

## 2. Challenging inequalities

Experiences of nature are socially and culturally specific, and often unequal within and between countries. Early childhood settings have a particular role to play in ensuring that all children have regular opportunities to engage with nature.

***“The outdoors is [...] a socially stratified space in which socio-economic status, class, ethnicity, and (dis)ability intersect in ways that can either include or marginalise even from before birth.”***

(Kemp, Josephidou & Bolshaw, 2025, p.232)



Look at the photo. Think about how the educator is supporting this interaction.



Challenging inequalities

# What the research tells us

**Froebelian research evidences the significant inequalities in nature engagement within and between countries.**

- Academics from a range of international contexts explored how nature engagement reflects wider societal norms, expectations, and cultural practices. Despite a shared commitment in principle, significant variations emerged in policy and practice between countries <sup>(1)</sup>.
- Early childhood settings can act as disrupters to, and rectifiers of, the inequitable access to nature experienced by some young children and their families <sup>(2,3)</sup>.
- Educators in predominately urban areas of England were acutely

aware of their responsibility “to fill a perceived gap in the children’s outdoor experience” by providing opportunities for nature engagement <sup>(4)</sup>.

- This requires knowledgeable nurturing educators who can sensitively navigate the perspectives and cultural expectations of children, parents and families. Direct nature-engaging experiences, and space to reflect on these, supported Irish student educators in making connections between themselves, the wider context and their practice <sup>(5)</sup>.

Find out more:

1. Benson McMullen & Powell (2025)
2. Watts (2021a)
3. Kemp, Josephidou & Bolshaw (2025)
4. Merrick et al., (2022)
5. Moore & Towler (2024)

Download our **Access to nature guide for educators** on the Froebel Trust website.



Froebelian research demonstrates the importance of socially and culturally aware and responsive nature-based pedagogies.

