



Early Childhood Education Workshop

Nurturing Young Children in Nature: How to do it and why it matters!

Featuring Michele Lucia, EdD

Saturday, March 1, 2025



*Funding provided by Indian River County
Children's Services Advisory Committee,
PNC and Lakeshore.*



NURTURING YOUNG CHILDREN IN NATURE:

How to do it and why it matters!

with

MICHELE L. LUCIA, ED.D.

Dr. Michele Lucia serves as the Academic Program Coordinator for the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Studies program at Walden University. With advanced degrees from Cornell University and Vanderbilt University, she brings a wealth of expertise to her role. Throughout her career, Dr. Lucia has taught students of all ages, both in-person and online. Dr. Lucia's diverse professional background includes work as a childcare center director, educational consultant, Montessori teacher, and children's photographer. Additionally, her experience includes numerous publications and presentations on early childhood education topics.



CONTACT	
	Michele.Lucia@mail.waldenu.edu
	linkedin.com/in/michelelucia/
	South Carolina

TODAY'S AGENDA

9:00	Welcome & Introduction
9:30	Evolution Of Play for Young Children
	Free Play Era
	Rise of Technology
	Digital Age
	Social and Legal Changes
	Consequences and Concerns
10:30	Break
10:45	The Impact of Outdoor Play on Development
	Physical Development
	Cognitive Growth and Environmental Awareness
12:00	Working Lunch
12:30	The Impact of Outdoor Play – cont.
	Social and Emotional Well-being
1:15	Current Trends and Efforts
	Balancing Technology Use and Traditional Play
	Encouraging Traditional Play
	Regulation Efforts
2:15	Summary of Key Points
2:30	Q&A



NOTES



LEARNING OUTCOMES



Comprehend Play Evolution's Impact: Understand how historical shifts in play—Free Play Era to Digital Age—affect children's development. Discuss modern play trends' consequences and explore balancing technology with traditional play.

Promote Holistic Physical Development: Design activities enhancing children's motor skills, strength, coordination, and overall fitness, recognizing the role of outdoor play.

Support Cognitive and Socio-emotional Growth: Foster problem-solving, curiosity, environmental stewardship, teamwork, emotional regulation, independence, and confidence through outdoor activities.

Balance Technology Use and Traditional Play: Implement strategies for combining technology and traditional play, including educational content, parental controls, scheduled screen time, tech-free zones, and role modeling.

Facilitate Traditional Play Activities: Promote outdoor, unstructured, physical, and creative play within educational settings and communities, emphasizing imagination and creativity.

NOTES



EVOLUTION OF PLAY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

When my parents were young...

When I was young...

For my children/my students...

For the next generation...



NOTES



TECHNOLOGY DEBATE



**Technology GOOD – 3
minutes**

**Technology BAD – 3
minutes**

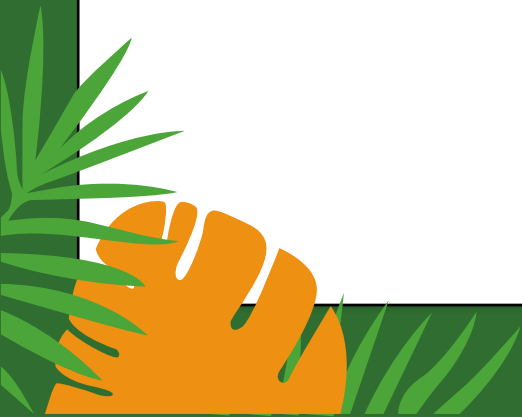
**Response & Summary – 2
minutes**

**Response & Summary – 3
minutes**

Final Points – 1 minutes



MY IDEAL PLAYGROUND



MY ACTUAL PLAYGROUND



NOTES



THE IMPACT OF OUTDOOR PLAY ON DEVELOPMENT

[illegible]

NOTES





GUIDED MEDITATION: INDOOR JOURNEY TO THE OUTDOORS

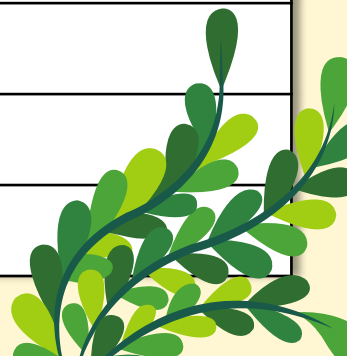
Introduction (1-2 minutes)

Grounding (2-3 minutes)

Engaging the Senses (3-4 minutes)

Visualization and Relaxation (5-7 minutes)

Closing (1-2 minutes)



SELF-EXAMINATION

AKA: THE TECHNOLOGY USE QUIZ

Daily Routine

1. **How often do you check your phone within the first hour of waking up?**
 - a) Rarely
 - b) Occasionally
 - c) Most days
 - d) Every day
2. **How many hours do you spend on screens (phone, computer, TV) on an average day?**
 - a) Less than 2 hours
 - b) 2-4 hours
 - c) 4-6 hours
 - d) Over 6 hours

Social Interaction

3. **Do you find yourself texting or using social media during meals or social gatherings?**
 - a) Rarely
 - b) Occasionally
 - c) Most times
 - d) Always
4. **How often do you prefer communicating via text or social media over face-to-face interactions?**
 - a) Rarely
 - b) Occasionally
 - c) Most of the time
 - d) Always

SELF-EXAMINATION — CONTINUED

Productivity and Focus

5. How frequently do you get distracted by your phone or other devices while working or studying?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most of the time
- d) Always

5. How often do you feel that your productivity is affected by your technology use?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most days
- d) Every day

Physical Activity and Health

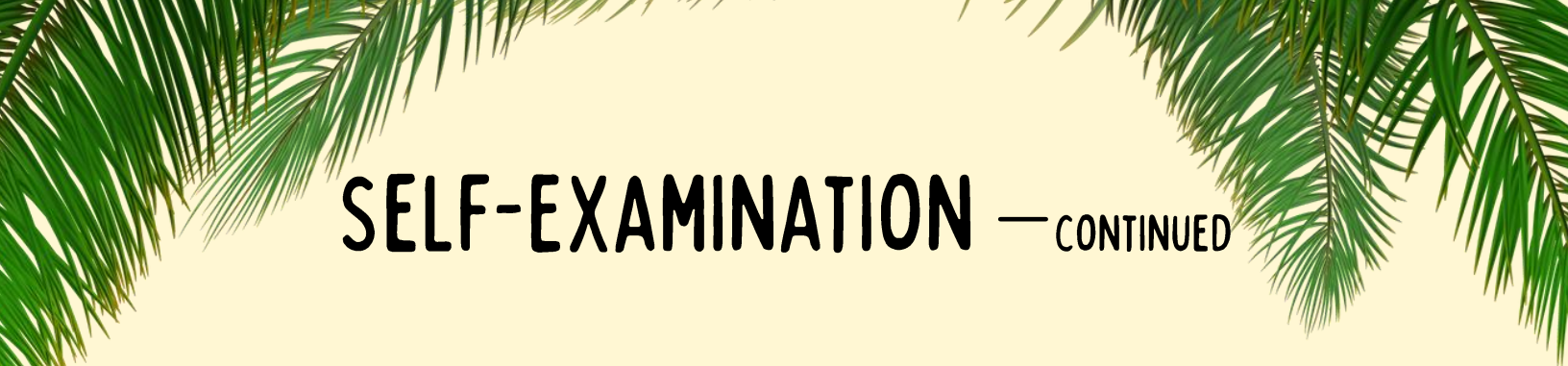
7. How often do you choose screen-based activities over physical activities?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most of the time
- d) Always

8. Do you experience physical discomfort (eye strain, headaches, etc.) from long periods of screen use?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most times
- d) Always





SELF-EXAMINATION — CONTINUED

Reflection

9. How often do you feel the need to disconnect from technology and take a break?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most days
- d) Every day

10. Do you feel anxious or stressed when you don't have access to your devices?

- a) Rarely
- b) Occasionally
- c) Most of the time
- d) Always

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

d) _____



GOALS

Promote Physical Development: Encourage activities that develop gross motor skills like running, jumping, climbing, and balancing.

Foster Social Skills: Create opportunities for children to interact, cooperate, and build friendships during outdoor play.

Enhance Cognitive Development: Plan activities that stimulate curiosity, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Encourage Environmental Awareness: Teach children about nature, plants, animals, and the importance of caring for the environment.

Stimulate Creativity and Imagination: Provide materials and open-ended activities that allow children to use their creativity and imagination.

Support Emotional Well-being: Create a relaxing and enjoyable outdoor environment where children can express themselves freely and build confidence.

Encourage Exploration and Discovery: Allow children to explore their surroundings, ask questions, and make discoveries.

Integrate Learning Across Domains: Use outdoor activities to teach various subjects, such as science, math, language, and art, in an engaging way.

Promote Healthy Lifestyles: Instill the importance of physical activity, fresh air, and a connection to nature as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Adapt Activities for Inclusivity: Ensure that outdoor activities are accessible and enjoyable for all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.



REVIEW

1. The average 4-year-old spends _____ hours in front of a screen daily.
 - a. 1
 - b. 2.5
 - c. 4
 - d. 5.5

2. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests that children aged 2 to 5 spend _____ in front of screens daily?
 - a. no time
 - b. no more than 1 hour
 - c. no more than 2 hours
 - d. no more than 3 hours

3. Increased screen time has all of the following effects except:
 - a. Obesity
 - b. Poor social skills
 - c. Greater academic performance
 - d. Irregular sleep patterns

4. Parents can be arrested for letting their children play outside unsupervised.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. Outdoor play has a positive impact on which types of development:
 - a. Gross motor skills
 - b. Fine motor skills
 - c. Social skills
 - d. A and C
 - e. All of the above



REVIEW — CONT.



6. Doctors now write prescriptions for time in nature.

- a. True
- b. False

7. Overuse of technology is linked to which of the following mental health issues among children?

- a. Increased anxiety
- b. Depression
- c. Social isolation
- d. B and C
- e. All of the above

8. What is one of the primary goals of running public awareness campaigns about screen time?

- a. To increase children's screen time
- b. To educate parents about potential risks
- c. To promote greater use of educational apps
- d. To discourage all use of technology

9. Establishing tech-free zones in the home and scheduling screen time helps to do ALL of the following: promote a healthy balance between digital and physical activities, increase face-to-face interactions, and promote physical play.

- a. True
- b. False

10. Outdoor play initiatives can be supported by which of the following?

- a. Local childcare programs
- b. Museums
- c. Families
- d. All of the above

KEY POINTS



Nurturing Young Children in Nature: How to Do It and Why It Matters!

Evolution of Play for Young Children

- 1.Free Play Era (Pre-1980s):** Children engaged in outdoor, unstructured play, fostering physical development, creativity, and social skills.
- 2.Rise of Technology (1980s - Early 2000s):** Introduction of video games and children's programming led to a shift from outdoor to indoor play.
- 3.Digital Age (Early 2000s - Present):** Increased screen time from smartphones and tablets, alongside structured activities, reduced unstructured playtime. Heightened safety concerns led to more supervised play.

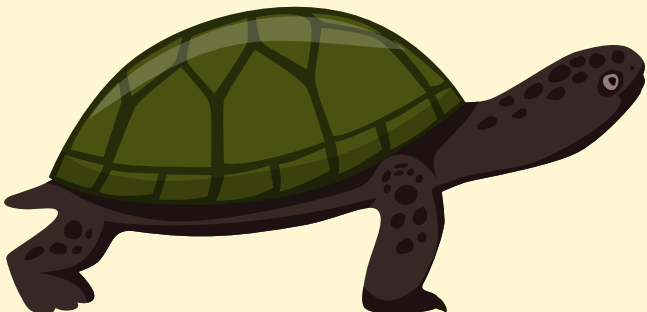
The Impact of Outdoor Play on Development

- 4.Physical Development:** Outdoor play enhances gross and fine motor skills, promotes cardiovascular health, flexibility, and overall fitness.
- 5.Cognitive Growth:** Outdoor activities foster problem-solving skills, curiosity, exploration, and environmental stewardship.
- 6.Social and Emotional Well-being:** Nature boosts teamwork, emotional regulation, independence, and confidence in children through group activities and unstructured playtime.

Current Trends and Efforts

- 7.Educational Content and Parental Controls:** Promote educational uses of technology, such as learning apps and e-books, while encouraging parental controls to limit screen time.
- 8.Balancing Screen Time and Physical Activities:** Implement scheduled screen time and tech-free zones to ensure a healthy balance between digital and physical activities.
- 9.Encouraging Traditional Play:** Support outdoor, unstructured, and creative play through community programs and family outings.
- 10.Regulation Efforts:** Awareness of screen time guidelines, safety standards, and legislation to protect children from harmful digital content and promote balanced lifestyles.

Q & A



RESOURCES

Childhood By Nature - 7 Ways to Bring the Outdoors Inside: This article offers practical tips on how to incorporate nature into indoor spaces, such as adding plants, nature-based arts and crafts, and nature documentaries.

<https://www.childhoodbynature.com/7-ways-to-bring-the-outdoors-inside/>

Head Start: This site provides information on the current state of outdoor play and exploration in the United States, as well as strategies for supporting outdoor play and exploration for infants and toddlers.

<https://headstart.gov>

Topic: Outdoor Play and Exploration

Infinite Recreation - Transforming Learning Through Play: This guide explores the aspects of designing play areas for schools and daycares, emphasizing safety, inclusivity, and educational play.

www.infiniterecreation.com

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

They offer a variety of resources and articles on outdoor play, including tips for teaching in the outside classroom and encouraging math learning during risky outdoor play.

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/outdoor>

Park N Play Design - 10 Ways to Improve Your School Playground: This guide offers practical tips on how to breathe new life into your playground, including incorporating game markings, zoning the playground, adding natural elements, and installing inclusive equipment.

www.parknplaydesign.com

Take Them Outside - 15 Easy Indoor Nature Activities for Kids: This blog post shares a variety of indoor nature activities, including indoor gardening, sprouting seeds, and nature-themed scavenger hunts.

<https://www.takethemoutside.com/indoor-nature-activities/>

Coaching for



Early Educators

Collaborate with an experienced educator

Build

Build on your strengths as a teacher or director

Work

Work towards your classroom or school goals

Strengthen

Strengthen relationships with staff and parents

Implement

Implement ideas from professional development workshops

Contact A Coach To Get Started!

ChildcareResourcesIR.org/coach • 772-567-3202 ext. 114



Amanda Gooch is an Educator with 14 years of teaching experience. In addition to a Bachelor's degree in Child Psychology and a Master's degree in Teaching from the University of South Florida, she holds her Florida Childcare Professional Credential Certificate and her Educator Certificate from the State of Florida Department of Education. Amanda has completed her Infant, Toddler, Pre-K, CLASS Observer certification through Teachstone and holds her University of Florida Lastinger Center for Early Learning Coaching Certificate. She believes that all children and educators are capable of success, no exceptions!



Todd W. Morrow received a Master of Science in Elementary Education and an Education Specialist degree in Leadership and Supervision both from Florida International University. Todd served as a teacher, assistant principal, and elementary school principal for 24 years in the Miami-Dade County School District. After relocating his family, he joined the Martin County School District where he served as a principal for six years. During his tenure he built strong community support and a lasting record of school-wide academic achievement. Todd Morrow has been recognized as a Principal of the Year by Citizen's Crime Watch of Miami-Dade County and as Principal of the Year by City Year. Todd is a certified CLASS Pre-K Observer and is working with Childcare Resources as an Early Childhood Education Coach assisting childcare providers throughout Indian River County. In addition to providing coaching to teachers and directors, Todd is pleased to offer Community of Practice for early childhood educators.

COACHING



Childcare Resources • 2300 Fifth Ave, Ste 149 • Vero Beach, FL 32960



Funding provided by Indian River County Children's Services Advisory Committee.

Early Educators:

Need help taking your next step?

Childcare Resources

Higher Education Program

Stay on track with our mentorship program!

- Get one-on-one support with registration and financial aid.
- Meet with other local early educators in a supportive cohort.
- Participate in weekly study halls to help you succeed.
- Attend special program-exclusive events.

New to teaching? Have years of experience?

Take the next step in your career by earning:

- Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC)
- Director's Credential
- A.S. in Early Childhood Education
- B.S. in Early Childhood Education
- M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, *Concentration: Early Childhood Education Leadership*

Partner Schools Include:



INDIAN RIVER
STATE COLLEGE



FLORIDA GATEWAY
COLLEGE



STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA
MANATEE - SARASOTA



UNF
UNIVERSITY of
NORTH FLORIDA

Unsure about the financial cost of higher education?

The Higher Education Program can also help you navigate Florida's Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) program, helping to pay for your credential or degree, reducing or eliminating your cost.

Want to know more?

Visit **ChildcareResourcesIR.org/advance**

Email Stephanie Harmody: Stephanie@ChildcareResourcesIR.org

Email Elizabeth Swann: ESwann@ChildcareResourcesIR.org



Funding provided by
Indian River County Children's
Services Advisory Committee.



Do you know a family struggling to pay the cost of childcare?

Childcare Resources delivers high-quality early childhood education and wellness and early intervention services, while offering tuition assistance to qualifying families. Tuition typically ranges from **\$45 to \$75 weekly per child**. Eligibility requires parent/guardian full-time work or school attendance (at least 30 hours per week), residency in Indian River County, and meeting income requirements below.



High-Quality Early Education

- Classrooms for students 6 weeks through 5 years
- All program sites are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Full-day program with breakfast, lunch, and a snack included



Family Wellness Resources

- All students are assessed twice each year to ensure they're reaching developmental milestones
- Physical, Occupational, and Speech therapies are available at all sites
- On-site early childhood mental health services



Family Support

- Parent education meetings on early childhood education and development
- Case management resources and referrals

Household Income Eligibility for Tuition Assistance

Number in Household	Household Income		
2	\$30,660	-	\$42,924
3	\$38,730	-	\$54,222
4	\$46,800	-	\$65,520
5	\$54,870	-	\$76,818
6	\$62,940	-	\$88,116



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For more information, please call 772-567-3202 ext. 115 or visit ChildcareResourcesIR.org



Thank you for Attending!



Childcare Resources Mission:

To evaluate and promote the highest quality early childhood development and education in Indian River County, focusing on economically challenged children and families.

