

A Guide to Nature-Based Pedagogy for Early Childhood Programs



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Working together

- Assess needs
- Deliverables
- Start Somewhere
- Feedback
- Evolution



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Who is this for?

Everyone (it's free)

- Policy makers
- Administrators
- Practitioners
- Providers
- Caregivers
- CHILDREN



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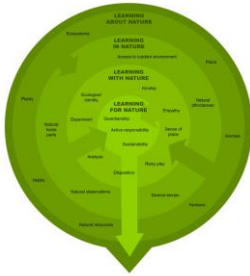
Tell us about yourselves

- What is your role?

- Policy makers
- Administrators
- Practitioners
- Providers
- Caregivers
- Other



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ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

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QUESTION

Biophilia hypothesis

The **biophilia hypothesis** also called **RET** suggests that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with plants and other forms of life.¹² **Edward O. Wilson** introduced and popularized the hypothesis in his book, *Biophilia* (1984).¹³ He defines biophilia as "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life."¹⁴

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"In (western) education we have the three R's. What's drummed into us is reading, writing, and arithmetic. But I say there are four R's, which are relationship, responsibility, respect, and resonance"

(The Green Interview, 2009).

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What is Nature?

Ruth Wilson
 Children and Nature Network, USA

Submitted December 20, 2016; accepted September 19, 2019

ABSTRACT

The concept of nature and how humans relate to nature provide the framework for this philosophical discussion on challenges facing the teaching field of early childhood environmental education. Post-humanist thinking is presented as an alternative to what is perpetuated through a more typical Western approach to education. This Western approach tends to distance and isolate the human-nature separation. A common theme emerging from interdisciplinary thinking about the nature-human connection centers around kinship versus disconnection. This theme is presented as critical to post-humanist thinking. Implications are offered for how to shape child humanism by philosophy, especially at the early childhood level. Adopting a post-humanist approach to working with children is considered to be critical to the very survival of the planet while also ensuring the holistic development of children. Post-humanism is also presented as a catalyst for solving in a community of life that is inclusive of multispecies beings. (1) How nature is presented to children; (2) the meaning and practice of nature play; (3) the capabilities of children; (4) a pedagogy of disconnection; and (5) deeper dimensions of wonder. Her voice concludes with a call to take up the challenge of thinking with nature and finding more entangled ways of being in the world.

Keywords: humanism, post-humanism, common worlds, kinship, pedagogy, early childhood education, environmental education

A concern addressed in this essay relates to a young child's statement – "I've never been to nature." This statement suggests that nature for this child is something "out there," something apart from humans in today's world. It's not surprising to hear a child articulate what many of us experience on an almost daily basis. We, as humans, no longer live connected to nature. We live in built environments with both physical and psychological walls separating us from the natural world. The environment in which we live much of the time was built by humans and is controlled by humans. It's an environment that was designed to effectively meet our basic physical needs, to make us feel comfortable, and to entertain us. The natural environment, then, becomes a luxury or a place to go to for diversion rather than a system of which we are a part. Even human adults who see their children's disconnection with nature tend to define nature

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“Kinship is rooted in a **deep kind of knowing** that includes, but goes beyond, cognitive understanding. Humans, like other living things, are social beings. We **live in relationship to others**, not just with other humans, but with the entire natural world.”



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Early years qualified teacher
 Academic researcher, lecturer, policy developer
 National Coordinator: ECE Centres of Innovation
 Co-Founder and Pedagogical Leader, Daisies Early Education & Care Centre
 Wellington, New Zealand

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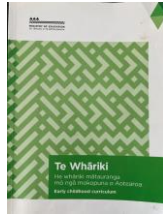
Tell us about your context:
 - Where are you based
 (urban/rural/suburban)



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NZ's early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*

- New Zealand ECE providers use *Te Whāriki, Early Childhood Curriculum* (2017)
- It is framed using concepts drawn from te ao Māori (indigenous knowledge)
- Teams have to weave their own *whāriki*/curriculum, like a mat
- Emphasis: Strengthening children's positive dispositions and working theories
- Our degree-qualified teachers embrace the inclusion of Māori culture and language



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Daisies Early Education Centres

Two centres side by side, total of 17 educators:

- 30 infants and toddlers
- 30 young children aged 3-5 years

Daisies Values, since 2008:

- Respect for people and the environment
- Kaitiakitanga/guardianship of the Earth
- Manaakitanga – welcoming, kind, caring and trustworthy
- Enthusiasm for learning by children, teachers and families



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Daisies Early Education
www.daisies.co.nz

Also, search Youtube:
 "Imagine a classroom without walls"

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Daisies – a finalist in the NZ Prime Minister’s awards for excellence in teaching and learning: for our Nature Explore curriculum

- Daisies is a loving, engaging and pleasing place of learning for all babies and children, parents and teachers.
- We create a culture of teaching and learning practices at Daisies and in nature that is connected to our local community and beyond.



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Daisies teachers’ lens is framed by an indigenous world view

- Daisies aims to become a Gold-status Enviro-school; highly-prized
- The Enviro-schools framework is based on Māori concepts, and on:
 - Learning about nature)
 - Learning in nature) Also in EKG
 - Learning for nature)
 And Daisies must do more than that.
- Using the *Environmental Kinship Guide (EKG)* gives Daisies a lift - the EK Guide’s adds *Learning with nature* and focuses on **Kinship**



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Learning **With** Nature

Daisies goal:

- Children will develop a love of and sense of responsibility for nature; they will understand kaitiakitanga (guardianship) of mother nature



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Learning **With** Nature

- "Learning **with** nature is defined as forming a **kinship** with the natural world" (*Environmental Kinship Guide*, 2022)
- **Kinship** is rooted in a deep kind of knowing, going beyond cognitive knowing. It involves developing a warm *relationship* with nature, *participation*, *connection* and *spirituality*
- Humans are ecological beings; **kinship** recognizes this reality
- **Kinship** recognises humans and the rest of nature are interdependent
- **Kinship** relationships involve guardianship, involve kaitiakitanga.

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Learning **WITH** nature

- Relationship
- Participation
- Connection
- Spirituality



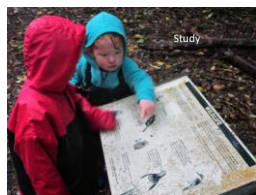
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EKG: Learning **About** Nature

Defined as the study of the natural world: inquiry, study and initiative

Daisies goals for learning **about** nature:

1. Children will develop working theories and scientific knowledge associated with the natural environment (birds, plants, insects, stream life and land formation)



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EKG links to Daisies goals for learning about nature:

2. Children will develop spatial concepts associated with the outdoors.



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EKG: Learning In Nature

Defined as the affordances provided in nature

Environmental Kinship Guide:

- Accessibility
- Exploration
- Engagement
- Agency.

Daisies goals In Nature:

Children will grow in confidence as explorers and leaders; they will strengthen their resilience.



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EKG: Learning for nature

Defined as recognising human's reciprocal connection with the rest of the world

Daisies goal:

- Children will develop a love and sense of responsibility for nature, understanding *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship).

Environmental Kinship Guide:

- Guardianship
- Responsibility
- Sustainability



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Kinship <> Guardianship

- “The term guardianship positions humans not as owners of the natural world but as its carers and protectors.
- “Our objective is to inspire educators to think outside classroom walls and into a space that allows for deep exploration and engagement with nature ... to foster a deep and lasting kinship between children and nature.”

(Environmental Kinship Guide)



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Storypark



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About the Environmental Kinship Guide

Kinship is based on the understanding that everything in the natural world is interrelated and that humans are a part of this as cohabiters.



- ✓ **Practical**
Every day, pragmatic examples for educators and administrators alike through overarching nature-based pedagogy
- ✓ **Inclusive**
Intentional practices from a variety of places, cultures, population densities, and communities
- ✓ **Community**
Creating an international dialog on fostering environmental kinship in the early years.

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Learning ABOUT Nature
The Study of the natural world.

- Inquiry
- Study
- Initiative





Learning IN Nature
The experiences provided in nature.

- Accessibility
- Exploration
- Engagement
- Agency

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Learning WITH Nature
Forming kinship with the natural world.

- Relationship
- Participation
- Connection
- Spirituality




Learning FOR Nature
Recognizing the role of reciprocity in human connection with the rest of nature.

- Guardianship
- Responsibility
- Sustainability

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Download the Guide

Please fill in the details below to receive both the full guide and our weekly 10-minute guided walk. We will also regularly update both the guide and our environmental walks.

First Name:

Last Name:

Work Email:

Home Email:

Phone:

Work Address:

Home Address:

City:

State:


Country:

How did you hear about us?

How often do you want to receive our newsletter?


This information will be used to send you our newsletter and to contact you about our environmental walks.

Environmental Kinship Guide



Thank you!

Your guide will be emailed to you within 24 hours and delivered to your inbox weekly.



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Learning Mode

Engagement Style

Concept

- Observables
- Examples



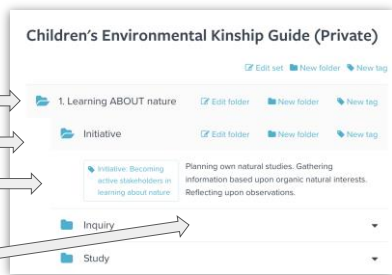
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Learning Mode

Engagement Style

Concept

- Observables



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Exploring Tarikaka over the seasons

Henry Tarikaka is one of our favourite places to visit, and even in the cold still winter we find things to explore - though gumboots come in handy for the stream.



Learning tags: ⓘ

- Exploration: Exhibiting body control and physical resilience within a natural environment
- Connection: Developing a sense of place
- Connection: Developing environmental awareness that leads to an ecological identity



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Rocks and stones are always in abundance, and you like to stop and take your time to choose the 'right' one and throw it, listening to the different sounds they make as they land on the different surfaces. We talk about what we see and hear as you do this.

Learning tags: 🏷️

Tag: Exploration: Exhibiting body control and physical resilience within a natural environment

Children's Environmental Knowledge Guide: ▶️

2. Learning in nature: ▶️ Exploration: Gaining self-confidence and body control whilst exploring and working in physically challenging outdoor space. Communicating an understanding of the world through body movements.

[More stories with this tag](#)

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Paola Malibiran
8 months ago

Kia ora, Amanda. What an exciting and special adventure you had with Henry in Tarikākā. He definitely loves the great outdoors and at the moment he is into climbing our kowhai trees in our Kindy. I asked Henry about it as soon as I've read your family moment and he told me that "throwing rocks" was his favourite part of the walk. Also, he mentioned that he didn't see any "piwakawaka just a tu". I didn't know that there was a tunnel there (I should go check it out myself). I must say we really miss our bush walks in Tarikākā. We are currently revisiting our bush walk procedures to see how we can get more parent help so we can go for bush walks again. I enjoyed reading this story with all the beautiful photographs from the walk and getting to know a little bit of your family history about this special place.

Henry, you have developed a love and sense of responsibility for nature as you grow in confidence as an explorer and leader of outdoors! It makes so much sense to me now why you show great kaitiakitanga (guardianship) and resilience you have in our Kindy...it's because you always go for adventures outside with your whānau. I remember my previous conversation with you when you were talking about Tāne, the god of forest and how you like him cause he is strong just like you.

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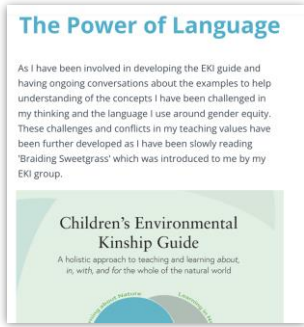


Amanda Higgins
8 months ago

Kia ora Paola, thanks so much for your thoughtful feedback. It is so awesome that you are teaching Henry about the Atua - we often talk about Tawhirimatea at our house as the wind whistles by in a northerly.

Henry also likes to check out the gutters on the roadway outside kindergarten most mornings and is quite concerned when he finds water running along them and there hasn't been any rain. He wonders where it has come from and who is wasting it. He loves to watch the water fall through the grate and we talk about it going out to sea and how important it is to keep it clean and free from rubbish so all the fish stay healthy. (And I'm happy to help on the nature walks if I am not working)

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Learning tags ⓘ Add tag

Developing an awareness of the way that humans are participants in a larger ecosystem that is the earth

Tag: Developing an awareness of the way that humans are participants in a larger ecosystem that is the earth

Children's Environmental Kinship Guide >
 3. Learning WITH nature > Participation
 Engaging in expansive conversation and immersion in nature

Children's Environmental Kinship Guide Outline

A holistic approach to teaching and learning about, in, with, and for the whole of the natural world

By Heather Fox, M.Ed., Megan Geesler, M.Ed., Amanda Higgins, M.Ed., Anne Maude, Ph.D., Claire Warden, Ph.D., and Sheila Williams Ridge, MA

<h4>Learning About Nature:</h4> <p><i>Defined as the study of the natural world</i></p> <p>INQUIRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing fascination for ecology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observing what is noticed in the environment Observing differences and similarities in nature <p>STUDY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacting with others to make sense of the natural world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing observations of the world around them Play acting natural phenomena Collaborating with others to explore nature Organizing information regarding the natural world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying things in nature Comparing, contrasting, sorting, or classifying natural items Charting things found in nature Investigating and researching nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using diverse research resources to learn and think about nature Using specific tools to study the natural world 	<h4>Learning In Nature:</h4> <p><i>Defined as the affordances provided in nature</i></p> <p>ACCESSIBILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiencing predictability and access in and to nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging unimpeded extended time in the natural world Engaging in activities specific to time and place <p>EXPLORATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibiting body control and physical resilience within a natural environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaining self-confidence and body control while exploring and working in physically challenging outdoor space Communicating an understanding of the world through body movements Playing creatively and imaginatively with open-ended natural materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using and using natural materials as props in imaginative play Using the flexible outdoor space to meet their specific play needs <p>ENGAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with the many offerings nature provides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to the play affordances available in nature
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Reports

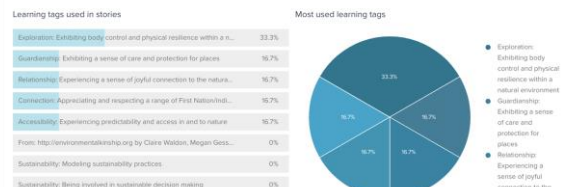


Learning trends Teaching trends Children activity Teacher activity

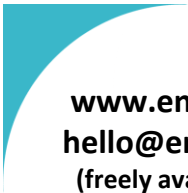
Split view Export to PDF

01/12/2016 - 07/03/2022 All children Children's Environmental Kinship Guide

Tags in Children's Environmental Kinship Guide for 15 children from 01/12/2016 to 07/03/2022



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hello@environmentalkinship.org
(freely available using paper or digital)

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the second webinar**