



# Children and Nature

A short presentation (PDF)  
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Froebel believed that as human beings we are an integral part of our natural planet. We need to live and learn in harmony with nature.

Engaging and being part of nature starts young.

These children are totally absorbed in their pond dipping activity.

**But what else is going on here?**





These children are exploring and experimenting with orientation. They are also using their whole bodies and having a whole body experience.

They are exploring perspective and how things look differently from within the tunnel and on top of the tunnel.

Froebel believed in open ended creative play and exploration.

‘Simple playthings that allow children to feel and experience, to act and represent, and to think and recognise’ (*Froebel cited in Brosterman 1997:51*)

**What could these children be feeling and experiencing?**





Close observation of who we share our planet with.

‘Question after question crowds out of his enquiring mind – how? Why? when? What for?’  
(*Froebel in Lilley 1967:125*)

In nature there is so much to see and explore and want to know about.

Children are great observers of very small things and are fascinated by them.

**What questions do you think they could be asking? How do you as the adult answer?**





Look how closely this child is observing.

By giving children the appropriate tools they can really see the world around them and engage with it in a positive and caring way.

Children are learning about the interconnectedness of living things and what in later learning they will come to know as ecology.





Outdoors is big!

Children learn that they are a small part of something much bigger.

Outdoors offers big opportunities for self expression and self awareness

Froebel believed that relationships are key.  
Relationship with self, others and our planet.

Outdoors allows the adult to help children explore these relationships in a real and natural way.

**What could these two children be learning about themselves and each other?**





An example of Wallowing in sensory experience.

Do you engage with International Mud day? It happens every year at the end of June. Look it up: [nationaltoday.com/international-mud-day](http://nationaltoday.com/international-mud-day)

**What mud experiences could you share?**





Outdoors children have real authentic experiences and often the need to record them is urgent and meaningful.

Froebel understood the importance of the Symbolic life of the child and how this links into their real, felt inner life.

He believed that all symbolic representation was the way children expressed their inner selves outwardly.

Play being the first and highest form of a child's development.





‘Play is the highest level of child development. It is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling..... At this age play is never trivial; it is serious and deeply significant’ (Froebel in Lilley 1976:84)

These children are celebrating birthdays.

Look at the resources they have used.

**Could they have had this experience at this authentic and creative level indoors? Would there have been this level of choice?**





Weaving outdoors can be done on large scale.

It can be linked to whole body experience by weaving through the trees, singing songs such as in and out the dusty bluebells and developing a maypole to dance around.

**What messages do you think an experience like weaving gives to children?**





‘The child who has cared for another living thing.... Is more easily led to care for his *own* life’  
(*Froebel in Lilley 1967:128*)

This child has learnt that sometimes we can help bees to survive when they have run out of flower nectar before they get back to the hive. He knows that a sugar solution will help.

**How might this awareness of being part of a greater whole help a child’s well-being?**



Outdoor provides a never ending opportunity for challenge and Froebel believed this was very important in every child's life as all through life we meet and navigate challenge.

'Children should be 'brought up to bear minor affliction so as to endure more serious hardship' in later life  
(*Froebel in Lilley 1967: 60*)

**What sort of boundaries do we put on children that stem from our own fear of risk? How could we mitigate these fears?**





As soon as children begin to walk they can start to explore and find themselves in nature.

‘The Value of Play and Learning Outdoors:

- Rich sensory first hand experience which is essential for growing minds
- Engagement with the wonder and mystery of the natural world
- Space and freedom to try things out, explore, experiment & investigate how the world works
- Space for whole-body, expansive movement
- Engagement with key concepts such as gradient, gravity, speed and energy or such things as life and death.
- Opportunities for adventure, risk and challenge
- Opportunities for meaningful learning in all areas of the curriculum’

*(Tovey. H. Outdoor play and exploration)*