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A bit about me...

- Nature-based early childhood education consultant (*Founder of Samara Early Learning*)
- Author of *Establishing a Nature-based Preschool & Preschool Beyond Walls*
- 25+ years in education; ~10 of those as a nature-based preschool director



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Today's Agenda

1. What is a nature-based early childhood education (NbECE)?
2. Why is it challenging to shift towards nature?
3. The how of leadership...
 - Administrative
 - Pedagogical
 - Human element



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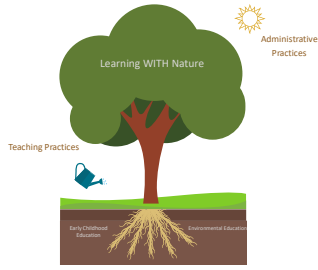




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an educational approach where experiences learning WITH nature are core to the teaching & learning

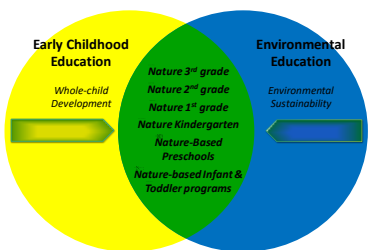
Nature-Based Early Childhood Education (NbECE)



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The blending of two disciplines

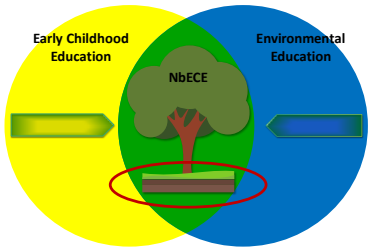
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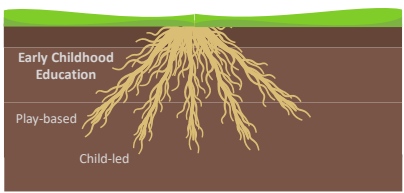
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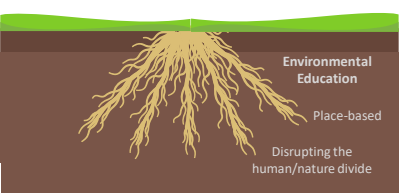
Roots in Early Childhood Education for Whole Child Development



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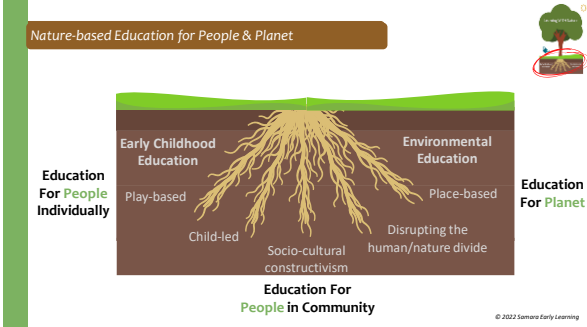
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Roots in Environmental Education for Environmental Sustainability



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Nature-based Pedagogy

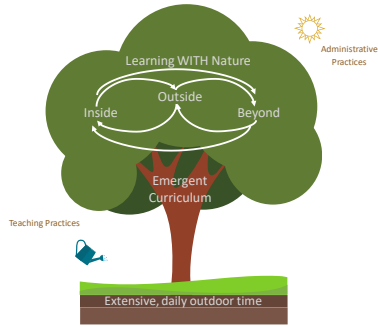



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- Starts with an experience with nature
- Sparks children's interest in learning about the world
- Builds over time
- Emphasis is relational (rather than location or information)

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Nurturing Nature-based Early Childhood Education

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Administrative Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies & procedures to support pedagogy (e.g., site assessments, risky play) • Staff support (e.g., professional learning for teachers, team planning time) • Family involvement & support (e.g., newsletters, education, social events) • Logistical support (e.g., extra clothing) • Financial support (e.g., budget management, fundraising) • Ongoing maintenance (e.g., hazard removal) • Clearly communicated philosophy (to current & potential stakeholders) | <p>Teaching Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize child-led activities (i.e., more free play than teacher-led activities) • Prioritize outdoor time (e.g., all weather, beginning of the day) • Physical Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic, place-based integration of nature in all spaces • Prevalence of loose parts • Three learning spaces (i.e., Inside, Outside, Beyond) • Teacher-child Interactions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily child-led activities • Teacher-led activities connect learning I/O/B • Co-learners with children • Support of beneficial risky play |
|---|--|

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Two aspects of leadership...

Administrative leadership
supporting the operation of the organization



Pedagogical leadership
supporting teaching & learning



...all dependent on the human element!

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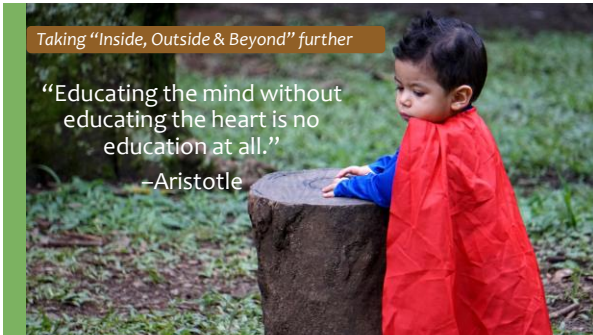
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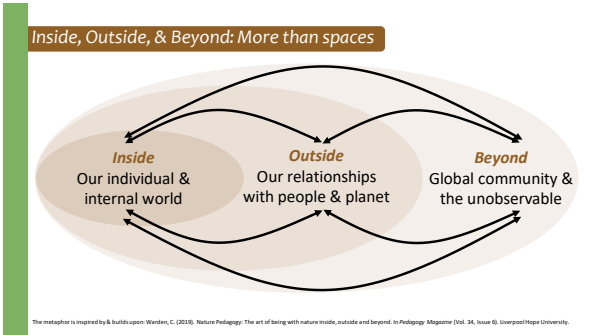
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Inside, Outside, & Beyond: Child perspective



Inside

- Physical health (balance, coordination, etc.)
- Joy
- Identity & self-esteem
- Curiosities & interests



Outside

- Problem-solving
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Curiosity
- Sense-making (regarding others & the planet)



Beyond

- Awe
- Wonder
- Surprise
- Connection to something bigger than themselves

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Inside, Outside, & Beyond: Teachers



Inside

- Purpose for teaching
- Identity as a teacher
- Self-confidence as a teacher
- Curiosities & interests
- Joy



Outside

- Connections with children & families
- Relationships with teaching team & community
- Interests in others
- Relationship with nature



Beyond

- Experiences awe & wonder
- Influence on the field of ECE

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Inside, Outside, & Beyond: Leaders



Inside

- What is my WHY for NbECE?
- What about leadership brings me joy?
- What about leadership frustrates me?
- What makes me "me"?
- What kind of leader am I?



Outside

- How do I connect with children & families?
- How do I relate with my team? Community?
- What in the world intrigues me?
- What is my relationship with nature?



Beyond

- When do I experience awe & wonder? Of nature? Of other programs?
- How am I influencing the field of ECE?

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Provide materials & equipment

- Children's clothing
- Storage for children's clothing
- Teacher clothing
- Learning materials & equipment
- Furniture & features
- Safety equipment



Administrative leadership



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But HOW do we get that stuff?!

- Budget for it 😊
- Donations (gear, money, etc.)
- Wholesale rates
- Local businesses
- Community foundation grants
- Larger national grants



Administrative leadership



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Establish appropriate policies & procedures

- Know the licensing rules!
- Conduct Site Assessment(s)



Administrative leadership



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Nature-based Education Site Assessment

The site assessment is intended to be a broad view of potential hazards in a particular space. This site assessment should then be used with a benefit-risk assessment for specific activities that occur in that space (with medium- and high-risk activities having detailed written protocols).



Location/Organization:	ABC Preschool	Date:	August 15, 2019
Assessor(s):	Betty White	Scheduled review date:	January 15, 2020

As you're identifying potential hazards, consider non-human (animals, plants, weather, land features, etc.) and human (litter left behind, encounters with dog walkers, intoxicated person, etc.) hazards. People at risk may include children, teachers, support staff, families, and so forth. Existing

Potential Hazard	People at risk	Existing mitigation procedures
Pond at back of schoolyard property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Teachers • Visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children never visit alone • Stop before getting to the pond to remind of rules • Mark boundaries at arrival for shoreline exploration • Children must not wade beyond the height of their boots • On the dock, walk in the middle; get on belly to touch/look more closely at the water

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Establish appropriate policies & procedures

- Know the licensing rules!
- Conduct Site Assessment(s)
- Remove hazards (poison ivy, snags, etc.)
- Conduct Benefit-Risk Assessments for activities (i.e., Why do this? What could hurt us? How prevent injury?)



Administrative leadership



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Benefit-Risk Assessment of Activities in Nature-based Early Childhood Education

Location/Organization:		Date:	
Assessor(s):		Review date:	

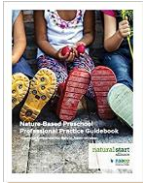
The three questions driving this assessment: 1) What are the benefits of doing this activity? 2) How might we (or nature) get hurt doing this activity? 3) How can we keep ourselves, each other, and nature safe doing this activity?

Activity	How will young children benefit from this activity?	What are the possible hazards of this activity?	Who is at risk?	What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?	Overall risk rating: L/M/H
Puddle jumping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's fun! Jumping Balance Discussion of IED displacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falling down & hitting head Slipping on wet surfaces (Killing clothes dirty) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child jumping Bystanders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must wear rainboots No running & jumping on asphalt or concrete surfaces If jumping from an elevated surface (e.g., log), no running on that surface Check for bystanders before jumping 	Low

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Establish Appropriate Policies & Procedures

- Establish protocols for high-risk activities
 - Involve the children in determining risk, benefits, & protocols (*i.e., Why do this? What could hurt us? How prevent injury?*)



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Nature-based Education Detailed Benefit-Risk Assessment Protocol

This detailed benefit-risk assessment protocol focuses on specific activities that occur in a space—particularly the medium- to high-risk activities. These types of activities need clearly outlined procedures to minimize the risk of injury.

Activity:		Scheduled review date:	
Date protocol written:			
How will young children benefit from this activity? (physically, cognitively, socially & emotionally)			
What are the possible risks of this activity?			
What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?			

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<p>What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?</p> <p>Equipment needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • <p>Pre-activity procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <p>Activity procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <p>Post-activity procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.
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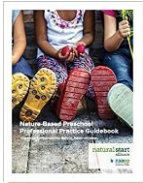
Example of using a saw

<p>How will young children benefit from this activity? (physically, cognitively, socially & emotionally)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine motor development • Self-regulation • Creativity • Confidence • Independence • Features of wood strength • Tool skills
<p>What are the possible risks of this activity?</p> <p>Child gets cut, cuts others, eye injury from sawdust</p>
<p>What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?</p> <p>Equipment needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red rope to create safety circle • Saw • Sawhorse or vice • Wood • Gloves • Safety glasses <p>Pre-activity procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher will gather & inspect the equipment 2. Teacher will create a workstation with equipment and surrounded by a designated safety circle: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Locate away from active/high-traffic areas b. On a flat surface 3. Teachers will discuss the rules and procedures with children before: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teacher must be present before they can saw b. Activity is limited to 1 teacher and 3 students at once c. Reminder of the workstation safety circle d. Always wear a glove on the non-tool hand e. Always wear safety glasses f. No talking to friends while you are sawing

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Establish Appropriate Policies & Procedures

- Establish protocols for high-risk activities
 - Involve the children in determining risk, benefits, & protocols (i.e., Why do this? What could hurt us? How prevent injury?)
- Encourage teacher-child interactions & conversations around risk



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Encourage (& support) small shifts in practice



• **Bring more natural materials inside:**

- 1. Natural instead of manufactured
- 2. Authentic instead of cartoon-like
- 3. Avoid stereotypes
- 4. Represent local nature
- 5. Diversity of people having positive outdoor experiences
- 6. Connect indoors to outdoors
- 7. Take advantage of science & math learning



For more, visit SamaraEL.com/toys



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Encourage (& support) small shifts in practice



• **Increase outdoor time**

- Integrate more loose parts in the outdoor play area
- Add 5 minutes to outdoor time; then next week maybe another 5
- Hold large & small group meetings outside
- Have snacks, meals &/or rest time outside
- Start the day outdoors



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Encourage ongoing professional learning

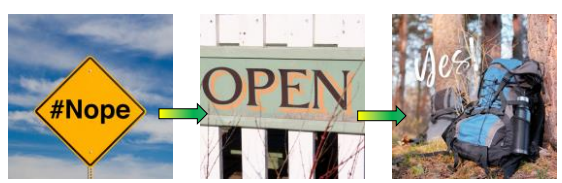


- **How can we use nature to support children's learning?** (the goals we already have for them)
- **How can nature help us solve challenges we have in the classroom now?**
- Explore a variety of formats:
 - Webinars, workshops, books...
 - Professional learning communities
 - Peer coaching
 - Consultant coaching



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Start where people are



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Create a culture of curiosity—Inside, Outside & Beyond

“Choosing to be curious is choosing to be vulnerable because it requires us to surrender to uncertainty.”
~Brené Brown



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Encourage self-reflection



Inside

- What is my WHY for NbeECE?
- What brings me joy?
- What frustrates me?
- What makes me “me”?
- What kind of teacher am I?



Outside

- How do I connect with children & families?
- How do I relate with my team? Community?
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Beyond

- When do I experience awe & wonder?
- How am I influencing the field of ECE?

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Where we've been

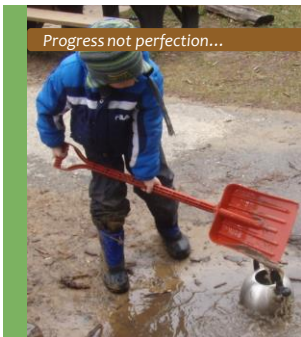
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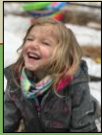


- Be intentional in leading & making decisions
- Regularly stop & reflect on your practices
- There will ALWAYS be compromises & trade-offs
- Let the "WHY" drive everything

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Keep in mind...

- Your inner work—stay curious
- Human element of administrative & pedagogical leadership
- The work leads to happy, healthy children, families, & teachers



Keep changing lives!

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Thank you! Questions?



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Rachel A. Larimore, Ph.D.
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