



On-line links to resources

Nature Explore – for information on designing effective, nature-rich outdoor learning environments and resources to support connecting children with nature go to www.natureexplore.org

Nature Explore Families' Club – free, research-based, field-tested resources designed to help you organize a Families' Club at your school, organization, or in your neighborhood. Activities can also be used individually as catalyst activities to foster close observation skills. www.natureexplore.org/families

Dimensions Educational Research Foundation – Read the newest research on play as well as the research on skill development children gain when spending time in well-designed Nature Explore Classrooms. <http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org/research/index.cfm>.

Call to Action to make nature part of children's daily lives issued by the **National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education** and the **World Forum—Nature Action Collaborative for Children**. http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc/call_to_action.php

Environmental Action Kit – free, down-loadable resources that have been designed to help young children, early childhood educators and families address environmental issues in a developmentally appropriate way. Available in English, Spanish and Arabic. www.worldforumfoundation.org/nature

Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines – See how the Nebraska Department of Education has written nature into their early learning guidelines at http://ectc.education.ne.gov/ELG/nature_education.pdf

Other **research on children and nature** and summary of health connections can be found at <http://www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc/ibm/research.php> and www.childrenandnature.org

Head Start/Body Start and the **National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play** provide both outdoor play ideas and links to grant funding. <http://www.aahperd.org/headstartbodystart/grants/>

NAAEE Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence - To download a set of recommendations for developing and administering high-quality environmental education programs for young children from birth to age eight, with a focus on ages three to six. These guidelines provide a tool that can be used to ensure a firm foundation for new programs or to trigger improvements in existing ones. The overall goal of these guidelines is to chart an appropriate and positive process whereby educators can start young children on their journey toward becoming environmentally responsive youth and adults. <http://eelinked.naaee.net/networks/network/topics/topics.aspx?networkalias=guidelines>

Nature Benefits



A Collaborative Project of
Arbor Day Foundation and
Dimensions Educational Research Foundation
www.natureexplore.org

Did You Know?...

...Going outside helps children with attention problems

Recent research studies reveal that the symptoms of children with ADHD are relieved after contact with nature. The greener the setting, the more the relief. Another study found that every hour preschoolers watch TV each day boosts their chances for developing attention problems later in life, suggesting that the fast-paced moving images on TV might over stimulate and “rewire” the developing brain. (Pediatrics Journal)

...Nature builds skills, skills, and more skills

Children who have frequent experiences with the natural world show better coordination, balance and agility...more creativity, increased performance on math and science tests...and higher skills in cooperative play and conflict resolution. (Fjortoft 2001, Crain 2001, Louv, 2006, Miller, 2007)

...Time outdoors may actually help prevent allergies and asthma?

Asthma among children has increased 87% since 1982. Interestingly enough indoor air quality has been found to have 2-5 times more pollutants than outdoor air quality levels. An environmental health report notes that most people, including children, spend 90% of their time indoors. Dr. Dennis Ownby says that “maybe part of the reason we have so many children with allergies and asthma is that we live too clean a life.”

... Exposure to sunlight has a host of benefits

“Being out in the sun boosts our mood, improves sleep, and promotes vitamin D production,” says James Spencer, associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York. Ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunlight trigger vitamin D synthesis in the skin that is necessary for strong bones. Experts now believe that sunlight has widespread mood-elevating effects, possibly because the “happy” hormone serotonin increases.

...For children, play is like eating and sleeping---one of the vital signs of health

Free, imaginative play is crucial for normal social, emotional and cognitive development. It makes us better adjusted, smarter and less stressed (Scientific American , 2009)

... Playing outside can be safe and that some risk is necessary for children to develop

People are afraid of accidents in play and want to minimize risk. Yet playgrounds that offer genuine risk tend to have fewer accidents than traditional playgrounds. When children are given real risk and they learn how to handle it. (Almon in Exchange, March 2009)