

***Building a Mutual
Relationship with
Nature: Experiences
During Early Childhood***

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Sustainability begins...

Through developing a mutual,
respectful relationship

With nature.

“Though we often
see ourselves as
separate from
Nature, humans
are also a
part of that wildness.”

(Louv, 2005)



Outside with nature is ...

- Where children play
- Where children grow
- Where children learn, explore, investigate, discover
- Where children imagine and build relationships



The concern...

73%

of children age 6 years and younger watch TV on a typical day and two thirds of them live in a home where TV is on at least half of the day. Nearly half of all children six and under watch videos or DVDs on a typical day
(Child Trends, 2004).

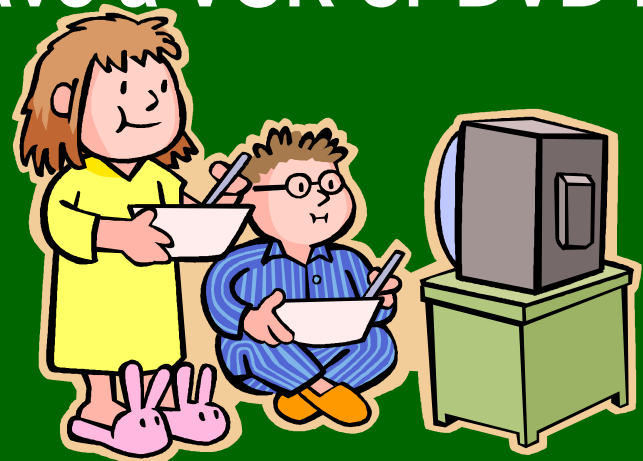


The concern

30%

of children ages 0 – 3 years and 43% of children between the ages of 4 - 6 years have a TV in their bedroom. 27% of all children six and under have a VCR or DVD in their bedroom

(Child Trends, 2004).



The concern...

Young children who watch a lot of TV spend less time playing outdoors. Among children ages 4 to 6 years, heavy TV watchers (defined as those watching 2 or more hours a day) spend an average of 1 hour 52 minutes outdoors a day compared with 2 hours 24 minutes for those who are not heavy TV watchers (Child Trends, 2004).



Caring for our bodies...

"One of the strongest correlates of physical activity in children is the amount of time spent outside (Klesges, et al., 1990; Baranowski et al., 1993; Sallis et al., 1993). In most homes...there are limited options for physical activity inside the home, and it is outdoors where children are generally more physically active and where more energy is expended" (Institute of Medicine, 2005).

Early childhood

60.8% of children 6 and younger, not yet in kindergarten, engage in some form(s) of early care and education experiences (nonparental care) including child care, nursery school, preschool

(Childstats.gov, 2009).



How do teachers help very young children develop a lasting relationship with nature?

Children demonstrate knowledge of the fundamental concepts, principles and interconnections of the life, physical and space sciences

- Children demonstrate an understanding of the basic properties of living and nonliving things
- Children know and apply concepts that describe how living things interact with each other and with their environment.

(Kansas Early Learning Standards (0 - 5 years), KSDE)

Reconnecting Children to Nature

Children will have time out-of-doors in nature that is spontaneous and unstructured, with peers or family. Such settings should promote observations and discovery and foster creativity and imagination.

World Forum-Nature Action Collaborative for Children, Nebraska Nature Action Collaborative for Children, National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (2008). Re-Constructing The World's Children to Nature. Author retrieved at www.worldforumfoundation.org





Reconnecting Children to Nature

Adults will create opportunities to promote nature learning which is likely to be at least semi-structured, using nature as the source of learning and inquiry (e.g., in forming the foundations of various arts and sciences).

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Reconnecting Children to Nature

Children will have ***daily*** opportunities to experience the land, water, and living things in their surroundings. It is through these natural experiences that they will develop both an attachment to and an understanding of their world and of other species.

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Reconnecting Children to Nature

School and community project work will include an active, hands-on approach to nature and the opportunity to develop integrated natural science knowledge. Engagement with the natural environment will allow for exploration and meaning-making experiences since both intentional learning and spontaneous activities build awareness and observational skills in children when outdoor spaces are rich with things to experience (Faber Taylor, et al, 1998, Kirby, 1989).

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Reconnecting Children to Nature

Nature learning experiences will be developmentally appropriate recognizing that young children (prior to age 9yrs) need experiences that support their nature affinity with nature and which are directly accessible to them (e.g., learning about birds in **the neighborhood** rather than those in a far off jungle). Without an opportunity to experience, children will not have an opportunity to develop appreciation or connections.

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Reconnecting Children to Nature

The culture and native environment of the community will be honored and cherished. Nature-rich curriculum and project work will link learning standards to the real life experiences of children and families...

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Flowers grow really tall, up to the sky. Airplanes are flying over the mountains. They have never seen mountains before.



Let's Learn



Reconnecting Children to Nature

A common sense approach by adults will support children in the challenges of their out-of-doors learning. Children will be allowed both “direction and freedom” to investigate and explore with reasonable safety considerations and toleration for messiness (Chawla, 1994).

Chawla, L. (1994). Editors' Note, *Children's Environments*, (11)3.

World Forum-Nature Action Collaborative for Children, Nebraska Nature Action Collaborative for Children, National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (2008). *Re-Constructing The World's Children to Nature*. Author retrieved at www.worldforumfoundation.org





Reconnecting Children to Nature

Community and school leaders will consider the preservation of natural environments in their approach to land development and building design. Centers and schools will be beautiful, engaging and amazing places.

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- = Movie Theatre
- = Mall
- = House
- = Park
- = Hospital
- = School
- = Stone house
- = Country Club
- = KSU
- = Wal-mart
- = Lake
- = road

Manhattan
map



Reconnecting Children to Nature

Community and school leaders will build “green schools” that are energy efficient, sustainable, and provide healthier learning environments for both children and those who work with children in those settings.

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Recycle





Recycle...reuse



Reconnecting Children to Nature

Adults will take care not to allow the lure of technology to override the allure of nature. The unprecedented opportunities technology offers to learn more about nature should be used to supplement real nature experiences.

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Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem Apparell'd in
celestial light, The glory and the
freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may, By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

William Wordsworth, 1770-1850

