

## Learning from Other Programs

Not all outdoor spaces are perfect, but they're best when they're made an extension of the learning environment. Watch the videos from a program that has made its outdoor space an inviting learning environment. Answer these questions about what you see.

1. What are the strengths of the outdoor space? Think about safety, design, space and accessibility.

*There are a wide variety of environments for children to explore. Activities that traditionally occur indoors (like homework and sewing) take place outdoors, as well. The space has been designed with safety in mind: there are clear paths and boundaries between areas, structures and materials are checked continuously. There are also materials that allow children to be creative and explore their world: hay bales, insects, chimes, water spaces, and plants. Children can meet their needs in the space. There are spaces for relaxation and privacy, spaces for art, spaces for reading, spaces for constructing, and spaces for active play.*

2. What concerns do you have about the outdoor space? What challenges do you think the program faced when creating the outdoor learning space? Again, think about safety, design, space and accessibility.

*Maintaining the safety of the environment is something the staff must be constantly attentive to. They bring in natural materials that must be checked and monitored for safety risks. They also must consider the logistics of bringing some materials (like sewing machines and other electric devices) outdoors safely and conveniently. There might be children or youth enrolled in the program who are not used to spending so much time outdoors; they might prefer indoor activities like video games and might need support and encouragement to engage in active play.*

3. What features of this environment would work in your program? That is, what lessons can you learn from this program?
4. What challenges does your program face related to outdoor spaces? What solutions can you think of for the challenges?
5. How might you work with families or network with local business, agencies or resources to help create some of these experiences in your program?