



Workshop Series

Nature Explore is a Collaborative Project of Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation



NATURE EXPLORE WORKSHOP SERIES

"Early experiences with the natural world have been positively linked to the sense of wonder. This way of knowing, if recognized and honored, can serve as a life-long source of joy and enrichment, as well as an impetus or motivation, for further learning."

- Ruth A. Wilson, "The Wonders of Nature: Honoring Children's Ways of Knowing"

Research shows that today's children would benefit greatly from spending more time outdoors and making deeper connections to the natural world. Getting children outside, however, is just the first step. While children learn a great deal exploring their natural surroundings, deeper learning involves interpreting what they see, touch and smell, as well as synthesizing this information to construct meaning. Supportive adults can help children develop well-functioning observation skills, visual memory, and the ability to learn math, science, and literacy concepts from their interactions with nature.

The Dimensions Foundation has partnered with the Arbor Day Foundation to develop a series of workshops for preschool and elementary educators, as well as those working with children in nature centers, parks, and other public settings that involve the natural world. Based on years of Dimensions Foundation research and field-testing, these workshops provide resources and inspiration to help educators more effectively reach all learners while also re-connecting children with the wonders of nature.

Each half-day workshop can be experienced alone, or as part of a series. On the next pages are descriptions of each workshop.

Workshop for Designers

A workshop for architects, landscape architects and planners, *Designing Outdoor Classrooms for Children*, is also available. For more information, please visit natureexplore.org



Workshops for Educators

Each Nature Explore Workshop described on these pages provides research-based, field-tested activities that support comprehensive learning with nature. Workshops are offered regionally or may be scheduled at your own site. To learn more, visit natureexplore.org, contact info@dimensionsfoundation.org or call 402-467-6112.

LEARNING WITH NATURE

This interactive workshop emphasizes the need for children to have consistent time outdoors with an interested, caring adult. The group discusses some of the common barriers to preschool and elementary children's ability to create positive connections with the natural world and what parents and educators can do to counteract them. Discover engaging and practical hands-on ideas that can be infused throughout all areas of the curriculum to support the nature-child connection. This workshop will also provide a multitude of resource ideas to help you incorporate nature into both outdoor and indoor classrooms.

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."
- Rachel Carson



USING YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



Through fun and engaging hands-on experiences, you will gain techniques for using outdoor classrooms as an integral part of preschool and elementary children's daily learning. Discover how well-designed outdoor spaces facilitate children's overall development in traditional academic areas, strengthen specific skills, and aid social-emotional growth. Explore a variety of motivating activities for facilitating and assessing student learning in outdoor classrooms, and reaching a variety of interests and needs. Strategies for meeting teaching standards through work in the outdoor classroom will be shared.

"Look deep, deep into nature and then you will understand everything better."
- Albert Einstein

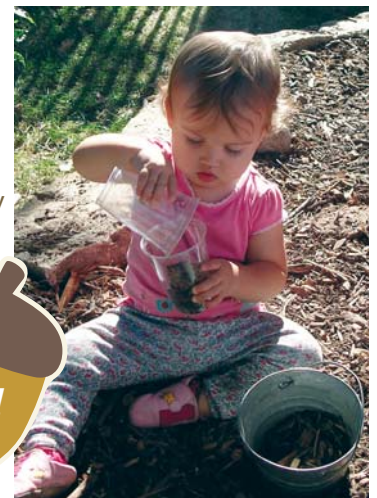
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Additional Strategies for Supporting Infants & Toddlers in Outdoor Classrooms

Discover effective ways to facilitate meaningful infant and toddler learning experiences inspired by nature. Gain positive solutions for addressing some of the challenges of working with very young children outdoors. Many practical ideas for helping infants and toddlers grow up with a sense of wonder will be shared.

"It is quite possible for today's child to grow up without ever having taken a solitary walk beside a stream, or spent the hours we used to foraging for pine cones, leaves, feathers and rocks – treasures more precious than store-bought ones."

From the book, *The Geography of Childhood*,
by Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble





THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL-SPATIAL LEARNING

Gain new ideas and tools for providing more authentic learning opportunities for preschool and elementary children in both built and natural environments and through purposeful movement. Through active participation you will build on group expertise while reconnecting with the joy of learning and new discoveries. Practice techniques for supporting each child's unique talents and abilities, and learn ways to use the natural world as a link to oral and written literacy. If you would like to enhance your work with children and families while becoming more aware of all learning modes, this workshop is for you.

*"One's mind, stretched to a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions."
- Oliver Wendell Holmes*



DEVELOPING OBSERVATION SKILLS: DOCUMENTATION

Discover new methods for supporting and documenting children's learning indoors and outdoors, and for helping children with behavioral challenges and verbal-language delays become more successful. Find out what we can learn about children's development when we really know how to "listen" to their visual-spatial language, and how to document work in outdoor classrooms using "Nature Notes."

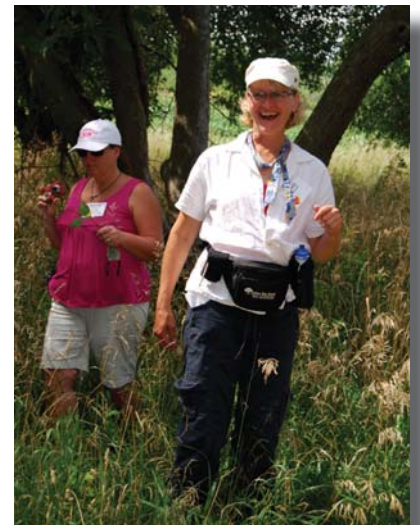


THE ARTS AND NATURE

Discover how to help children express their knowledge and personal interpretation of the world in more meaningful ways. The Look-Move-Build-Sketch planning model is designed to help educators create multi-faceted arts experiences. This approach encourages children to work in many modes, reminding both teachers and learners (especially those with sensory integration challenges) of the many ways to experience new ideas and concepts. The projects explored during this workshop are inspired by nature and serve as another way to help children make deeper connections with the natural world.

THE WONDERS OF NATURE

This outdoor workshop will help you develop and rekindle the "sense of wonder" we all need to live a fulfilled life. Participants are led through an outdoor session exploring and experimenting with activities designed to help them better connect to nature. "Revitalizing, fascinating, and inspiring" are some of the words participants have used to describe this one-of-a-kind workshop you will never forget. Educators leave feeling empowered to be the interested, caring adult children need to strengthen not only their nature connection but all of their learning.





Workshops for Educators (cont.)

CHOOSING EFFECTIVE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR MATERIALS

Some of the most important decisions educators make for preschool and elementary children relate to careful selection of materials and thoughtful planning of indoor and outdoor environments. In this workshop you will learn more about why adults need to manipulate materials personally and understand the properties of materials to best support in-depth, hands-on learning. Various learning theories and how they relate to teaching with a variety of commonly used and inexpensive materials, including materials from nature, will also be explored. Through this workshop, you will benefit from the helpful tools and strategies that Dimensions Educational Research Foundation has developed to assist educators in making these important decisions.

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."
- Johann Wolfgang van Goethe*



NATURE-INSPIRED INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS



Adults play an important role in setting up environments that can help children be successful. Attend this workshop to be inspired to think deeply about how well-planned indoor environments can better support healthy growth and development as well as decrease behavior problems in preschool and elementary children. Discover research-based, field-tested ways to create more beautiful and calming spaces by decreasing visual "clutter" and adding interesting materials from the natural world.

MOVING TO LEARN

Watch children and you will see that their bodies love to move. Brain research tells us that motor development is important for neural processing, especially for children who are primarily kinesthetic learners. Children truly must move in order to learn well, and adults need practical strategies for developing purposeful movement experiences that work in indoor and outdoor settings. Attend this workshop to discover effective techniques for providing preschool and elementary children movement opportunities that can help them in three key ways: gaining body control, gaining knowledge about the world, and having positive outlets for emotional expression.

JOYFUL MOVEMENT

If you want to be authentic, vibrant, and really present when you are working with children, then this session is just for you. This workshop is a gift to give yourself — a time to reconnect to your body and soul, to enjoy live music inspired by nature, to slow down, relax, breathe, and move freely. This is significant because the more we adults are able to develop this comfort and awareness ourselves, the more we will be able to support children in developing that same awareness. Children who are self-aware are better able to identify and control emotions as well as regulate their own actions and exhibit pro-social behaviors.

For information on educator workshops, contact info@dimensionsfoundation.org or call 1-402-467-6112 or 1-888-908-8733.