



# Physical Development: Connecting to Our Experiences with Physical Activity in Natural Settings

## Focus Statement

Students reflect on their own connections to natural settings and discuss the importance of these settings for young children.

## Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide learning experience. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Child Growth and Development
- Child, Family and Community
- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Practicum-Field Experience

## Instructional Methodologies

- Creation of a visual representation
- Pairs work
- Reflection—individual or large group
- Reflective discussion—large group

## California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

The Faculty Initiative Project will be undertaking a comprehensive process in the future to map the content of the instructional guides to the California Department of Education, Child Development Division's California Early Childhood Educator Competencies. "The Competency Areas to Consider" below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how

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particular competency areas might be addressed through these learning experiences.

- Child Development and Learning
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Family and Community Engagement
- Dual-Language Development
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition



# Physical Development:

## Connecting to Our Experiences with Physical Activity in Natural Settings

### Before You Start

The introduction to the physical development domain of the *California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2* (PLF, V2) contains a section entitled “Active Physical Play in The Natural World.” This is a discussion of the importance of contact with natural settings and the impact on development. (PLF, V2, p. 38). There are some references cited in this section that would be helpful to read before implementing this learning experience.

Depending on how you choose to do this learning experience, you will need paper for drawing, markers, crayons, colored pencils, brushes and paints, magazines for collage, glue, and any other preferred materials.

### Information Delivery

Ask students to read the section “Active Physical Play in The Natural Word” in the introduction to the physical development domain of the *California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume 2* (p. 38). This can be done before coming to class or during an assigned time in class.

Ask students to work individually or in pairs to pick out one or two key points. Have them share their key points with the whole group. These should be charted so that they can be seen during the rest of the experience.

### Active Learning

#### Getting it started

Ask students to think for a moment about their early experiences in natural settings. This could be neighborhood parks, other small or large parks, beaches, forests, campgrounds, gardens, walking paths, or even a yard near a home with grass, trees, and plants. Ask them to quickly write down several of these experiences or places.

#### Online Options

Students could list their experiences online or post photographs of their visual representations.

If some students live in highly urbanized environments or can't remember early experiences in natural settings, ask if they have a favorite natural place or one they would like to visit.

Some students who live in rural or remote areas might have trouble distinguishing a particular place, since that is what



surrounds their daily lives. In this case, you might also ask for a favorite place or one that is particularly important to them.

### Keeping it going

Next, ask students to choose one of these experiences or places and draw it, paint it, or make a collage that represents it. You might have a student who would like to write a poem about it or use a list of words to describe it. Some students might want to use words and images together in some way. The main point is to produce some kind of representation that can then be discussed with others. Give students 20 or 30 minutes to do this, depending on their level of engagement.

### Putting it together

Gather the students in a large group, and ask them to look around at what they and others have created. Emphasize that what is important is not how skilled anyone has been with their creation, but notice the variety and how we connect to natural settings in different ways. Encourage students to ask each other about their experiences and discuss their work.

The following discussion questions help students understand the importance of activity in natural settings to lifelong development.



Slides 2-3

#### Online Options

Students could have an online discussion based on the questions in “Putting it together” and “Reflection” or write individual reflection papers based on these questions.

- Was it hard to remember your early experiences in natural settings or to think of places you would like to visit or places that are important to you?
- How did it feel when you remembered them?
- What kind of feelings did these places bring up?
- Did you think of these experiences or places with happiness? Fear? Excitement? Contentment? Wonder?
- Did they bring up memories or ideas about other people?
- What does this suggest about the importance of exposing children to natural areas when working with young children?

### Reflection



Slide 4

The questions in “Putting it together” are designed to support reflection regarding students’ connections to natural settings but could be augmented by asking these additional questions:

- What new insights did you gain in this experience?
- What really stood out for you in this experience?



- Did this experience suggest anything you want to do in relation to your experiences with natural settings or the experiences of children in your work?