A Letter to Families About Outdoor Play

Dear Families,

Physical exercise and fresh air are important for your child's health and well-being. We take children outdoors every day so they can run, jump, swing, climb, and use all of their large muscles. They move around, breathe fresh air, and catch balls and bugs. They lie on the ground to watch clouds and birds, and they climb high to look down. We talk about the things children see, hear, touch, smell, and feel so they become aware of changes in the weather, the seasons, plants, and animals.

Playing outdoors helps your child learn to

- notice and appreciate the natural world
- discover how water puddles during a rain and disappears when the sun comes out
- follow shadows
- use his or her body in increasingly skillful ways

We encourage children to wonder about what they see by asking questions like these:

"What do you notice?"

"Where do you think the birds are going?"

"How are the flowers different? How are they the same?"

What You Can Do at Home

Fresh air and exercise are very important to your child's health and to yours. Try to spend time with your child outdoors every day except when the weather is dangerous. Take walks in your neighborhood, go to parks together, and explore the natural world with your child. Watch what your child notices and show that you are also interested.

Children love to collect things and then play with them. They sort them, make patterns with them, and pretend with them. Bring along a container or plastic bag when you go outdoors so your child can collect treasures (seeds, leaves, and rocks) along the way and bring them home to examine. You also can plan special activities outdoors. Here are some ideas:

- Bring drawing paper and crayons outside so your child can draw what he or she sees.
- Take a pail of water and large brushes so your child can paint the sidewalk or fence.
- Bring colored chalk, which is perfect for sidewalk art.
- Play catch with balls of all sizes.
- Bring bubble-blowing solution and wands of various shapes.

Make time each day to be outdoors with your child, exploring, making discoveries, and enjoying nature.

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