 million people who earn their money by teaching and caring for young children or by working in directly related jobs. As the demand for child care continues to increase, who's minding the kids is crucial.

Today's child care professionals are the world's unsung heroes. This profession is one of the most underpaid occupations in the country; yet research shows that early childhood is the most critical developmental period in a child's life. It takes a special person to work in this field and the contribution these individuals make to the quality of children's and families' lives too frequently goes unnoticed. Provider Appreciation Day offers a unique opportunity to recognize and commend the unselfish dedication, commitment and compassion that child care providers demonstrate every day.

From Everyone at Child Care Resource, thank you for all that you do!



All of the staff at Child Care Resource signed this page and it was sent to all child care programs in Chittenden County!

Introducing New Foods

By Rebecca Francisco

Food To Grow on Educator and Nutrition Counselor, CCR

Getting children to try and like a new food can be a challenge. Unfortunately, there is no quick fix to this problem, and based on our human history, that makes a lot of sense. Back when most humans were foragers and hunters, taste was one of our only defenses against eating poisonous food lookalikes. Often, when a new vegetable is tasted it tastes bitter because our instincts tell us it is bitter. For some, it may take as many as 10-20 tries before we learn to like that food. However, eating a diverse diet complete with vegetables and fruits is important to healthy development. Here are some tips to help you overcome the challenge of introducing new foods.

Start small. Some children will not try a new food the first time it is served. Some may never try it, but it is still important to introduce new foods. Start with small portions of a new food, and never force or coerce the child to try it. Simply encourage them to try the new food, and keep a relaxed attitude.

Encourage kids to use their senses. If they are unwilling to try new things, simply ask them to smell the food, describe its color, and imagine what the texture might be like. This works great in a non-meal setting, like circle time. Once their interest is peaked, ask them what dish they think they could make with it.

Make it fun! Did your mother ever tell you not to play with your food? Throw that old wisdom out the window when introducing new foods. In order to try a new food, a child may need to get familiar with it first. One of the best ways to do this is to introduce a food in a non-eating setting. Make a bean mosaic, create "Salad People" out of fresh produce, or make jewelry out of dried fruits. Better yet, grow veggies with the children. Gardening is a great educational activity that will get the kids interested in all kinds of new veggies.

Involve them in preparing the food. This tip will help encourage familiarity with foods. Children will have a chance to touch, smell, and get familiar with the food, before they are asked to eat it. It is also a great way to develop fine motor skills, and introduce measuring and reading directions. Books by Molly Katzen, such as *Salad People*, have wonderful, pictorial directions preschoolers can follow.

Serve familiar foods with unfamiliar foods. Again, the goal here is to make the new food less threatening. Camouflage a new food by adding it to some old favorites, or just include it in a supporting role, rather than as the star of the meal.

Serve the new food first. Children are most likely to try new things when they are hungry. If a new food is introduced after they have already been served something familiar, they will be less open to trying it.

Avoid serving kid foods. Often, "kid foods", such as chicken nuggets and French fries are less fresh, lower in nutritional value, and high in sodium and preservatives. The best way to encourage lifelong, healthy eating habits is to serve fresh, quality foods.

Take these tips, try out some new foods, and most importantly, have fun! Remember to take it easy, start small, and engage the children in the process of creating a meal in any creative way you can think of. The more familiarity they have with new foods, the more likely they are to try them.

Baked Kale Chips

These may not seem like a top pick for introducing new foods, but you'll be surprised! These bake up quick and taste a lot like their less nutritious, potato counterparts. Kale is a cool-season crop, and packed full of healthy nutrients. Let the children help wash, tear and toss the kale, and invite them to try out the raw kale.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch kale
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt



Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a non-insulated cookie sheet with parchment paper. Wash kale and dry thoroughly in a salad spinner. Tear into bite size pieces and toss with olive oil and salt. Spread in a single layer on the cookie sheet, and bake until edges are browned but not burnt, about 10-25 minutes.

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Introducing New Foods (continued)

Asparagus Ham Roll-up

This recipe is a great one to prepare with the children, since it involves very little cooking, and is an easy finger-food assembly. Enjoy some spring asparagus in this easy preparation.

Ingredients:

- 16 spears fresh asparagus, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon water
- 16 thin slices fully cooked ham

DILL SAUCE:

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cucumber - peeled, seeded, and diced
- 1 teaspoon dill weed
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice



Directions:

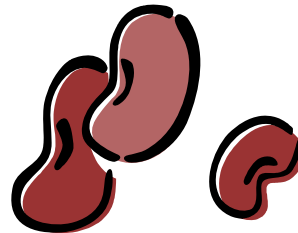
Lightly sauté asparagus in olive oil over medium heat until bright green and tender. Wrap each asparagus spear with a slice of ham. Just before serving, combine sauce ingredients. Serve with roll-ups.

Barley Baked Beans

A new twist on an old favorite will up the nutrient ante. Start this early in the day and it will be ready by lunchtime.

Ingredients:

- 3/4 c. pearled barley
- 2 1/4 c. water
- 4 c. cooked yellow eye beans or pinto beans
- (1) 28 oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 1/2 c. maple syrup
- 3/4 c. onion diced
- 1/3 c. molasses
- 2 Tbs. ketchup
- 1 Tbs. prepared mustard
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper



Directions:

In a medium saucepan, combine barley and water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until barley is tender. Mix all ingredients together in a covered dutch oven or casserole dish. Bake at 325 degrees for 2 hrs.

Summer is Almost Upon Us

By Tammy Poquette, Hand in Hand Creative Learning Center

Summer will soon be upon us and the opportunity for hands-on visual learning is in abundance! Visual hands-on learning stimulates children of all ages and intrigues them to ask questions, explore, and become excited about learning! The outside environment is an excellent resource that can be brought into the classroom in a variety of different ways. Here are just a few of many ideas that can easily inspire young children to get excited about learning!

Observation Tanks – As a teacher, observe what the children are interested in while outside, and recreate the learning environment inside with a child-friendly aquarium tank. This can be used to watch the wonder of caterpillars transforming into butterflies, the life cycle of a tadpole, or even observing what creatures can be found in a clump of earth. An observation tank is a universal classroom tool that can be utilized all year long! It enhances literary skills through reading, questioning, and investigating books related to the aquarium's chosen contents. In addition, it can be used as an early math tool to chart or graph a multitude of

different scenarios within the tank or its contents. The children can also put their fine motor skills to work by drawing changes that they see over time or to document what is in the tank itself.

It also encourages and inspires children to ask questions and develop their own scientific experiments to find answers to their questions. Perhaps the children have found some ants in the clump of earth in the aquarium tank and inquire about what they eat? The teacher can turn this simple question into a learning opportunity by asking the children how they could investigate this discovery. You may be surprised by the answers you receive, and by asking for the children's input, it gives them a vested interest in the outcome and learning process. There is a very broad spectrum of learning skills that can be acquired through observation tanks.

Get Growing – Children love to watch something in their care come to life, but don't limit yourself to just plants and vegetables. Why not try an exciting Venus Fly Trap or Pitcher Plant that are available in kits at most Learning Express

stores? Clear planting cylinders, in which the children can view what is happening both above and below ground, can spice up any planting activity. Just think of the excitement and questions that growing of any form can inspire in your children!

*What type of water helps plants grow faster? (Tap Water, distilled, or bottled water?)

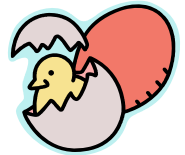
*Do plants grow best inside or outside?

*How tall can grass grow in a week? (Let the children explore, measure, and chart their results!)

*What type of vegetable seeds grow the fastest?

Egg Hatching –

If you contact the UVM Farm your children can incubate, hatch, and care for real chickens! The UVM Farm provides you with the eggs and a complete care and activity guide for learning. Once the eggs have hatched, the children can care for the baby chicks for about one week before they are brought back to the UVM Farm. For more information on this activity, contact the UVM Farm at 524-6501.



Taking Care of Business

Where CCR Referral Department answers questions related to the business of child care

Q. *I've been a registered home provider for a few years now but I still get confused about how many children I can have in my program... especially in the summer which is just around the corner! Can you help me?*

A Milton registered home provider

A. Thanks for your question! Believe me, you are not alone! We receive many questions about the number of children in registered home care from providers of all levels of experience! Hopefully the following will help!

During summer vacation you can have **up to 12 children** in care (note: 6 of these children must have been to kindergarten (school-age). **Once the number of all day (more than 4 hours) children in your home is over 6, a second caregiver must be present. Note: In the summer, your own preschool-aged and younger children count in the twelve.** School-agers who reside in the home of the registrant do NOT count. No more than two children under two years of age may be in care.

Have more questions about this topic? You can call the **CCR Referral Department at 863-3367 ext. 33**. If you'd like a handout that illustrates the different number of children combinations with pictures, just ask and we'd be happy to send you a copy! Also, as always, you can call the **Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-540-7942** with these types of questions as well.

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Announcements



Congratulations to the following programs on attaining or renewing STARS in the SStep Ahead Recognition System:

Children's Preschool and Enrichment Center in Essex, owned and directed by Karen Gray, has renewed with **4 STARS**.

Sara Holbrook Community Center in Burlington, directed by Leisa Pollander, has achieved **5 STARS**.

Nadeau's Playschool in Williston, directed by Judy LaClair, has joined with **4 STARS**.

Shelburne Nursery School in Shelburne, directed by Joanne Buermann, has renewed with **4 STARS**.

Discovery Preschool in South Burlington, directed by Liz Olson, has achieved **5 STARS**.

Live Y'ers in Jericho, coordinated by Tricia Pawlik, has joined with **4 STARS**.

A Remembrance

Many of you will remember that Child Care Resource had the great honor of having Jim Greenman as the keynote speaker for our Annual conference in 2007. Below is a lovely tribute to his amazing work and the legacy he leaves the field of early childhood.

Jim Greenman Will Be Missed

It is not length of life, but depth of life.

This weekend Jim Greenman passed away after fighting a long battle with cancer. In his final days, and throughout the illness, his family comforted him, including his daughters Emma and Annie.

Jim was an inspiration to everyone at **Exchange**, as well as to early childhood professionals around the world. His insightful thinking about what makes for the best environments for children and families, both environmentally and programmatically, pushed the field toward higher and higher standards of caring. His published works - books such as [Caring Spaces, Learning Spaces: Children's Environments that Work](#); [Places for Childhoods: Making Quality Happen in the Real World](#); [Prime Times: A Handbook for Excellence in Infant and Toddler Care](#); and [What Happened to My World](#); and countless articles in **Exchange** over the past 30 years (one of which can be found on the [Exchange web site](#)) - will certainly continue to inspire future generations of early childhood professionals.

In noting the passing of Jim, Bright Horizons Family Solutions leaders Dave Lissy and Mary Ann Tocio observed...

"Jim was a legend not only within Bright Horizons, but in the entire field of early education. And while his passing leaves a major void in our hearts and in the early childhood profession, his legacy leaves an ever-lasting gift to children and to educators that will sustain for generations to come. Jim brought respect to early educators by insisting on respect for young children. He knew the purpose in their play and unveiled it for the world to see messy little scientists, emerging builders, acrobats, and artisans. He ensured that we don't ask, 'How smart is this child?' but rather, 'How is this child smart?'

"Jim advocated for children and their teachers from the streets of Minnesota to the halls of government in Washington, DC to the classrooms in child care centers around the globe. At Bright Horizons you can see his impact in gentle book nooks in the toddler classroom, in the preschool's dramatic play corner, and in the spots on the playground dedicated to the exploration of even the youngest infants. You can see his impact in the work of the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, which he led with a great sense of purpose. Whether in the Head Start programs of his earliest years or in the Bright Spaces he helped to build across the U.S. and Europe, Jim was dedicated to ensuring that all children, no matter their circumstances, have spaces to call their own, to learn, to be safe, and to grow. He leaves his mark on the Web on BHU and in the advocacy of men in child care. And he leaves those who knew him best with an understanding that you may not mourn his loss without also paying tribute to his unmatched irreverence and tremendous wit."

From Exchange Every Day

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Training Events with Child Care Resource

Please call 863-3367 for these CCR upcoming trainings.

- May 16** *Calming the Storm...Don't Pop Your Cork* - A full-day seminar with Jeanine Fitzgerald, M.A.
- June 10** *Sustainable Passion* - A full-day seminar with Tish Linstrom, MA, CIMI.
- July 14** *New Provider Orientation* - Family Child Care Information Session for newly and soon-to-be registered child care providers; 6:30—9:00 p.m.

Regional Training Opportunities

- May 7**
- An evening for parents and early educators with Dr. William Crain, author of **Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in our Achievement-Oriented Society**. The assumption that our children's future is more important than childhood itself has become so commonplace that it is difficult to shake; even for parents who are committed to a child-centered parenting style. Dr. Crain challenges the assumption that academic achievement is a goal unto itself, rather than a by-product of kids who are happy, well-loved, and allowed to grow at their own pace. **William Crain, Ph.D.**, is a developmental psychologist, author, and social activist. A professor of psychology at the City College of New York, he is the author of a major textbook in the field. His 1997 article in *Montessori Life* magazine, "How Nature Helps Children Develop," was a finalist for the 1998 Ed Press Award for excellence in educational journalism. He lives in New York City.
- Pizza/mingling** - 5:30 PM ~ **Speaker/Q & A** - 6:30 PM ~ **Dessert/Discussion/Focus groups** - 8:00 - 9:00 PM
- Location:** Middlebury United Methodist Church.
- Cost of the evening is **\$25.00**; with a copy of *Reclaiming Childhood* - \$30.00; **Scholarships available.**
- For more information** contact Amethyst at 388-4304 or resource@mjcvt.org.
- Sponsored by:** Addison County Child Care Directors' Network;
Addison County Child Care Services;
Addison County Building Bright Futures Council.

- May 15**
- 4th Annual Working with Youth Conference**, sponsored by VT Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs, at the Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center, South Burlington; contact Kreig Pinkham, kreigpinkham@comcast.net or at 229-9151 or Diane Robie at wwy@robie.info.