



could feel alone and lose touch with time as you became absorbed. There was a sense of not wanting to stop. It felt like another world and prompted reflections on past experiences. For some there was a sense of calm though for others there was an awareness of feeling more vulnerable.



The session was focused on enabling creative learning in the outdoors. It was designed to explore the continuum of learning environments available at the centre and how these can be offered.



We invited you to start thinking about what core values or qualities you wanted to ensure were built into your future planning. At this stage you wanted to ensure that:

- you offered the children time
- the experiences planned for the children should offer as much freedom and choice as possible within carefully planned boundaries
- the emphasis was on the experiences the children were having and not on any finished product
- you explored different ways to offer things
- there were a variety of materials and resources offered, especially natural ones
- that different spaces were explored
- that time was spent planning and preparing in order to allow for safety but also freedom and independence for the children



Out and About

**An Ignite workshop for educators
at Fields Children's Centre
Cambridge
September 6th 2010**



resources to role play/small world to expand existing – especially BIG things; arrange for willow to be tended with the children; talk about creating spaces within the grass area; try to encourage children to explore play area more.

Thank you for working with us. Good luck with getting out and about more with your children.

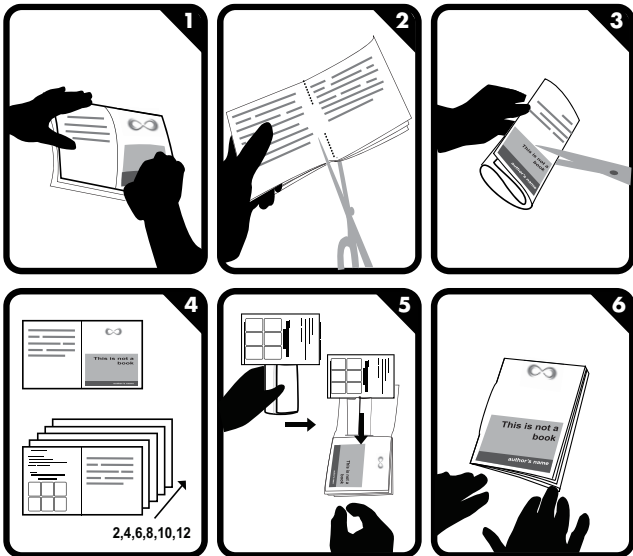
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You felt that the two-dimensional presentation was useful for setting the context and beginning your thinking. Some of you commented that it made you want to do what you had seen others doing. It stimulated a sense of intrigue. Others commented that it was boring as it offered no opportunity to get hands on. There was a sense that it felt repetitive and was in places hard to understand.

We had planned a number of elements to the session:

- A presentation of images on the computer, sharing with you the experiences of families who worked with us on Barnwell Nature Reserve last spring.
- An invitation to play with a range of natural materials and other resources inside on a paper frame.
- Using these same materials but outside in the willow garden.
- Finally, taking the materials out to the Nature Reserve to explore them creatively in this setting.
- Returning to the classroom, but retracing our steps via the willow garden to reflect on what changes as we return to the more tamed outdoor environment and finally to the indoors.
- Reflecting on these different learning environments.



- Looking back at the end of the session, you noticed:
- how important the environment is. What a difference it makes to the atmosphere of learning
- how you can use natural things in creative ways. I was surprised at how people did this how enjoyable it was to lose yourself in an activity
- that I like collecting things...especially leaves
- that it's good fun
- that all environments support creativity
- the dragonfly and the colours of Viv's thread that part blended in the environment
- the wind and tree movements

You felt that you had learned how: *different spaces create different stimulations; how you can use the natural environment and natural materials in various ways; the importance of giving enough time; the power of the environment on the imagination; the value of unstructured, un-led play; how different spaces make all the difference; that I like to create order; how the atmosphere changes quite dramatically.*

You will remember: *the contrasts in space/place and feeling; the feeling of childhood fun; to use more natural materials; to look around more; the sense of having the freedom to create; to take the outside in more; the creativity of your team you work with.*

Next you will: *add more natural play to my planning; digest today; look at the outside areas more; look at the natural resources we have and add to them; look at our planning and try to involve the outdoor grass area more; look at possibility of having a natural selection in the workshop; look at the possibility of adding natural*

- Moving the materials to the willow garden introduced different experiences and challenges. The senses felt much more stimulated as you noticed the weather, the sense of airiness, piles of grass to kick and the dragonflies and spiders webs. Some felt they needed time to explore and settle – that it was harder to concentrate and they now had the elements (especially the wind) to deal with. Others commented that they now had more choices, that they could find colleagues to work with or enjoy the solitude without feeling so distracted by those around them.
- Playing in the 'wild' out in the Nature Reserve offered a sense of freedom, a feeling of adventure but also calmness, and the opportunity to explore lots of natural resources. You commented on the variety, the contrast, the sense of endless possibilities – there were different textures, different sounds. You noticed how you could feel hidden in your own space, how you

- Introducing natural materials into this classroom space enabled you to become more focused. People felt excited about the materials and enjoyed looking at what others had done. You noticed the concentration of the group as they began to explore and make. The atmosphere was calming and therapeutic. But there was also a sense of feeling crowded and cramped, of needing to protect your work.

