Nature-Based Learning Assessment (NBLA)

This self-assessment tool is designed to help educators reflect on how effectively you are facilitating nature-based learning experiences on the playground or in your outdoor learning space. Evaluate each item below based on your current practices. Use this assessment to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable steps for fostering nature-based play and learning.

Rating Scale

- 4 - Consistently: I do this regularly and confidently.
- 3 - Often: I do this frequently, but there's room for growth.
- 2 - Sometimes: I occasionally do this, but it's not consistent.
- 1 - Rarely/Never: I rarely or never do this and would like to improve.

Assessment Categories:

1. Facilitating Meaningful Interactions with Nature

Statement	4	3	2	1
I provide ample opportunities for children to engage with natural elements (e.g., plants, rocks).				
I encourage children to observe and ask questions about their natural surroundings.				
I actively participate in nature-based play by modeling curiosity and exploration.				
I prompt children to notice changes in nature (e.g., seasonal shifts, animal behaviors).				
I use open-ended questions to encourage deeper thinking and curiosity about nature.				
I introduce scientific vocabulary in age-appropriate ways to describe natural processes.				
I support children's exploration by providing natural materials and resources for investigation.				

2. Promoting Nature-Based Play and Exploration

Statement	4	3	2	1
I create a welcoming, safe environment where children feel free to explore nature independently.				
I provide a range of natural loose parts (e.g., sticks, stones, leaves) for open-ended play.				
I encourage creative use of natural materials, such as building structures or creating art.				
I guide children in exploring natural sensory experiences (touching soil, listening to birds).				
I encourage imaginative play inspired by nature (e.g., pretending to be animals or plants).				
I regularly vary playground activities to expose children to different types of nature play.				

3. Connecting Nature-Based Learning to Broader Concepts

Statement	4	3	2	1
I connect children's playground discoveries to classroom learning (e.g., seasons, ecosystems).				
I use nature observations to introduce sustainability concepts (e.g., conserving water, recycling).				
I encourage children to observe and care for living things (e.g., plants, insects).				
I support social and emotional growth by fostering empathy and respect for nature.				
I discuss ways to care for the environment through daily habits (e.g., not picking leaves).				
I integrate social justice by discussing how nature and resources are shared within communities.				

4. Observing, Assessing, and Extending Nature-Based Learning

Statement	4	3	2	1
I observe children's interactions with nature and document key moments of discovery.				
I assess children's understanding of nature-based concepts and adjust activities accordingly.				
I extend learning based on children's interests (e.g., exploring bugs, identifying leaves).				
I encourage children to reflect on their discoveries (e.g., "What did you learn about...?").				
I collaborate with families to reinforce nature-based learning at home.				
I seek feedback from children about what they enjoy in nature-based play to improve experiences.				

Create a Plan of Action

Reflection and Next Steps

1. Strengths: What are you doing well in facilitating nature-based learning?
2. Areas for Improvement: Where could you grow to enhance children's connection with nature?
3. Action Steps: What specific steps can you take to increase the quality and consistency of nature-based interactions on the playground?

Overall Comments or Observations:

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