Title: **Engaging with Nature: Reflections from the Froebel Partnership on supporting children’s narratives in outdoor spaces.**

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This cross-national participatory project explores engagement with nature, and the agency specific outdoor spaces offer to children. It spotlights the development of Froebelian practice in England, within the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2021) and in New Zealand, within Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 2019). The focus on nature builds on a previous collaborative project that explored young voices on the COVID pandemic (Pascal et al, 2021) using Froebelian principles and ethics (Bruce et al, 2019). This research adopts a praxeological, action research methodology, compiling narratives of children’s interactions with nature and supporting practitioners’ reflections of their pedagogic intentions using a range of multi-media methods. EECERA ethical guidance (Bertram et al., 2015) supports this research; specifically, all settings ensured informed consent and ongoing assent, anonymity and confidentiality and contribution to the setting’s social and cultural commitments. Practitioners reflections and children’s stories demonstrate the breadth of Froebelian principles (Tovey, 2020) and can equally be mapped against national expectations. Specifically, in New Zealand practitioners sought to develop children’s sense of Kaitiakitanga (guardianship of outdoor spaces); reflective dialogue links this to placed-based education (Penetito, 2013) and the concept of unity (Lilley, 1967). Findings indicate that the affordances offered in outdoor places are diverse and unexpected. Developing the adult role in the natural outdoor environments promotes wellbeing and broader communication in children, their families and practitioners. The agency of children and practitioners within the outdoor space has the potential to provide connections to the wider community and impact on those beyond the setting.

(4) Three keywords: **nature, agency, participatory research**