

Environmental Assessment: Outdoor Environments

Place a check mark by the question if it is achieved in your childcare program.

This assessment is meant to get you thinking about your outdoor play area.

We will not “grade” it! 😊

Playground Design

	Is the playground S.A.F.E (appropriate supervision, developmentally appropriate equipment, appropriate fall zones and surfaces, well-maintained equipment)?
	Is there enough space for the number of children using the playground? (75sqft per child) Crowded areas? Areas with no children?
	Are there safe, looping circular paths?
	Is the playground zoned (different areas for different types of play)?
	Are the zones visibly separated through different ground surfaces or dividers?
	Are nonmobile children protected from more active children?
	Is there shade and protection from the elements?
	Is there enough storage space?
	Is the storage space located near the location where the materials will be used?
	Is there access to toileting, hand washing, and drinking water?
	<p>Are a variety of activity areas present?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas to climb, crawl, jump, and balance • Areas to swing • Places to slide • Messy areas (mud, sand) • Water areas • Area for riding tricycles, scooters, bikes • Areas for plants and gardens • Places to observe and interact with insects, animals, and birds • Large area for gathering and for large motor play • Place to seek refuge • Many different places to sit • Outdoor learning centers: block and building, art, music, dramatic play, science and math, literacy.
	Are there loose parts available to enhance possibilities?
	Does the playground have the right amount of challenge?
	Are there a range of activities to meet the needs of different skill levels (balance beams at different widths, different types of swings, different ways to climb a structures)?
	are there ways children can feel powerful (ringing a bell when they reach the top of a climbing structure)?

	Are all children able to use the playground successfully (playground equipment accessible to all)?
	Is the playground aesthetically pleasing (materials and colors from nature, personalized with children's ideas and art, designed for rich sensory experiences, created with beauty in mind, clean, uncluttered, attention to detail, curved lines)?
	Does the playground provide "a sense of place" (reflects location, climate, culture, values, local materials, and local plants)?
Adult/Child Interactions	
	Are adults enforcing rules? If so, are the rules necessary for safety? Are children engaging in unsafe or harmful behavior that is being ignored?
	Are adults interacting with children? In what ways (for example, playing, conversing, reading a book)?
	Are adults scaffolding children's learning (for example helping a child transverse across an overhead ladder or providing additional information about a worm that was found in the playground)?
	Are adults nurturing dispositions (such as the love of nature, respect for living things)?
	How are children who are in conflict helped to solve the conflict (are children separated, punished, or forced to apologize, or are they helped to problem solve issues)?
	Are adults helping excluded children to be included?