**Nature Brain**

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The body of evidence keeps growing – nature is good for children and really good for the brain! Spending time in nature is actually essential for children’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Partner this with the young child’s inherent curiosity and drive to experience and learn from their world and you have the makings of optimal learning experiences. In this workshop we’ll explore the role of nature, nature play, and interacting with people during these early years of rapid brain development. How are problem-solving, thinking skills, social competence, and physical development enhanced by experiences in and with nature and by adults in those environments? We’ll practice a technique for creating learning conversations called *Powerful Interactions* and take a look at nature through a child’s perspective. Intentional teachers can use these tools to support and enhance brain development for young children and communicate the benefits of inquiry-based early learning with their parents. We’ll consider the role that early learning standards, observations, goals and assessments play in planning and facilitating experiences in nature.

By participating in this workshop participants will:

* Learn some of the research findings examining the effects of nature on the developing brain.
* Be able to identify why nature is good for the mind, body, and spirit.
* Discuss the ways in which we can provide a balance between technological and nature experiences for all children
* Brain storm ways which this information can be used to enhance programs
* Discuss the relationship of brain development and guidelines such as Illinois Early Learning Standards and the NSTA Position Statement on Early Childhood Science Education

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Linking theory to practice, parents with professionals and kids with their optimal potential

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