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alliance



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North American Association  
for Environmental Education

# Nature-Based Early Learning Conference

July 31–August 3, 2019

Manchester, New Hampshire

Teaching, Administration, Research, and  
Advocacy in Nature-Based Early Learning



**program guide**

[naturalstart.org](http://naturalstart.org)  
#NaturalStart2019





# Nature-Based Early Learning Conference

**July 31–August 3, 2019**

**Manchester, New Hampshire**

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Advocacy in Nature-Based Early Learning



## Welcome

We're thrilled to welcome you to Manchester, New Hampshire for four days of engaging presentations, experiential workshops, site tours, and professional networking with nature-based early childhood professionals from around the continent.

The participants in this year's conference hail from more than 35 states and provinces. They represent a vast range of experiences, professions, and backgrounds. But they share a belief in the power of safe, effective, and inclusive nature experiences that make learning authentic, relevant, and just plain fun in early childhood. We hope that you will meet new allies, gather fresh ideas, and continue to build the nature-based early childhood education movement.

Together with our Local Conference Chair, Johanna Booth-Miner, and our Program Chair, Sheila Williams Ridge, we aimed to design a program that has something for everyone, whether you are just dipping your toes in nature-based education or are a seasoned expert. Prepare to learn, teach, and have fun!

### **Natural Start Alliance Staff**

Emilian Geczi, Christy Merrick, Betty Olivolo, Emily Van Laan

### **With Heartfelt Thanks to**

Patti Bailie, Patty Born, Johanna Booth-Miner, Judy Braus, Ellen Doris, Sarah Foglesong, Regina Fong, Megan Gessler, Kit Harrington, Claire Harris, Susan Howland, Rachel Larimore, Liza Lowe, David Miner, Eliza Minnucci, Kris Scopinich, David Sobel, Sheila Williams Ridge, and all of the presenters, reviewers, field trip hosts, exhibitors, sponsors, and everyone else who has dedicated their time and expertise to organizing this year's event.





## Welcome, Conference Participants.

It is with tremendous pleasure that I welcome you to the Natural Start Alliance's 2019 Nature-Based Early Learning Conference. Thank you all for coming. Many of you have traveled long distances to be here, which emphasizes the importance of our work locally and globally.

We are pleased to host this year's conference in Manchester, NH. New Hampshire is home to Mount Washington, Lake Winnepesaukee, and thirteen miles of seacoast, to name just a few of our natural attractions. As an alliance of educators, we know how important it is for all young children (and adults!) to have frequent opportunities to experience, learn from, and care for nature and the environment. I hope you'll be able to enjoy some of our natural wonders while you are here!

Among the workshops and field trips that are planned, you will learn new ideas, network and share, look at the latest research, and immerse yourself in best practice in nature-based early learning. I believe in the fundamental importance of children's ongoing experience in nature as the foundation for creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. All of these topics are embodied in our conference sessions and field trips. Please check out this conference program for more information on the wonderful sessions. There are a variety of presenters that are eager to share ideas with you, supporting you in your work with young children and families.

This conference would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the amazing conference planning team. I would like to thank Emily Van Laan, Emilian Geczi, and Betty Olivolo who tirelessly led and focused the committee.

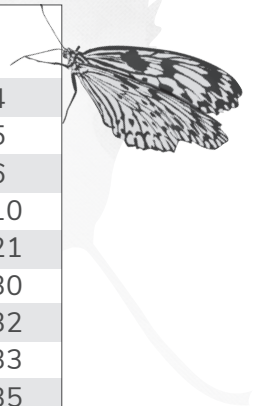
I look forward to meeting many of you over the next few days. I am excited for all the discussions, inspirations, friendships, and fun that lie ahead of you at this year's conference. Rachel Carson states that, "if a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in." Let us be those adults!



**Johanna Booth-Miner**  
Director, Live & Learn Early Learning Center  
Lee, NH

### Table of Contents

Schedule at a Glance	4
General Conference Information	5
Wednesday	6
Thursday	10
Friday	21
Saturday	30
Sunday	32
Directions & Lodging	33
Venue Map	35



# Schedule at a Glance

## Wednesday, July 31

7:15 am – 4:15 pm	Central New Hampshire Field Trip*	Assembly
7:30 am – 4 pm	A World Out of Sight Workshop*	Assembly
7:45 am – 4 pm	Massachusetts North Shore Field Trip*	Assembly
10 am – 4 pm	Higher Education Summit*	SEE Science Center
5 – 6:30 pm	Conference Registration	Assembly
5 – 6:30 pm	Opening Reception	Armory
6:30 – 8 pm	Welcome Plenary and Keynote Address	Armory

## Thursday, August 1

8 – 9 am	Continental Breakfast	Armory
8 am – 5 pm	Conference Registration	Assembly
9 – 10:30 am	Workshops	See session descriptions
10:45 – 11:45 am	Presentations	See session descriptions
12 – 1 pm	Lunch	Armory
1:15 – 2:15 pm	Presentations	See session descriptions
2:30 – 3:30 pm	Poster Presentations	Pemigewasset
3:45 – 4:45 pm	Presentations	See session descriptions
5 – 6:30 pm	Regional Networking Reception	Armory

## Friday, August 2

7 – 8:45 am	Shinrin Yoku Walk*	Veteran's Memorial Park
8 – 9 am	Continental Breakfast	Armory
9 – 10:30 am	Workshops	See session descriptions
10:45 – 11:45 am	Presentations	See session descriptions
12 – 1 pm	Lunch	Armory
1:15 – 2:15 pm	Presentations	See session descriptions
2:30 – 3:30 pm	Presentations	See session descriptions
3:45 – 5:15 pm	Closing Plenary and Panel Discussion	Armory

## Saturday, August 3

7:30 am – 4:30 pm	Boston Area Field Trip*	Assembly
8:15 am – 5 pm	Eastern New Hampshire and Maine Field Trip*	Assembly
9:00 am – 4 pm	Nature-Based & Forest Preschool Business Planning Workshop*	SEE Science Center

## Sunday, August 4

2:30 – 5 pm	Juniper Hill School Tour*	See tour description
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\*Pre-registration required. See descriptions for more information.



# General Conference Information

## Conference Strands

Look for the following icons next to session titles to quickly identify the topics that interest you:

-  Teaching
-  Administration
-  Research
-  Educator Preparation
-  Advocacy

## Professional Development Certificate

At the conclusion of the closing plenary, you will receive a signed, printed certificate for the number of professional development hours offered during the conference. You will receive separate certificates for any optional workshops or field trips you attend. If you cannot stay for the closing plenary but would like to receive a certificate, stop by the registration desk anytime.

## New Hampshire Continuing Education Credits

This conference meets the criteria of the New Hampshire Child Development Bureau to count as training hours. New Hampshire attendees can upload their certificate into their Professional Registry to receive credit into their Professional Development Record for each session they attend at the conference. Please stop by the registration desk to pick up a worksheet and make sure that you get a signature from the leader of each session or workshop you attend at the conference.

## Graduate Credits Available

Graduate credits for participating in the conference (2 credits) are available through Hamline University, and may be used toward a certificate in nature-based early learning or toward a Master's degree in environmental education. Contact Patty Born Selly at [pselly01@hamline.edu](mailto:pselly01@hamline.edu) to learn more.

## Wi-Fi

To access Wi-Fi during the conference, select **HiltonHonorsMeeting** as your Wi-Fi network and then launch your browser. A screen should appear that enables you to enter your passcode (if this screen does not appear, try opening up any website, such as [google.com](http://google.com)). Enter the passcode (case-sensitive): **NAAEE19**

## Sustainable Practices

In an effort to reduce the event's footprint, we will not be using plastic bottles during meals at the conference, workshops, and field trips. Please bring a reusable water bottle with you if you can. In addition, we have worked with our hosts at DoubleTree by Hilton to reduce packaging and single-use materials as much as possible throughout the conference. We continue to learn how to make Natural Start Alliance events less impactful on the environment and welcome all of your ideas and feedback in this regard.

## Accessibility and Accommodations

We are happy to provide accommodations to make the conference accessible to all of our participants, and the hotel offers a variety of accommodations and amenities to increase accessibility. Please see us at the registration desk to let us know how we can help or call the hotel at 603-625-1000 to request specific aids or services required during your stay.

## Share the Conference!

Use **#NaturalStart2019** to share your conference experience on social media!

## Questions?

See us at the registration desk in Assembly starting at 5 pm on July 31 through the morning of August 3.

## Wednesday, July 31



Photo: Blue Heron School

**7:15 am – 4:15 pm**

### **Central New Hampshire Field Trip**

Join us on a tour of three model nature-based early learning programs in Central New Hampshire!

We will start the day at Fledglings Nature-Based Preschool, in Laconia, NH, a fully licensed program that uses the Prescott Farm property as the backdrop for helping students ages 3–5 to become lifelong learners and create meaningful connections to nature, the self, and others.

We will then visit and have lunch at Mountain Village Charter School, a tuition-free, nature-based, Montessori elementary school in Plymouth, NH, that aims to engage students in child-centered and project-oriented learning to spark their innate curiosity, nurture their inner discipline, and foster their motivation to learn.

Finally, we will stop at the Blue Heron School in Holderness, NH, to learn how the program combines the Montessori philosophy and materials with opportunities for both spontaneous outdoor exploration and guided discoveries with naturalists at Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, which is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Lunch and transportation to and from the conference hotel are included with registration. In an effort to reduce waste, a beverage will not be provided with lunch. Please plan to bring your own water bottle; there will be opportunities to refill at our stops.

**Where and when to meet:** Please arrive by 7:15 am in Assembly. The bus will load right outside Assembly and depart promptly at 7:30 am.

*Pre-registration required. To register, add the field trip as an option when you register for the conference. Already registered for the conference? Modify your registration using the link provided in your registration confirmation email.*





## Wednesday, July 31



Photo: Live & Learn Early Learning Center

7:30 am – 4 pm

### **A World Out of Sight: Activities for Discovering Nature with Children in the Pond, in the Garden, and in Ourselves**

Live & Learn Early Learning Center, Lee, NH

Start your conference experience with an immersive, hands-on professional development workshop in beautiful Lee, NH! Take away tools, ideas, and strategies for helping young children discover the wonders of forests, ponds, and gardens, with the help of educators from Live & Learn Early Learning Center, a NAEYC-accredited nature-based program nestled on a 25-acre farm.

Participants will have a choice of activities in the morning, as well as in the afternoon. In the morning, you can explore the hidden wonders of ponds and learn how to help children discover the diversity of unfamiliar animals that make these environments their home. Or, you can learn how to introduce storytelling and yoga in your outdoor classroom to help children focus, communicate, and self-regulate.

In the afternoon, you will be able to learn how to use your classroom garden to help children explore, imagine, try new things, and learn alone or with friends. Or, you can combine favorite nature books with a dramatic play walk in the woods to create a curriculum for toddlers and preschoolers that promotes nature learning through literacy.

Lunch and transportation to and from the conference hotel are included with registration. In an effort to reduce waste, please plan to bring your own water bottle; water, tea, and coffee will be provided.

**Where and when to meet:** Please arrive by 7:30 am in Assembly. The bus will load right outside Assembly and depart promptly at 7:45 am.

*Pre-registration required. To register, add the workshop as an option when you register for the conference. Already registered for the conference? Modify your registration using the link provided in your registration confirmation email.*



## Wednesday, July 31

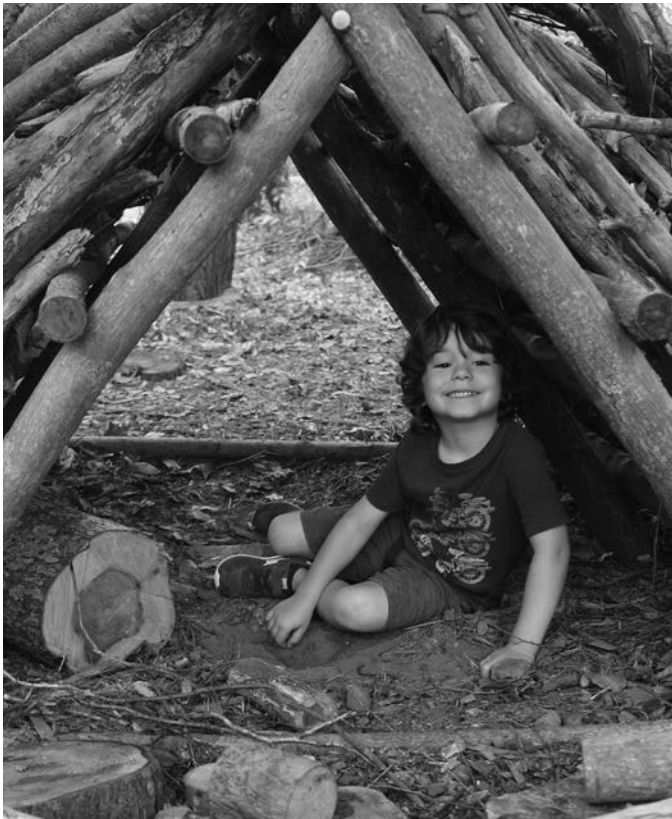


Photo: Ipswich River Nature Preschool

**7:45 am – 4 pm**

### **Massachusetts North Shore Field Trip**

Visit three model nature-based early childhood education programs on this trip to the Mass North Shore!

We will begin with a tour of Merrohawke Nature School in Newburyport, MA, whose programs include an all-outdoors Forest Kindergarten, parent-child programs, and year-round outdoor programs for ages 4 to teens. The programs are inspired by Waldorf education and coyote mentoring, and promote a deep connection to the Earth—on land and sea.

We will then tour and have lunch at Mass Audubon's Ipswich River Nature Preschool at the Endicott Wildlife Sanctuary. The program serves fifty 3-to-6 year-olds and uses a 40-acre landscape to foster children's creativity and curiosity through hands-on science activities, nature walks, and gardening.



Finally, we will visit Nature's Pathways Early Childhood Center in Nashua, NH, a program for children ages 8 weeks through interim-kindergarten that nurtures inquiry, curiosity, and exploration on a working farm with forested trails, fields, ponds, and wetlands.

Lunch and transportation to and from the conference hotel are included with registration. In an effort to reduce waste, a beverage will not be provided with lunch. Please plan to bring your own water bottle; there will be opportunities to refill at our stops.

**Where and when to meet:** Please arrive by 7:45 am in Assembly. The bus will load right outside Assembly and depart promptly at 8 am.

*Pre-registration required. To register, add the field trip as an option when you register for the conference. Already registered for the conference? Modify your registration using the link provided in your registration confirmation email.*

## Wednesday, July 31



Photo: Betty Olivolo

10 am – 4 pm

### Nature-Based Early Learning Higher Education Summit

SEE Science Center, Manchester, NH

Join teacher educators and other higher ed institution representatives from around the country for a day of presentations, small- and large-group discussions, brainstorming, and joint planning to help recruit and prepare future educators and leaders in nature-based early childhood education.

During this all-day event organized by the Council of Nature and Forest Preschools' Higher Education Committee, we'll discuss the state of nature-based early childhood education training, classes, certificates, and degrees. We will share the results of a survey that looked at opportunities, needs, and challenges that face those in college and university settings around North America, and address timely questions, such as:

- What are the interdisciplinary connections between nature-based early childhood education and other curricular areas, including teacher licensure?
- How can institutions of higher education best support the growing demand for high-quality nature-based early childhood education training and teacher preparation?

- What core competencies, skills, and dispositions should program graduates possess?
- How do we continue to professionalize training and education in the field?
- How can higher education institutions help to diversify the nature-based early childhood education workforce?

In addition, representatives of nature-based teacher education programs will share highlights of their work and discuss how we can come together as a community to seize the opportunity and respond to the demand for nature-based early learning programs in higher education.

The Summit is generously hosted by SEE Science Center, located a short walk or drive away from the conference venue. Lunch is included with registration.

**Where and when to meet:** The program begins at 10 am at the SEE Science Center, located at 200 Bedford St., Manchester, NH 03101. A group will depart on foot from Assembly at 9:30 am if you'd like to join it.

**This event is full and additional registrations are no longer possible.**



## Wednesday, July 31

5 – 6:30 pm

**Conference Registration** Assembly

5 – 6:30 pm

**Opening Reception** Armory

Connect with old friends and meet new ones as you register for the conference, collect your registration materials, and enjoy drinks and appetizers.

6:30 – 8 pm

**Welcome Plenary and Keynote Address – “Mother Nature’s Pedagogy: How Children Educate Themselves Naturally Through Free Play and Exploration”** Armory



Peter Gray

Dr. Peter Gray is a research professor of psychology at Boston College who has conducted and published research in neuroendocrinology, developmental psychology, anthropology, and education. He is the author of an internationally-acclaimed introductory psychology textbook (*Psychology*, Worth Publishers), which views all of psychology from an evolutionary perspective. His recent research focuses on the role of play in human evolution and how children educate themselves, through play and exploration, when they are free to do so. He is the author of *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life* (Basic Books). He also authors a regular blog called Freedom to Learn, for *Psychology Today* magazine, and is a founding member and president of the Alliance for Self-Directed Education, which aims to create a world in which children’s natural ways of learning are facilitated rather than suppressed.

## Thursday, August 1

8 – 9 am

**Continental Breakfast** Armory

8 am – 5 pm

**Conference Registration** Assembly

9 – 10:30 am

**Workshops**

**How Nature-Based Curriculum Unfolds: Eight Owls, Eight Students, Two Teachers** ⓘ Piscataquog

Anne M. Stires, Antioch University & Juniper Hill School for Place-Based Education  
A close look at the evolution of an interdisciplinary, nature-based investigation will illuminate the teacher’s role in listening for children’s questions, structuring experiences, providing tools, and encouraging inquiry.



# Thursday, August 1

9 – 10:30 am

*Continued*

## **Doing What Scientists Do** (T) Contoocook

Ellen Doris, Antioch University New England

This workshop will introduce an approach to early childhood science that integrates observation and inquiry, indoor and outdoor exploration, language and literacy. We'll engage in observation and inquiry ourselves, learn from children's drawings and discussions, and consider next steps.

## **Animal ABC's: The Science of Teaching Nature to Children**

### **Using Theater** (T) Hale

Emilie Hanson, Central Park Zoo

Learn how the Central Park Zoo uses theater to foster love for the natural world with children unable to leave their classrooms. Join us as we discuss the process of creating a theatrical program for children ages 2-5. Watch snippets of our shows to inspire you to use theater yourself!

## **What's the Hurry? Let's Slow Down to Develop Naturally** (T) Frost

Cassandra Louise Ellis, Bloom Early Education

The norm is to speed things up and dumb things down for children. We then lose what makes learning ACTUALLY happen. We will dive into how to slow down in a nature-based learning environment. Join us to learn about tea time, Classroom Agreements, Happenings Mat© and more. Why not make time to develop naturally?

## **Strategies and Benefits of Farm to Early Education** (T) Webster

Jed Norris, Shelburne Farms

Learn how Farm-to-Early-Childhood-Education (FTEC) concepts help meet state standards and promote children's learning, social-emotional well-being, healthy eating habits, family engagement, and community building.

## **Strategies for Supporting Children with Developmental Disabilities During Nature-Based Learning Activities** (E) Dartmouth

Sylvia Collazo, Florida Atlantic University

Nature-based learning for all! Learn more about young children with developmental disabilities and discuss barriers to inclusion in nature-based programs. Evaluate your program and find out how research-based strategies can help you build inclusive practices and support children with special needs.

## **Nature Preschools at Your Zoo and Aquarium** (A) Pierce

Heidi Faris, Lauren Magliola, Amy Greene, Amanda McMickle, Laura Seger, Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Zoos and aquariums have created innovative ways to connect visitors to nature. Hear from AZA-accredited facilities that connect children and families to nature in urban areas, through community partners, and through nature preschool programs.

# Thursday, August 1

9 – 10:30 am

*Continued*

## **“But... Do You Teach Them to Read?": Justifying the Importance of Nature-Based Learning in Early Elementary** (A) Merrimack

Cheryl Ryan, Red Oak Community School

Every nature-based program has its skeptics. Discover resources and tools you can use to effectively market your program to families and funders alike. Participate in a practice session where we will put our skills to the test.

## **Transforming Environments** (T) Hawthorne

Rebecca Dhondt, Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse

Do you want to start your own indoor/outdoor program or bring more nature into a classroom you already have? Learn more about what Reggio Emilia is and why the environment is the third teacher. Participants will see examples, share ideas, and learn to create and assess nature-based areas that will enrich teachers, students, and parents.

10:45 – 11:45 am

## **Presentations**

### **Promoting Inclusion: A Continuum of Supports** (T) Hale

Deb Carter, Juli Pool, Boise State University

This session will discuss a continuum of supports to promote inclusive learning opportunities for all young children. Building on the *Early Childhood Environmental Education Guidelines for Excellence*, the presenters will support attendees in considering tiered supports and systems to promote participation and inclusion.

### **Digging for Meaning: Preliteracy Skills in Nature-Based Preschool** (T) Pierce

Heidi Mann, Forest Friends

Nature-based preschool is an opportunity for young children to acquire a strong foundation of pre-literacy skills that will ensure their future success. Learn how children become the architects of their own stories as they learn to describe events using sensory-rich vocabulary and bring classic stories to life through puppets and role-playing in the outdoors.

### **Risk vs Hazard in Outdoor Education** (T) Hawthorne

Rachel Schaller, Elmhurst Academy of Early Learning

This informational session will look into the benefits of risky outdoor play in healthy early childhood development. Educators will gain insight into best practices to support appropriate risk taking and challenge their own thinking on safety intervention in the outdoors.

### **Bringing the Outdoors In and the Indoors Out: Montessori and Nature-Based Preschool** (T) Merrimack

Laura Mammarelli, Audrey Eisenhauer, Blue Heron School

At Blue Heron School at Squam Lakes Natural Science Center, we use the Montessori teaching approach in a nature-based preschool setting. We will share our blended approach, our nature curriculum, and some of the activities and materials we use to bring the outdoors in and the indoors out.

# Thursday, August 1

10:45 – 11:45 am

*Continued*

## **Teaching and Learning with Vertical Hydroponic Gardens** (E) Stark

Louise Ammentorp, Rachel Chernati, The College of New Jersey  
Hydroponic gardens can be a powerful learning tool for P-3 students and preservice teachers. We will share resources on the basics of hydroponics, maintenance, connections to outdoor learning, as well as standards-aligned lessons and activities for the P-3 classroom.

## **Cross-Sector Collaboration to Foster Nature-Based Learning Opportunities for Kindergarten Children in Hong Kong** (E) Frost

Amelia Nam Yuk LEE, Hong Kong Baptist University  
Amelia Nam Yuk LEE, Chairperson of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide and the leader of Hong Kong's first publicly funded nature-based early learning program, will share her experience in advocacy, planning, design, cross-sector collaboration and teacher preparation in nature-based early learning.

## **Little Explorers: Facilitating Parent-Child Programs** (E) Piscataquog

Liza Lowe, Antioch University New England & Wild Roots Nature School  
We'll explore ways to create a predictable, reassuring rhythm that includes songs and simple activities, which are engaging and fun. Discover how to use the seasons as a guide for the day's focus and invigorate your group with all that Mother Nature has to offer—whatever the weather!

## **Design Your Outdoor Classroom for All** (A) Webster

Ed Melvin, SHP Design  
Learn how to design outdoor learning environments while considering the relationships between physical environment and educational and developmental needs of children of all ages and ability levels.

## **Diversity and Community Within Nature Preschools** (✓) Dartmouth

Julie Camp, Magnolia Nature School  
Come learn about Alabama's first nature-based preschool! We have formed partnerships that allow us to be more inclusive across income brackets and enrich our students' education. Discuss how to form partnerships that can benefit both your local community and your school!

## **Principled: A Conversation with Public School Principals** (A) Contoocook

Eliza Minnucci, Antioch University & ForestKinder; Christine Bourne, Hartland Elementary School; Cathy Newton, Ottauquechee School; Barrett Williams, Sharon Elementary School  
Join principals from elementary schools with strong nature-based programming. Discussion will include program origin stories, creative funding solutions, and administrators' perspectives on the benefits of investing in more outdoor time for young students. Bring your own questions, too!



# Thursday, August 1

12 – 1 pm

**Lunch** Armory

1:15 – 2:15 pm

## Presentations

### **Outdoor Play and Children's Storied Constructions** (T) Piscataquog

Celia Cruz, The Miquon School

Participants will learn how students in an emergent, inquiry-based nursery program take agency in their storytelling through outdoor play and how first and second graders participate in "Hike and Write" during a poetry study.

### **Preschool in the Park: Using Urban Spaces to Cultivate Curious, Compassionate Kids** (T) Merrimack

Rachel Franz, Tiny Trees Preschool

Urban parks provide preschool-age children with amazing opportunities for engaging in social and environmental justice. With examples from an all-outdoor urban preschool, we will explore children's experiences in urban spaces as a platform for anti-bias education.

### **Design for Best Practice in Outdoor Learning Environments** (T) Stark

Adrienne Sedlak, National Wildlife Federation

Do you have ideas for your outdoor spaces at your child care site, but don't know where to start? In this hands-on session, you will learn best practice in outdoor learning environments and identify easy ways to begin to reimagine outdoor spaces to engage children and encourage physical activity.

### **Authentic Learning in the Outdoor Classroom** (T) Hawthorne

Jennifer Heyer, Cedar Ridge Elementary School

Move past being the expert in your classroom and start facilitating authentic learning with your students in the great outdoors! This session offers all participants standards-based lessons that will lead you through yearlong nature-based learning and exploring.

### **Using Nature-Based Play to Prepare Our Students for a Traditional, Private School Education** (T) Pierce

Deanna Robeano, Sarah Penney, Mike Weible, Grace Gordon, The Columbus Academy

See how our program at a college preparatory school has evolved from a traditional, academically-focused program to one that is rooted in outdoor play-based learning. We will share our philosophies, methods, and assessment strategies to inspire you to get your students outside and to get dirty!

### **The Importance of Outdoor Play: A Research-Based Perspective** (R) Webster

Lauren Illiano, University of Delaware Early Learning Center

This interactive session will discuss the current research on forest schools. Participants will leave with sound data to take back to their own schools in order to educate peers on the importance of outdoor play and how it supports all aspects of child development.

# Thursday, August 1

1:15 – 2:15 pm

*Continued*

## **Co-Constructing Professional Learning Experiences for Nature-Centered Early Learning** (E) Hale

Rachel J. Han, University of Washington

Discuss the knowledge and skills that empower educators to support equitable and just nature-centered learning opportunities for all children. Conversation begins in the context of online learning modules for educators but focuses on cross-pollination between participants' diverse experiences.

## **Developing Relationships with Families While Connecting Them to Your Mission** (A) Contoocook

Heather Parker Goetzinger, Shannon McLeese, Nature's Way Preschool

Family engagement is essential to developing community. Nature-based schools must also foster a connection between families and the natural world. Learn how to create routines, events, fundraisers, and parent groups designed to create meaningful relationships while encouraging sustainable choices.

## **Routines, Rituals, and Relationships: Starting the Year Off Right** (T) Frost

Vicki Sturtevant, Jenna Zamzow, Little Hawks Discovery Preschool

Utilizing rituals, expectations, and intentional connections helps teachers create a classroom community and minimize unwanted and challenging behaviors. We will discuss the routines and rituals used in our classroom, on the playscape, and while exploring the beyond.

## **Never Hear "Why are her clothes dirty?" Again: Capturing Emergent, Nature-Based Curriculum Using a Pedagogical Documentation Tool While Deepening Partnerships with Families** (A) Dartmouth

Megan Gessler, The Morton Arboretum; Peter Dixon, Storypark

Looking to build understanding with families, deepen impact for children, and shorten the hours spent on documentation? Come explore how Storypark has impacted the pedagogy, culture, and communication at one nature-based program. Leave with new tips, tools, and takeaways.



# Thursday, August 1

2:30 – 3:30 pm

## Poster Presentations

Pemigewasset

### Horticultural Therapy for Inclusive Nature Education (E)

Kay Knight, Chicago Botanic Garden

Inclusive educators looking for a bridge between typical and nature-based pedagogies should look to horticultural therapy (HT) to support students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) progress. Learn about HT, strategies for the classroom, and gain research to justify nature-based experiences for diverse learners.

### Animal Mini-Ventures! (T)

Emilie Hanson, Wildlife Conservation Society

At the Central Park Zoo, we have created theatrical performances specially designed to be successful within early childhood classrooms. We will share best practices in educational theater, and how we adapted and wrote our theatrical programming for children ages 2-6.

### Implementing a Nature-Based Learning Program with Traditional Early Childhood Programs: Lessons Learned in the First Year (T)

Katie Krause, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

By working with educators, families, and the community to promote nature-based learning, we are striving to "Create communities where all children have opportunities to learn and play in and with nature." We share program details, lessons learned, next steps, and hope to learn from you as well!

### Development of the Nature-Based Education Rating Scale (NABERS) for K-3 Education (R)

Rachel Larimore, Michigan State University

This poster focuses on the development of the Nature-Based Education Rating Scale (NABERS) for K-3 education, which is designed to describe how "nature-y" a program is. Attendees will learn about the tool development, review a draft of the tool, and be able to provide input.

### Nature for All: Leveraging Public Spaces at Dondero Elementary (✓)

Alice Carey, Dondero Elementary School PTA, Seacoast Wander Club

Learn how the use of public lands at Dondero Elementary School in Portsmouth, NH, has transformed the school's physical and academic environment. Made possible by public/private partnerships, the Forest Classroom and the planned Nature Playground will create an integrated nature-immersion campus.

### Inspiring Preschool Teachers in Connecting Children with Nature: Findings From an In-Service Education Initiative (E)

Dr. Yash Bhagwanji, Sylvia Collazo, Florida Atlantic University

Learn about an innovative in-service curriculum for preschool teachers! Results from pre/post surveys showed increased teacher awareness and understanding of child-nature connection strategies. Tips for improving, planning, and delivering future professional development will be discussed.



# Thursday, August 1

2:30 – 3:30 pm

*Continued*

## **How Natural Playscapes Support the Holistic Development of Young Children** (T)

Kristen Tarr, Rhonda Kaiser, Patti Bailie, Educare Central Maine

The naturalized outdoor learning environment stimulates the diversity of children's play experience and will contribute to their healthy development. We will share how our space serves as the third teacher in supporting the holistic development of our young children.

## **Moms, Pops, & Tots: A Program for Parents and Their Infants and Toddlers** (T)

Molly Larmie, BLM Campbell Creek Science Center

The BLM Campbell Creek Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska, launched a program for infants and toddlers and their caregivers called "Moms, Pops, & Tots." Come learn more about this innovative program that gets parents and young children outside exploring together.

## **Fledglings Nature-Based Preschool** (T)

Jayne Hastings, Prescott Farm Environmental Education Center

Prescott Farm offers a licensed Nature-Based Preschool Program that gives 3-5 year olds the opportunity to make valuable learning connections during every season and in all types of weather. Learn how the open fields, three miles of wooded hiking trails, ponds, stonewalls, and natural playscape become an outside classroom for learning.

## **Young Children's Contributions to Sustainability: The Influence of Nature Preschools on Curiosity, Resilience, Executive Function Skills, and Creative Thinking** (R)

Jenna Zamzow, Dr. Julie Ernst, University of Minnesota Duluth

Learn about a set of studies investigating the influence of nature preschools on children's creative thinking, curiosity, resilience, and executive function skills. This poster also includes why these outcomes are developmentally important and how they contribute to a more sustainable future.

## **Animals in Early Childhood Environmental Education** (R)

Patty Born, Hamline University School of Education

This poster provides an overview of a survey that explored the role of animals in nature-based early childhood education settings, including classroom pets, exhibit animals, and wildlife. Teachers' attitudes, barriers, and strategies are identified, along with questions that invite further exploration.

## **Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practices: An Open-Space Discussion** (✓)

Christy Merrick, Natural Start Alliance

Bring your questions, thoughts, and ideas about Natural Start's new Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook. Let's brainstorm together about how to use the practices to advance nature-based learning in the United States.

# Thursday, August 1

3:45 – 4:45 pm

## Presentations

### Supporting Nature-based Learning in an Early Childhood–5th Grade

Public School ⓘ Merrimack

Anna Dutke, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools

Learn about outdoor learning guidelines that were created for supporting Nature PreK and K-5th grade teachers to successfully provide nature-based learning opportunities for their students. In addition, explore curriculum resources and materials from the Jeffers Foundation.

### Becoming the Beast: Encouraging Pretend Play to Foster Empathy for Living Things ⓘ Stark

Amanda Segura, Riverbanks Zoo and Garden

Discover techniques for kids to explore their natural surroundings through pretend play, by immersing themselves into the lives of the plants and animals around them. Learn how to guide children on hikes and focus their attention on a topic through stories, natural items, and exploratory tools.

### Growing Inside ... Outside: Strategies for Creating Learning and Play Landscapes for Children ⓘ Pierce

Susanne Smith Meyer, Naturally Rooted LLC

Every curriculum area can be integrated into an outdoor setting. A planned approach to adding these nature-based learning opportunities will ensure success and enrich the mind, body, and spirit of children through hands-on exploration in an outdoor environment.

### Letting Play Lead the Way: Navigating and Illuminating the Intricacies of Play in the Forest ⓘ Piscataquog

Clare Loughran, Abby Bradford, Ron Grady, NOLA Nature School

In this workshop we will discuss the importance of play in early childhood and the ways in which we support different types of play in a forest school setting. This presentation also includes ways to illuminate the learning in play for children, practitioners, families, and the broader community.



# Thursday, August 1

3:45 – 4:45 pm

*Continued*

## **Partnering with Family Childcare Educators: Instilling a Lifelong Love of Nature in Very Young Children in Areas with Limited Access to Green Space** (E) Contoocook

Monica Edgerton, Angela Cusicanqui Engborg, All Our Kin

Family child care providers play a unique role in creating early access to nature for children 0-5 in cities. Participants will discuss barriers to getting children outside and will learn how FCC educators have overcome barriers to create high-quality outdoor experiences for children in these settings.

## **Glorious Mud! – Using Nature to Reach Pre-Service Teachers Who Have Limited Outdoor Experiences Themselves** (E) Hawthorne

Katie Pollock, Debbie Torbert, University of Delaware Lab School

Time spent inside during childhood has created, in the words of Richard Louv, a “nature deficit” for the undergraduates we work with at the University of Delaware. Opening the eyes of these undergrads to the wonder of the world as they interact with children has created a new focus for our academic programs.

## **Assessment Isn’t a Dirty Word (But It Can Be a Muddy One)! (T) Dartmouth**

Laura Seger, Kelsey Navin, St. Louis Zoo

It’s easy to develop a negative impression of assessment but it can provide valuable information to educators and families. Just as we encourage children to be naturalists, observing and documenting the details of the natural world, we too can use these skills to learn more about our students as they grow.

## **Keep the Sense of Wonder: Mud Puddles, Nature Walks, Fairy Houses, Oh My (E) Webster**

Johanna Booth-Miner, Live & Learn Early Learning Center & Rising Hawk Afterschool

Come explore wonder with us. Participants will have hands-on experiences with nature. We will look at science as discovery and use all five senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Participants will explore how to guide children to integrate these experiences into cognitive concepts.

5 – 6:30 pm

## **Regional Networking Reception** Armory

Enjoy drinks and light appetizers, and meet nature-based early learning professionals from your region. Discuss ways to strengthen the field through regional coordination and hear how other regions are getting organized to support the profession.





## Use Storypark to...

- › Document, support and ‘uncover’ children’s learning outside through recording and sharing stories, photos, videos, audio and text.
- › Build parents understanding and appreciation of the value of nature-based curriculum, and empower them to continue activities at home.
- › Bridge the communication gap with families through two-way conversations.
- › Enhance quality practice by easily connecting your nature-based curriculum and encouraging more reflective observations and deeper learning.

## Attend the presentation

Attend the presentation by Megan and Peter  
**Never hear “Why are my child’s clothes dirty?” again** at this conference or check out Storypark at [www.storypark.com](http://www.storypark.com)



## Friday, August 2

7 – 8:45 am

### **Shinrin Yoku Walk** Veteran's Memorial Park

Sally-Ann Anderson, Sol Forest School

Experience what the growing trend of “Forest Bathing” is all about with a gentle early morning Shinrin Yoku walk in the park directly across from the conference center.

Rev-up your Natural-Killer cells, get a dose of “Vitamin N,” and greet the new day with a guided morning meditation, facilitated invitations aimed at re/connecting participants to the Natural World, and a sip of tea shared under the park trees. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing, bring a water bottle, and prepare for a revitalizing experience unlike any other!

*The program is free but pre-registration is required. To participate, please sign up at the registration desk on Wednesday or Thursday. Spots available on a first-come, first-served basis.*

**Where and when to meet:** Meet in the hotel lobby at 7 am and walk over to the park together.

8 – 9 am

### **Continental Breakfast** Armory



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is proud to sponsor Natural Start  
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nature play and learning.

Visit us at the conference or online at  
[massaudubon.org/education](https://massaudubon.org/education).

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# Friday, August 2

9 – 10:30 am

## Workshops

### Creating Zen for Our Most Energetic Children (T) Piscataquog

Johanna Perlin, Second Nature Design

A natural outdoor learning environment offers opportunities to support children's individual developmental needs. Through hands-on activities and small-group sharing, learn strategies to help determine the needs of children with challenging behaviors and activities that offer positive outlets.

### The Head and the Hands: Translating Nature-Play Research into Practice (T) Contoocook

Eliza Minnucci, Antioch University & ForestKinder

Dive into PEER Associate's literature review of nature play and learning research. Then become young students on a Forest Day, experiencing the outcomes described by the literature firsthand. Leave this workshop with both the research and the routines to support your work with young children.

### Wild About Animals: Exploring Ways to Design Curriculum to Incorporate Live Animals (T) Webster

Jill Canelli, Rina Zampieron, Mass Audubon, Drumlin Farm

Children are naturally curious in some way about animals they encounter. Our focus is on how to incorporate live animals into everyday curriculum. We also will experience activities that deepen learning and connection with and about animals, all while observing and interacting with animals (real ones!).

### Landscapes for Autism: Sensory-Supportive Play and Learning Environments and How to Build Them Yourself (E) Hawthorne

Jena Jauchius, SPVV Landscape Architects

Autism is on the rise. Natural early learning programs are uniquely positioned to respond to this childhood health trend through sensory-supportive play and learning environments. This session goes in-depth on autism's sensory experiences and how you can build your own beneficial play and learning features.

### Playful Inquiry: A Playful Approach to Scientific Inquiry & Exploration (E) Dartmouth

Linda Kinney, Kathy Osborne, North Carolina Zoo

Playful approaches to learning allow children to play with ideas, experiment, and initiate investigations. Using methods used in the playwork profession, participants will look at ways they can playfully support children's opportunities to explore the questions they care about outdoors.

### Remove the Bubble Wrap: Building Resilience Through Risk Taking (A) Merrimack

Johanna Booth-Miner, Live & Learn Early Learning Center; Nicole Mason, Live & Learn Early Learning Center & Rising Hawk Afterschool

We need to stop bubble wrapping our children! Risk-taking builds resilience and competence for life skills. Risk allows children to embrace trial and error as a learning process. Children learn to problem solve and build competence moving their body through space. Participants will explore hazards vs. risk.

*In order to maintain a safe environment for the live animals in this session, attendance is limited to the first 20 people to arrive.*



## Friday, August 2

9 – 10:30 am

*Continued*

### **Learning Through Story: Outdoor Skills and Nature Connection Through Role-Playing Adventure** ⓘ Stark

Jess Liotta, Trackers Earth

Fantasy play is a vital part of how all children learn. In this workshop, participants will explore how live action role-playing games and guided narratives can enhance outdoor educational goals, including nature connection, bushcraft skills, and more.

### **Asking Questions and Telling Stories: Instructional Techniques for Natural History with Children** ⓘ Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Pierce)

Sarah Foglesong, Ellen Bashor, Center for Nature & Place Based ECE at Prescott College; Bob Ellis, Natural History Institute

Natural history is foundational for Western understandings of all natural sciences. Most simply, this practice asks us to fall in love with nature, observe, and stay curious. Learn to use deep questioning and storytelling as instructional techniques to help all children engage with natural history.

### **The Languages of Tools** ⓘ Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Frost)

Britney Stark, Melissa Tobias, April Griebok, Dodge Nature Preschool

Learn about using carpentry tools in an early childhood program. Hear first-hand accounts of childrens' progression using tools, stories of collaborative projects, and examples of tools created from found objects. Discuss necessary risk assessment and logistics of having tools in your curriculum.

### **Creativity in the Artdoors: How to Make Art in Nature with Natural Materials** ⓘ

Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Hale)

Sarah P. Wilson, Antioch University New England

Making beautiful creations outdoors with natural materials is fun! Learn to see nature and all its shapes, colors, properties, and patterns in a new way, while incorporating early childhood curriculum at the same time. This hands-on workshop is for the creative ... and the creative-at-heart alike!

10:45 – 11:45 am

### **Presentations**

#### **You're Not in This Alone! Enhancing the Curriculum Through Collaborative Community Connections** ⓘ Piscataquog

Peter Dargatz, Woodside Elementary, Hamilton School District

Curricular requirements driving you crazy? Feeling your curriculum doesn't do what's best for kids? Connect your curriculum to nature, but don't think you have to do it alone. Come learn how a public school uses nature and community resources to take their curriculum to the next level.

#### **Self Care and Mindfulness for Educators** ⓘ Stark

Mali Johnson, Vermont Wilderness School

Learn yoga-based self-care practices through gentle stretching, movement, and breathing techniques to become a better and stronger you. Take on new ways to share mindfulness with your students through playfulness, and help your students connect to themselves and the natural world in a deeper way.

## Friday, August 2

10:45 – 11:45 am

*Continued*

### **Unlearning Together: Integrating Conscious Discipline in Our Forest School Family** (T) Webster

Katja von Elbe, Patricia Leon, Miami Nature Playschool

As educators, we must determine the values and skills we model and teach daily to empower children to regulate themselves, handle difficult feelings, and communicate with others. Learn about our journey as an urban forest school and take home helpful strategies and resources for your program.

### **The Science of Inquiry in Early Childhood** (T) Contoocook

Brooke Larm, Michigan State University Extension

How can natural phenomena drive teaching and learning? Investigate how to spark and guide children's thinking using an inquiry-based approach. Drawing from the NGSS position statement on early childhood education, we will share stories and practical ideas of how to foster meaningful learning in the outdoors.

### **Bit by Bit: How One Preschool Increased Its Natureness** (A) Hawthorne

Sunny Crandell, Santa Barbara City College, The Oaks Parent-Child Workshop

Sunny Crandell, Director & Parent Education Instructor, will share the story of how, within the limits of location, budget, and governance constraints, an urban cooperative preschool was able to increase its natureness and enhance children's learning with nature "inside, outside, and beyond."

### **Centering Equity, Ecocentrism, and Social Justice in Nature-based Education** (A) Merrimack

Kelly McLane, Takako Kono, Yinan Lu, Queens Botanical Garden

We invite you to embark on a journey of planning for the future of nature-based programs through lenses of equity, justice, and ecocentrism. Together, we explore decentralized power structures, interconnectedness of nature and justice, AND nature programs in urban settings and multicultural communities.

### **Integrative Nature Immersion Programs for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder** (✓) Dartmouth

Nina Bricko, Stephanie Fitch, Mighty Seeds Forest School

In this session we will discuss the therapeutic benefits of nature immersion programs for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), how we can support those children, and ways to establish partnerships in order to integrate children in your own program.

### **Moments in Nature with Infants and Toddlers** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park

(Backup indoor location-Frost)

Katrine Horion, Second Nature

Going outdoors with infants and toddlers can pose a unique challenge. Our workshop will offer strategies for play in inclement weather, creating activities, partnering with parents, meeting regulations, and ways we can help babies and toddlers explore at their own pace.

## Friday, August 2

10:45 – 11:45 am

*Continued*

### **The Joy of Learning with the Landscape** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park

*(Backup indoor location-Hale)*

Mary Zentara, North Branch Nature Center

How can we engage with the landscape in ways that create authentic learning experiences for ourselves and students? Explore this question by practicing mindfulness and daily outdoor learning routines. This workshop will focus on direct experience in nature followed by a debrief and discussion.

### **The Benefits of Taking Risks: From Trees and Ticks to Knives and Poison Ivy** (E)

*Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Pierce)*

Anne M. Stires, Antioch University & Juniper Hill School for Place-Based Education

Children enjoy learning that is challenging and adventurous, where they can reach beyond their abilities and test themselves. Teaching and learning outdoors provides these sorts of experiences and requires a level of teacher support and management beyond what we are used to in an indoor classroom.

12 – 1pm

**Lunch** Armory

1:15 – 2:15 pm

### **Presentations**

#### **Exploring the Duo of Spiritual Development and Nature: Providers of Wholeness, Wellness, and Learning for All Children** (T) Dartmouth

Deb Schein, Champlain College and Growing Wonder

This workshop is for educators inspiring to bring wholeness, wellness, and learning to all children. Using a definition of spiritual development that incorporates nature, relationships, wonderment, joy, mindfulness, etc, educators will find new ways to understand children's nature play experiences.

#### **An Urban Public School Heads into the Woods** (T) Hawthorne

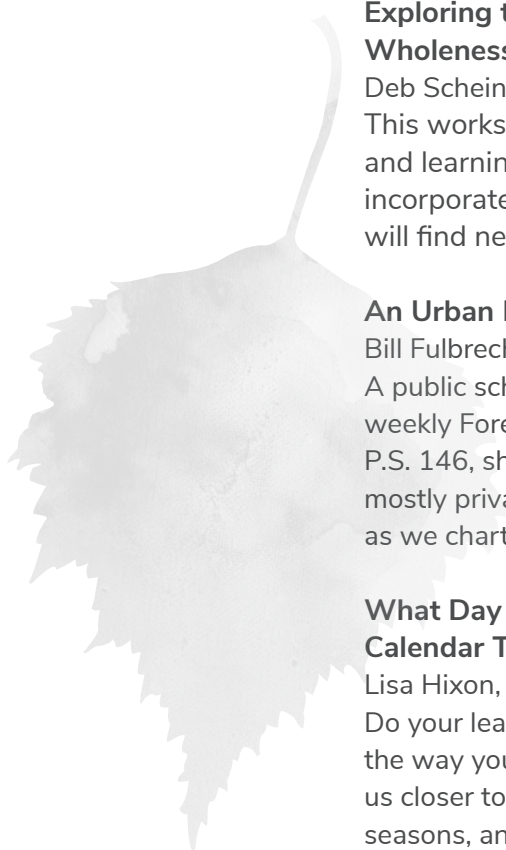
Bill Fulbrecht, The Brooklyn New School

A public school in Brooklyn might seem an unlikely place to find children enjoying weekly Forest Days, but it can happen. A teacher from the Brooklyn New School, P.S. 146, shares how one NYC public school joined the growing ranks of what are mostly private Forest School programs. Join us for a presentation and open discussion as we chart a path forward together.

#### **What Day Is It? Becoming Sunwatchers as an Alternative to Traditional Calendar Time** (T) Webster

Lisa Hixon, Freelance Researcher and Writer

Do your learners know what day it is? Do they care? Would you like to re-think the way you "teach" the calendar? We will examine how sunwatching can bring us closer to the natural world and discover ways to spark awareness of the sun, seasons, and cosmic position of the earth.





## Friday, August 2

1:15 – 2:15 pm

*Continued*

### **Engaging Children with Disabilities in Nature: Collaborating with Families and Accessing Community Supports** (E) Contoocook

Sylvia Collazo, Dr. Yash Bhagwanji, Florida Atlantic University

Let's make nature fun for everyone! Join our discussion on the challenges of engaging children with disabilities in nature-based programs and learn tips on how to collaborate with families and access community resources to support the inclusion of children of all abilities in your programs.

### **Learning From Each Other: A Facilitated Discussion on the Challenges of Starting a School** (A) Merrimack

Rachel Larimore, David Catlin, Samara Early Learning

This session will start with a brief overview of the process and common challenges of starting a school. We will then have a discussion on the biggest questions and needs of attendees. Come learn from two business planning consultants as well as those in similar situations.

### **Big Picture Design: Nature Playscapes on a Budget** (A) Piscataquog

Nikki Julien, NaturePlayLearning

Limited budgets don't have to limit nature playscape dreams. This session will introduce the powerhouses of play—design elements that afford the most bang for the buck. Participants will begin an idea bank of nature play elements and experiment with design for risky play to rich, imaginative play.

### **Risky Play in a Washington State Forest Preschool: Characteristics and Social Contexts** (R) Stark

Rachel J. Han, University of Washington

Learn how children engage in risky play in a Washington forest school, including the types of play activities and the associated nature features and social contexts. Join us to discuss how to communicate effectively about the importance of risky play with stakeholders in different social and cultural contexts, given recent research findings.

### **Weaving Interactive Stories** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Pierce)

Harriet Hart, North Branch Nature Center

The golden stick, secret winter worlds, and onion skunks ... Come and learn how to captivate your students, weave a narrative that integrates nature facts, and experiment with props. We'll dissect, discuss, and practice each of the elements that go into creating interactive oral stories.

### **Animal Diversity and Tracking** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Hale)

Melissa Jackson, Elizabeth Philpott, The Orchard School

This session will highlight how animal tracks are useful in learning about the diversity of wildlife in varied habitats. Activities are based on "The Nature of Teaching" curriculum from Purdue University. Participants will discover how to create a scent station and document student learning.

# Friday, August 2

1:15 – 2:15 pm

*Continued*

## **Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Gentle: Nurturing Young Children's Sense of Wonder and Sense of Self** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Frost)

Emily Pals, Hilary Redman, Four Winds Nature Institute

As children, we learn about ourselves and the world around us through play, observation, and conversation. Here we'll explore the adult role in nature play and introduce language and strategies to create peaceful learning communities and nurture children's curiosity, compassion, and confidence.

2:30 – 3:30 pm

## **Presentations**

### **Seeds of Inspiration: A Curriculum-Based, Outdoor Classroom**

**Design Tool** (T) Webster

Victoria Hackett, Outdoor-Classrooms.com

The Seeds of Inspiration card deck is a curriculum design tool for outdoor learning that reconnects children to nature. This session showcases how a simple deck of cards can generate nature-based icebreakers, problem solving activities, creative inspiration, and outdoor curriculum ideas.

### **Shining a Light on Outdoor Learning with Documentation** (E) Dartmouth

Karen First, Karen Chemel, Mass Audubon, Ipswich Nature Center

Documentation of outdoor learning helps us reflect upon ordinary and profound moments. We'll share tricks and tools for documenting outdoors, think together about documentation versus display, and learn how to formulate guiding questions that provide a road map for short- and long-term projects.

### **Baby Roots: Nature Programs for the First 1,000 Days** (T) Contoocook

Leah Deragon, Birth Roots + Baby Roots

Whether an existing outdoor program is expanding to include 0-3, or a 0-3 early childhood program is evolving to become more nature-based, this session will address the unique challenges of outdoor programs for a population that is still in diapers, preverbal or even pre-mobile, including frameworks for scaffolding adult caregivers during toddler and baby-led nature play.

### **First Teacher in the Woods** (E) Hawthorne

Rod Diercks, Doane University

This session will describe how our university preservice teachers in a science methods class plan and facilitate Forest Fridays for preschool and kindergarten classes from the local schools. Learn how they apply nature pedagogy skills and concepts as they develop as teachers.

### **Summer Camps: The Perfect Setting for Nature-Based School Programs**

(A) Merrimack

Rachel Parker, Ferncliff Nature Preschool

This session will walk you through the why and how of developing a nature preschool or forest kindergarten at a summer camp site. Educators and administrators will leave with a plan in place to help grow the nature-based education movement by identifying out-of-the-box ways to start up.

## Friday, August 2

2:30 – 3:30 pm

*Continued*

### **Take It Outside! Introducing Nature to Early Learners** (T) Stark

Kathleen Neville, NH Project Learning Tree

Taking children outside to learn can be easy and fun. In this session, experience hands-on activities that introduce science concepts to young children and learn tips to take children outside. Participants receive an *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* activity guide and CD.

### **Creative Collaborations: Exploring Partnerships in Outdoor Classrooms** (✓) Piscataquog

Nicole Pelletier, Christine Jee, SHED Children's Campus

Learn about a partnership between pre-kindergarten students and their local art museum and reimagine what nature-based classrooms can look like. Participants will create maps of their own schools and identify potential partnerships using what is available in their communities.

### **Revitalizing Traditional Games to Strengthen Understandings of Nature** (T)

Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Pierce)

Edith Pucci Couchman, evolvingbeauty.org

This workshop offers a vibrant assortment of racing, singing-circle, progress-towards-a-goal, and collecting-and-tag games that can be used to provide sociable, inclusive, and aesthetically pleasing interludes to complement nature learning in an outdoor discovery setting or schoolyard.

### **Rhythms, Routines, and Righteous Transitions** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Frost)

Liza Lowe, Antioch University New England & Wild Roots Nature School;  
Mali Johnson, Vermont Wilderness School

We will offer strategies and techniques to create fluidity within your school day. Learn songs, activities, and models you can follow in any season to establish solid routines and enjoyable rhythms that will help get you and your students through each day with effective repetition and ease.

### **Bringing Literacy to Life in the Natural World** (T) Veteran's Memorial Park (Backup indoor location-Hale)

Jenna Zamzow, Vicki Sturtevant, Little Hawks Discovery Preschool

Let's go outside for literacy! Nature provides context to what we read, building vocabulary and oral language through direct experiences. Let's explore how to make books come alive in the eyes of a child, and why increasing literacy efforts outside will help all children grow as future readers.



## Friday, August 2

3:45 – 5:15 pm

### Closing Plenary and Panel Discussion – “Applying a Whole-School Approach to Broaden Participation in Nature Play and Learning”

Armory

Kris Scopinich, Mass Audubon; Deb Green, Parent Infant Center; Colleen Bostwick, Worcester Head Start; Eliza Minnucci, Antioch University & ForestKinder

While the number of nature preschools continues to grow, there remains a gap of awareness and understanding among “traditional” early childhood education professionals about our field, its many benefits to children and communities, and the adoption of nature play and learning as a vital component of early childhood development in any setting.

What is the role of nature preschools and forest kindergartens in broadening participation in nature play and learning for all children while respecting the many approaches and philosophies of early childhood education? What do we need to consider when supporting the integration of early childhood environmental education into more “traditional” early childhood education programs? And, how can we work in partnership with early educators to listen for and identify meaningful ways to integrate nature play and learning in a sustainable way?

This panel of teachers, administrators, and researchers will explore these generative questions and discuss how a whole-school approach can offer a constructive framework for thinking about how we can increase access to nature play and learning and contribute to the larger field of early childhood education.

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## Saturday, August 3

7:30 am – 4:30 pm

### Boston Area Field Trip

Visit an elementary school and two preschool programs—one at a farm and the other at an urban nature center—that demonstrate the rich variety of nature-based early learning programming!

Our first stop is the Peter Woodbury Elementary School, located just a short distance from the conference hotel. Tour the Community School Yard, a space featuring a timber-frame outdoor classroom, covered bridge, messy play materials, fairy garden, tree cathedral, dry river bed, labyrinth, gazebo, basketball court, fields, gardens, and traditional play equipment, and meet the creators of the space.

We will then tour and have lunch at Mass Audubon's Drumlin Farm Community Preschool, where an emergent and nature-based curriculum is combined with outdoor play and exploration, farm chores, wildlife visits, and planting and harvesting to develop children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth.

Finally, we will visit the Pathways to Nature Preschool at the Boston Nature Center, a program committed to serving the working families of the surrounding urban community and immersing children in a science and nature curriculum through hands-on activities, investigations, and free play.

Lunch and transportation to and from the conference hotel are included with registration. In an effort to reduce waste, a beverage will not be provided with lunch. Please plan to bring your own water bottle; there will be opportunities to refill at our stops.

**Where and when to meet:** Please arrive by 7:30 am in Assembly. The bus will load right outside Assembly and depart promptly at 7:45 am.

*Pre-registration required. To register, add the field trip as an option when you register for the conference. Already registered for the conference? Modify your registration using the link provided in your registration confirmation email. You can also stop by the registration desk anytime on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday to find out if there are any spaces left on this field trip.*



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## Saturday, August 3



Photo: Dondero Elementary School

**8:15 am – 5 pm**

### Eastern New Hampshire and Maine Field Trip

Tour three model nature-based early learning programs—including a public elementary school—in Maine and Eastern New Hampshire!

We will first visit Live & Learn Early Learning Center in Lee, NH, a NAEYC-accredited, experiential program on a functional 25-acre farm. Live & Learn began as a summer program in 1974; today, it offers year-round programming and it regularly trains nature-based educators from all over the region. This year, it has added a naturalist to every classroom so that children may go on a nature walk, look for birds, feed the worm farm, and learn in and with nature every day. We will also enjoy an outdoor lunch before we depart Live & Learn.

We will then tour Eyes of the World Discovery Center Nature-Based Preschool, a program of the community center in Kittery, ME. The preschool offers open-ended exploration that allows children to build forts, dig holes “to China,” make mud pies, daydream in a special hiding place, and swing on vines in a Forest Classroom year-round.

Finally, we will visit Dondero Elementary School in Portsmouth, NH, whose outdoor learning experiences started with two classrooms going out to the woods behind the school on Friday mornings, but now is finding more and more ways to integrate the curriculum with the interests and themes that emerge out of the time children spend in nature.

Lunch and transportation to and from the conference hotel are included with registration. In an effort to reduce waste, a beverage will not be provided with lunch. Please plan to bring your own water bottle; there will be opportunities to refill at our stops.

**Where and when to meet:** Please arrive by 8:15 am in Assembly. The bus will load right outside Assembly and depart promptly at 8:30 am.

*Pre-registration required. To register, add the field trip as an option when you register for the conference. Already registered for the conference? Modify your registration using the link provided in your registration confirmation email. You can also stop by the registration desk anytime on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday to find out if there are any spaces left on this field trip.*



## Saturday, August 3

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

### Nature-Based & Forest Preschool Business Planning Workshop: Helping Your Business Take Flight

SEE Science Center, Manchester, NH

The goal of this workshop, facilitated by Rachel Larimore and David Catlin of Samara Early Learning, LLC, is to help your nature-based or forest preschool dream take flight. This one-day workshop will not only help you get started, but also provide you the road map for accomplishing your vision. We will begin with an overview of the business planning process, then we will guide you on questions to ask and tools to answer those questions—all specific to the unique business needs of nature-based and forest preschools. We will provide specific guidance related to these topics:

- Key decisions (e.g., mission, goals, administrative model, partnerships)
- Programming plan (What will the program look and feel like?)
- Site plan (How do I determine if a site is right for my business?)
- Building plan (What does the ideal physical space look like and how can I achieve that vision?)
- Marketing plan (Who is the target market? How do I reach them? How do I identify potential competition?)
- Operating plan (How do I identify the nuts and bolts of my program, such as schedule, registration process, insurance, etc.?)
- Financial plan (How do I identify and track start-up and operating expenses?)
- Risk analysis (What might go wrong in my business plan and how might I respond if it does?)

The workshop itself will be a mix of presentations and small-group interaction and problem-solving. All of these activities are designed to ensure you leave the workshop having made substantial progress on your business plan. Yes, you'll leave with more work to do, but our goal is for you to leave with a clear road map of next steps to quickly and efficiently make your preschool a reality.

Presentation handouts, worksheets, business plan templates, and lunch will be provided. The workshop is generously hosted by SEE Science Center, located a short walk or drive away from the conference venue.

**Where and when to meet:** The workshop begins at 9 am at the SEE Science Center, located at 200 Bedford St., Manchester, NH 03101. A group will depart on foot from Assembly at 8:30 am if you'd like to join it.

*Pre-registration is required. Please visit the website of Samara Early Learning, LLC, to register: [samarael.com](http://samarael.com)*



## Sunday, August 4

### Juniper Hill School Tour

Juniper Hill School, Alna, ME

Following the conference on Sunday, August 4th, Anne Stires is offering the opportunity for conference attendees to visit Juniper Hill School in Alna, Maine. Anne will host an information session and provide a tour of the school's facilities and outdoor classrooms from 2:30 to 5 pm. Located 2.5 hours from Manchester, NH, Juniper Hill is near several of Maine's quintessential coastal towns that have beautiful ocean views and delicious restaurants. To register, please send an email of interest to [info@juniperhillschool.org](mailto:info@juniperhillschool.org) with your name, contact info, and number of people in the group. Suggested donation is \$50 (paid directly to the non-profit of Juniper Hill School). This tour is not organized by the Natural Start Alliance and transportation is not provided; please reach out directly to Anne Stires with any inquiries.



## Travel and Lodging

### Conference Venue

#### **DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown**

700 Elm Street, Manchester, NH 03101

Telephone: 603-625-1000

The DoubleTree is a beautifully renovated hotel located within walking distance of restaurants, shops, and public transportation in the historic downtown Manchester area.



### Parking

Parking is available at the hotel at a special group rate of \$6/day or \$12/overnight. Please bring your parking ticket with you to be stamped at our registration desk.

### Airport Shuttles

**Manchester Airport:** A free shuttle is available for hotel guests to and from the Manchester Airport. Call the hotel at 603-625-1000 for details.

**Boston Logan Airport:** Several shuttle options are available, including the Boston Express service ([bostonexpressbus.com](http://bostonexpressbus.com) or 800-639-8080) which drops you off a short 5-minute walk from the conference hotel (shuttle price is \$19 and the trip takes two hours).

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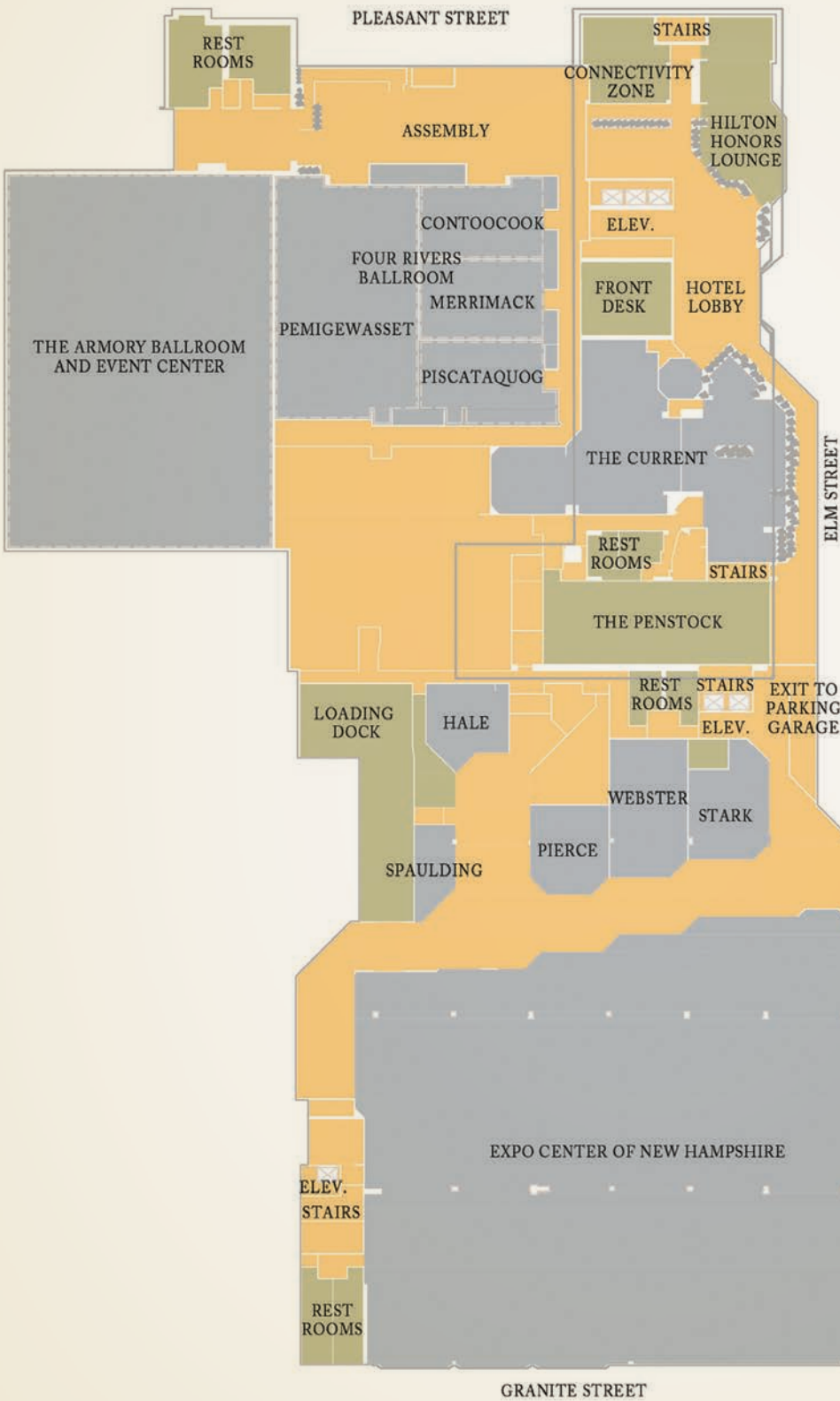
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**[www.polarnopyretusa.com/outdoor\\_schools](http://www.polarnopyretusa.com/outdoor_schools)**



DoubleTree by Hilton Manchester Downtown Map

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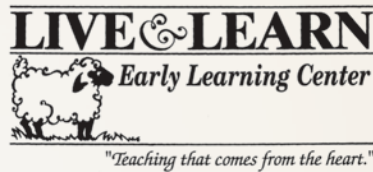
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