



# Overview

Field-tested resources, programs and training for effective learning with nature.

## THE VALUE OF LEARNING WITH NATURE



Cracking open a milkweed pod to release the feathery seeds. Watching a robin tirelessly build its nest. Discovering the

diversity of life housed in a single tree. Experiences like these help children to understand the interconnectedness and beauty of our world. Importantly, these interactions cannot be reproduced indoors, on a computer, or on video. Research shows that children benefit greatly from daily connections with the natural world. And these benefits have a lasting impact, especially when positive outdoor experiences come at an early age. To support educators, families, and administrators with effective resources to help young children connect with nature, the Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions

Educational Research Foundation have developed the Nature Explore program. Based on years of Dimensions' research and field testing, each Nature Explore resource can be used alone or in concert to help children make closer connections to nature and develop a lifelong sense of wonder.



## NATURE EXPLORE WORKSHOPS

From the professionals who design effective outdoor learning environments to the educators who apply new strategies and teaching methods, Nature Explore Workshops facilitate professional development and hands-on practical learning.

**For educators:** Nature Explore Workshops offer flexible, site-specific help to educators to bring the benefits of nature into both indoor and outdoor classrooms. Each Nature Explore Workshop provides research-based, field-

tested activities that supports comprehensive learning with nature.



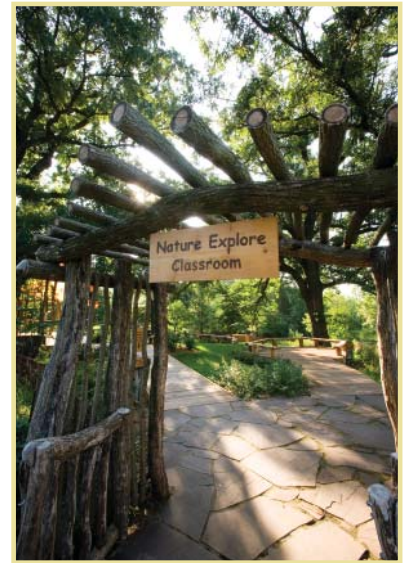
**For architects and landscape architects:** Design professionals have a unique opportunity to inspire a child's sense of wonder in the natural world. The *Designing Outdoor Classrooms for Children Workshop* explores effective ways to apply new research-based, field-tested principles to the design of outdoor classrooms for elementary schools, parks, botanic gardens, children's museums, childcare centers, private homes, and other public spaces.

A Collaborative Project of

## CREATE A NATURE EXPLORE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Research shows that positive experiences with nature improve a child's creative, observation, and motor skills. Nature Explore Classrooms bring those experiences into outdoor spaces at elementary schools, early education programs, parks, and other community sites, providing the means to incorporate the outdoors into meaningful learning. In these spaces, children

instinctively interact with natural components, and gain important learning skills as they play. Each Certified Nature Explore Classroom will become part of a network of schools and programs committed to making nature part of children's daily lives.



## NATURE EXPLORE DESIGN CONSULTATION



On-site design consultations with a specially trained team consisting of a landscape architect and a Dimensions trainer are available to help create Nature Explore Classrooms nationwide. This team will work closely with the school or organization that is constructing the site to

develop a concept plan for the space based on field-tested principles while customizing the classroom to meet the school's or organization's needs.

## BECOME A CERTIFIED NATURE EXPLORE CLASSROOM

Nature Explore Classroom Certification recognizes outdoor learning spaces created using the three certification standards presented in the Learning With Nature Idea Book:

1. Well-designed Outdoor Space;
2. Staff Development; and
3. Family Involvement.

Through certification, educators, families, and others form a national network for idea-sharing, peer support, and continuous learning and development. Certification offers many benefits to a school or organization that designs or redesigns an outdoor space based on guiding principles described in the Learning With Nature Idea Book:

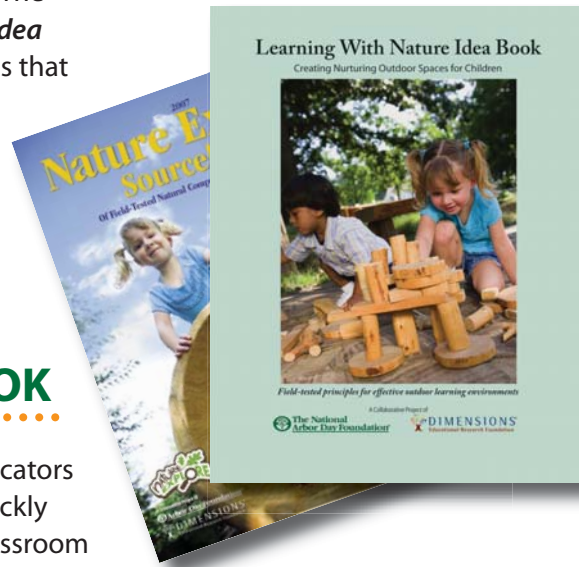
- Certified classrooms join a growing network of schools and organizations committed to reconnecting children with nature.
- A specially designated Nature Explore Classroom Web site and online Forum will offer access to the latest news and research on children and nature while providing a place to share ideas.
- Upon certification, the Arbor Day Foundation will send a press release to your local media to stir interest and awareness and potential for fundraising.



## LEARNING WITH NATURE IDEA BOOK

Providing comprehensive guidance, the *Learning With Nature Idea Book: Creating Nurturing Outdoor Spaces for Children* shares field-tested principles for effective outdoor learning environments with educators and builders who are designing or redesigning

an outdoor classroom. The *Learning With Nature Idea Book* has practical ideas that incorporate concepts from Dimensions' research and leading ASLA designers with colorful illustrations and photos.



## THE NATURE EXPLORE SOURCEBOOK

The *Nature Explore Sourcebook* lets educators, administrators, and communities easily order field-tested natural components for outdoor learning. From precision-cut tree blocks

to natural surfaces, educators and developers can quickly see how an outdoor classroom with natural components is a fun, creative way to connect children with nature.

## TRAVELING EXHIBIT

The *“Exploring Trees Inside and Out”* Traveling Exhibit helps children discover nature through multiple perspectives and inspires them to get outdoors and develop personal connections with the natural world. Children get a glimpse of the wonders that await them in their own backyards and neighborhoods through this interactive exhibit’s

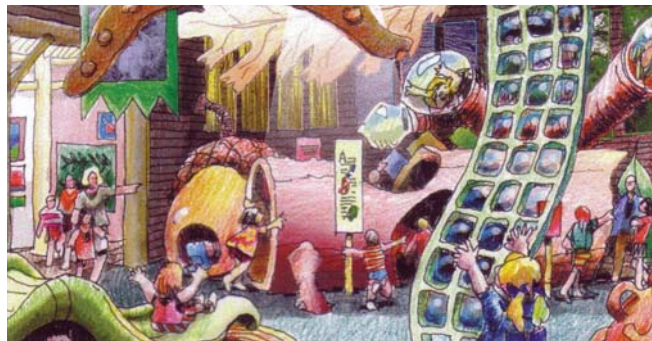
multi-sensory and innovative visual-spatial experiences. Sponsored by Doubletree Hotels, the Exhibit travels around the country through 2010.



## THE EXPLORATORY

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.



## NATURE EXPLORE RESOURCE MATERIALS

Getting children outside is just the first step in nature education. While children learn a great deal exploring their natural surroundings, deeper learning involves interpreting what they see, touch, and smell, and

synthesizing this information to construct meaning. Learning to make sense of what one sees does not “just happen.” Children need adult guidance to develop better observation skills, visual memory, and the ability to

learn math, science, and literacy concepts from their interactions with nature. These Nature Explore Resources guide educators and parents in using the natural world as an integral and effective part of children’s daily learning.

### NATURE IMAGE CARDS AND POSTERS and DVDs

Nature Image Cards and Posters are colorful, hands-on resource materials that help children develop observation skills, strengthen math, science and language learning, and pay more attention to the wonder of the

world around them.

Nature Explore DVDs will inspire educators, administrators, and families to adopt research-tested methods that use nature as an integral part of children’s learning.



### NATURE EXPLORE CLUB

Many adults have fond memories of childhood experiences walking in the woods, climbing trees, or collecting colorful leaves in the fall. Sharing those experiences with a child can be invaluable in so many ways – in nurturing their sense of wonder and appreciation for the earth, and creating lasting bonds with the adults in their lives as they explore nature together. Nature Explore Club is a fun, year-round resource to help educators or families

provide children with positive experiences with nature. Every Club member receives activity packets throughout the year to help them make nature part of their daily lives. Each packet includes a new, engaging, colorful story, an outdoor activity to share with an adult, and a clever “explorer’s tool” to make connecting with nature even more fun and hands-on.



### NATURE EXPLORE CLUB Home Edition

Nature Explore Club Home Edition is designed for parents, grandparents, and other adults to enhance their bonds with the

children in their lives and bring them closer to nature. A new activity packet arrives at home ten times a year to support

adults in guiding children as they explore nature in their own neighborhoods and backyards. Ages 3-8.

### NATURE EXPLORE CLUB Educator Edition

Nature Explore Club Educator Edition is a fun and affordable resource for educators to use in supporting interactive outdoor learning. The field-tested outdoor

activities combine literature with science to enhance children’s observation and problem-solving skills as they have fun connecting with the wonders of nature. year-

round resource to help educators. Every Club member looks forward to receiving activity packets.

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