



Workshops for Educators

Learning With Nature

This enjoyable, interactive workshop explores some of the common barriers that keep children from creating positive connections with the natural world, and suggests ways families and educators can counteract them. Engaging and practical hands-on activities will inspire a multitude of ideas for supporting the nature-child connection. Helpful resources for incorporating learning with nature into both outdoor and indoor classrooms will be shared.

Using Your Outdoor Classroom

Adults will experience interesting techniques for using outdoor classrooms as an integral part of children's daily learning and discover how well-designed outdoor spaces facilitate children's healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. Motivating activities for use in a variety of settings (from schools to early childhood programs to public spaces) will help adults support children's individual interests and needs. Strategies for assessing children's learning, meeting teaching standards, and alleviating challenging behaviors through work in the outdoor classroom will be provided.

Documenting Children's Learning Outdoors

Through engaging hands-on activities, participants will 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. Ways to more effectively "listen" to children's visual-spatial language, and techniques for documenting work in outdoor classrooms using "Nature Notes" will be explored.

We Dig Dirt

Additional Strategies for Supporting Infants & Toddlers in Outdoor Classrooms

Participants will discover effective ways to facilitate meaningful infant and toddler learning experiences in well-designed outdoor spaces. Practical strategies for addressing some of the challenges of working with very young children outdoors, and ideas for helping infants and toddlers grow up with a sense of wonder will be shared.

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. During this workshop, adults will discover effective techniques for providing children with movement activities that can help them in three key ways: gaining body control, gaining knowledge about the world, and having positive outlets for emotional expression.

The Importance of Visual-Spatial Learning

Through interesting interactive activities, adults will discover tools for providing more authentic learning opportunities for children in both built and natural environments and through purposeful movement. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of why visual-spatial learning is important and how the visual-spatial learner is often misunderstood. Techniques for supporting each child's unique talents and abilities, and ways to use the natural world as a link to oral and written literacy will be explored.

The Arts and Nature

In this fun, hands-on workshop, adults will experience the Look-Move-Build-Sketch planning model. This approach encourages multi-faceted arts experiences that support children's individual interests and needs (and is especially helpful for children with sensory integration challenges). 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 adults develop and rekindle the "sense of wonder" we all need to live a fulfilled life. Participants are led through an outdoor session exploring 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. Educators leave feeling empowered to be the kind of adults children need to strengthen their nature connection and all of their learning. This workshop is usually held at Arbor Day Farm.

Nature Inspired Indoor Environments

Adults play an important role in setting up environments that can help children be successful. During this hands-on workshop, participants will be inspired to think deeply about how well-planned indoor environments can better support children's healthy growth and development as well as decrease behavioral issues. Research-based, field-tested ways to create more beautiful and calming spaces by decreasing visual "clutter" and adding interesting materials from the natural world will be shared.

"This is an important and informative workshop for design professionals in architecture and landscape architecture to become aware of the experiences that are possible for young children in a natural environment."

—Dr. Wayne Drummund,
Dean of the University of Nebraska College of Architecture,
Lincoln, NE

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.

Choosing Effective Indoor and Outdoor Materials

Some of the most important decisions educators make for children relate to careful selection of materials and thoughtful planning of indoor and outdoor environments. In this interactive workshop, participants discover why adults need to understand the properties of materials to best support in-depth, hands-on learning. Strategies for effectively using a variety of motivating yet inexpensive materials, including materials from nature, will also be explored.

Workshops for Design Professionals

Landscape architects, architects, planners, and other design professionals have a unique opportunity to inspire a child's sense of wonder in the natural world. The Designing Nature Explore 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, private homes, children's museums, child care centers, botanical gardens and other public spaces.

To learn more or to schedule a workshop in your area, email info@natureexplore.org, visit natureexplore.org or call 1-888-908-8733.