

The Applewood Learning Center

Outdoor Classroom

At Applewood, we firmly believe that children benefit from being outside and connecting with nature. With childhood obesity reaching epidemic proportions, ADHD and childhood depression on the rise, children's stress levels increasing and recess times in public schools being reduced to almost nil, it is more important than ever for children to be able to have time outside using their bodies to climb, run, skip, and move in ways that are not possible or safe indoors. Research has shown that exposure to nature and the outdoors decreases stress, increases attention, and improves mood. It is also crucial to our environment's survival that we unite children with nature at an early age. If they don't feel a bond, they will have no interest in protecting the environment when they are older. We feel that it is vital to teach children, early on, that their time outdoors is just as important as their time in the classroom.

As a result of these beliefs, Applewood has two playgrounds on which children can play and explore. We have a traditional playground with sand, swings, and climbing structures. This allows for a multitude of "gross motor" (or large muscle) activities. We also have a more natural setting with a flower garden in the spring and summer, a climbing tree, grass, rocks, and plants. This allows children the opportunity to explore the science of nature including the study of living things. Nothing compares to a child discovering an earthworm under a rock and watching it dig in the moist dirt! Our playground allows for this kind of discovery and more.

We spend time outside everyday (weather permitting). We will go outside in the snow, rain, and sun, as long as it is safe for the children to be out. We encourage the children to dress appropriately and then give them the opportunities to explore the science of the weather that happens in New Hampshire. This is hands-on learning at its best.



When the weather doesn't permit us to go outside, we offer a "Gross Motor Room" with indoor climbing structures and space for group games. This permits us the flexibility to offer children some physical play even on a really rainy day!

For more reading on the importance of connecting children with nature visit childrenandnature.org and read [Last Child in the Woods](#) by Richard Louv.