

Using Teachable Moments for EfS with 2-3 years olds

Using teachable moments across the day with both individual children and groups supports children to ask questions and seek answers to make sense of their world.

Using our senses in the outdoors

There is a quiet spot in our garden where I sit and talk to children about sight, sound, touch, smell and taste [not that we are going to taste anything outside].

We talk about what we can see and may use words like alive and living. Looking for responses like birds, bees, trees, and bushes.

We may then close our eyes and listen to what we can hear again, birds [some children can name the birds like magpies and kookaburras], bees, people talking, cars and planes.

With our eyes closed what we might feel, not using our hands, the warmth from the sun or a cool breeze on our face.

Still with our eyes closed it may be what we can smell. The aromas of food cooking, flowering plants nearby, mulch heaps – gum leaves

On opening our eyes we use our hands to touch and feel objects as we walk around. Children use words like prickly, smooth, name colours, the shape and size of leaves and plants. They look at the different texture of the wooden seats to the bark on the trees, rough, scratchy. Stones on the paths- smooth, rough and colour differentiation.





One child noticed that the black stones were hot and the white one was not. We researched, by feeling, the difference between those in the sun and those in the shade. This discussion became a learning experience on solar heating and conversion.

The smell of garden mulch evolved into a discussion from “what does mulch do for our gardens” through to ways of saving and conserving water.

Individual learning

On a white table there was a green grass mat, a brown piece of material and a pile of animals.

A child walked in picked a Polar Bear named it and said “it lives in Antarctic” so he placed it on the white end of the table. I asked what else lived there and he picked up all the penguins and placed them there also. We then thought about where we could place the remaining animals in the appropriate environment. The lizards were placed on the brown piece of material because this became the outback, along with the kangaroos. The farm animals were placed on the grassy area, leaving us with some whales; the child thought about this and came to the conclusion that he would place these with the penguins because they sometimes lived where it was cold.

Next time I added a blue area on the table for ocean dwellers.



Teachable moments are ideal opportunities for educators to develop children's interests in and discoveries about the environment and their world through thoughtful questioning, hypothesising, problem solving and sharing knowledge.

It is the educator's knowledge and interest in education for sustainability that supports teachable moments with young children.

Kathy Hampton
Assistant Director and
Educator Room 2
Waite Campus Childrens Centre