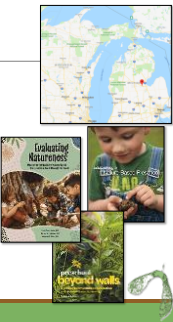




1

A bit about me...

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



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 *A huge thanks goes to Dr. Julie Causton and Kristie Pratt-Fronczak of Inclusive Schooling for their "The Inclusive System Change Path" which was the inspiration for the Trail Map.

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Two aspects of leadership...

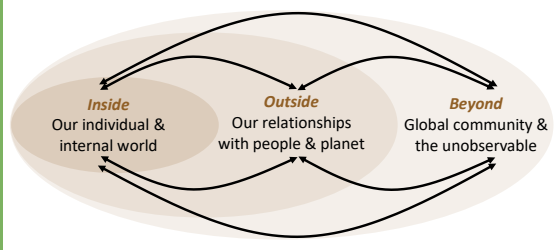
Administrative leadership
supporting the operation of the organization

Pedagogical leadership
supporting teaching & learning

...all dependent on the human element!

6

Inside, Outside, & Beyond: More than spaces



The metaphor is inspired by & builds upon Warren, C. (2010). Nature Pedagogy: The art of being with nature inside, outside and beyond. In Pedagogic Magazine (Vol. 34, Issue 6). Liverpool Hope University.

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Inside, Outside, & Beyond: Leaders

The 'Inside' section includes:

- 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?

The 'Outside' section includes:

- 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?

The 'Beyond' section includes:

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

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The importance of "doing the work"

The text box contains the quote:


"There is no through-you work without in-you work"
 -Dr. Nikki Lanier

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Leadership steps to why nature-based pedagogy

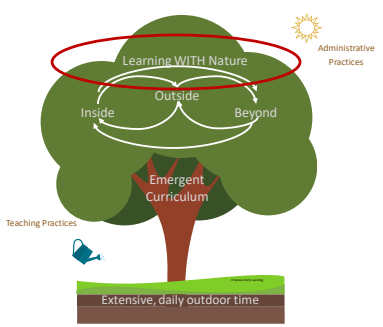
- Leadership team develops a shared understanding of nature-based pedagogy.



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Nature-based Pedagogy

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



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Three types of nature learning...



...emphasizing learning with

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Learning WITH nature



- 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)
- Assumes nature provides more than we can plan for—serving as another teacher!

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Leadership steps to why nature-based pedagogy

- Leadership team develops a shared understanding of nature-based pedagogy.
- Explore together the various ways nature-based pedagogy can be implemented.



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Different models, common pedagogy

A few terms you'll hear:

- Nature-based preschools (*generally U.S. term*)
- Forest preschools, Forest kindergarten, Waldkindergarten
- Forest School
- Nature kindergarten
- Nature 1st-3rd grade



Pedagogy is more important than what the program is called!



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A collection of practices, each on a continuum



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Explore what resonates for your program

- Visit other programs (*multiple programs!*)
- Can't visit?
 - Check out websites
 - Explore the social media of different programs
 - Attend workshops & professional development
 - Dig into nature-based pedagogy books



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Leadership steps to why nature-based pedagogy

- The leadership team develops a shared understanding of nature-based pedagogy.
- Explore together the various ways nature-based pedagogy can be implemented.
- All leadership team members explore their personal WHY for this work.



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Nature-based Education for People & Planet



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Nature is Necessary for Healthy Development

- **Physically**—balance; coordination; active; illness recovery; myopia prevention
- **Cognitively**—engaging all of the senses; creative thinking; better concentration
- **Socially & Emotionally**—problem solving; interacting with peers; ability to handle stress
- **Spiritually**—connecting to something bigger than themselves
- **Building lifelong stewards!**



Visit Children & Nature Network's Resource Hub for more research!

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Exploring WHY

"I want to teach with nature so that _____."

Reflection questions:

- Of all the benefits, what rises to the top for me?
- What about nature-based education excites me the most? The least?
- What about being outside with kids brings me the greatest joys? Greatest stress?
- If I was explaining to my best friend why I was excited about this new direction at work, I would say...



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Leadership steps to why nature-based pedagogy

- The leadership team develops a shared understanding of nature-based pedagogy.
- Explore together the various ways nature-based pedagogy can be implemented.
- All leadership team members explore their personal WHY for this work.
- Support the leaders who continue to have questions about nature-based pedagogy.



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The importance of a clear vision

Before we can build the world we want to live in, we have to imagine it.

-Simon Sinek

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Leadership steps to create a clear picture

- Collect data on the current use of nature-based pedagogy. (What are we already doing?)
- Share & analyze the data with the entire leadership team.



Check out the Nature-based Education Rating Scale (NABERS) for this step!

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Leadership steps to make our vision public

- Craft or revise the program’s current vision statement—*What will success look & feel like?*
- Develop a clear rationale for the new vision using key findings from Trail Marker 2 (current practices).
- Get feedback on the vision from a diversity of program stakeholders (staff, families, board, local early childhood experts & regulators)



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Leadership steps to make our vision public

- Once finalized, share the vision and rationale both internally and externally.
- Review the vision and rationale yearly & revise as needed.



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A clear vision inspires


“There are only two ways to influence human behavior: You can manipulate it or you can inspire it.”
-Simon Sinek

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Leadership steps to identify adjustments

- Identify where current practices (TM:2) & the vision (TM:3) do/don't align
- Explore & name the current strengths
- Explore & name the current opportunities for growth



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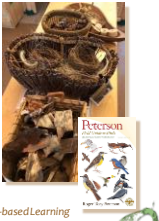
Opportunities to improve material selection?



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Be more intentional with nature indoors?

- 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, check out the 2021 ECI webinar *Nature-based Learning Environments: What Every Early Childhood Program Leader Needs to Know!*

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Spend more of the day outside?

- Hold the large group meeting outdoors
- Have snack outside
- Have rest time outside



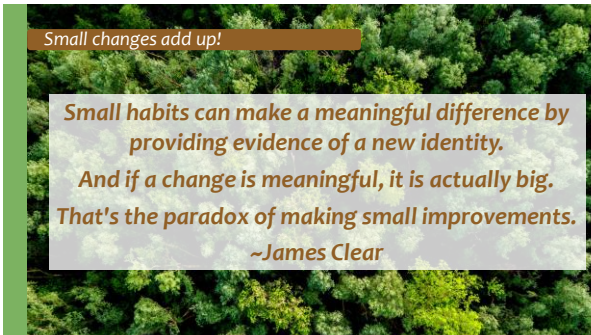
* Start with "easy" weather days & work your way into the "hard" weather days

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Provide more natural materials & loose parts



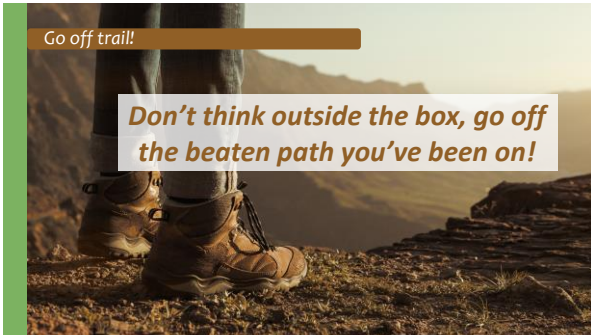
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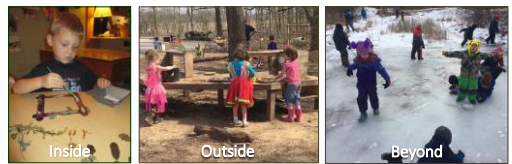
Leadership steps to reimagine practices

- Identify program schedules to prioritize time outdoors and nature-based pedagogy.



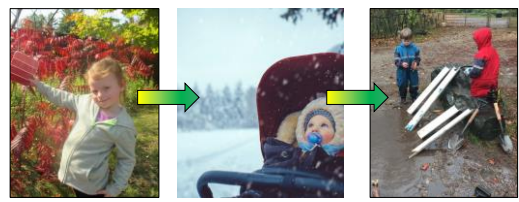
40

Outdoor time at the beginning of the day!

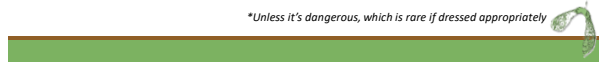


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Go outside in ALL weather*



**Unless it's dangerous, which is rare if dressed appropriately*



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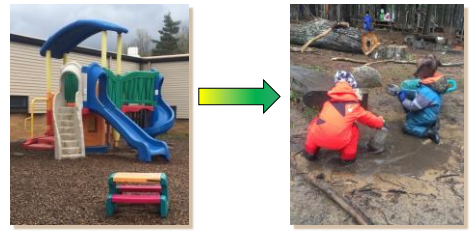
Leadership steps to reimagine practices

- Identify program schedules to prioritize time outdoors and nature-based pedagogy.
- Identify ways to strategically adjust the physical learning environment to support nature-based pedagogy.



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Traditional playground to a natural play area



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Leadership steps to reimagine practices

- Identify program schedules to prioritize time outdoors and nature-based pedagogy.
- Identify ways to strategically adjust the physical learning environment to support nature-based pedagogy.
- Identify adjustments to the curriculum, planning, and ongoing assessment approaches to emphasize emergent curriculum rooted in the seasons.



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Leadership steps to reimagine practices

Explore...

- alternative schedules for collaborative team planning
- more nature-based family education & engagement
- partnerships with local nature-based education organizations



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Possible tools to help reimagine practice

- Remember, others have gone off trail before you!
- Visit other programs than you did in TM:1
- Reach out to NBECE experts
- Books, journals, magazines, etc.
- Attend nature-based professional development



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Leadership steps to using Nb practices



- Explore current nature-based practices & identify opportunities
- Develop professional development plan for the team & individuals around nature-based teaching



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Leadership steps to using Nb practices



- PD where team members can learn from each other & outside nature-based education experts
- Establish & communicate on expectations around nature-based teaching



naturalstart alliance



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Set & communicate clear expectations

- What is required?
"You must go outside every day for at least 30 minutes unless the weather is dangerous. The policy manual outlines what constitutes 'dangerous.'"
- What is preferred?
"Ideally small groups will relate to the recent hikes into the woods."
- What is not okay?
"Children cannot walk barefoot on the rock pile next door because the rocks are so sharp."



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Leadership steps for ongoing support

- Leadership team continues to explore how to support team members through change



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Ongoing support might look like...

- Purchasing new or replacement equipment
- Clarifications on policies & procedures
- Providing ongoing professional learning opportunities
- Listening!



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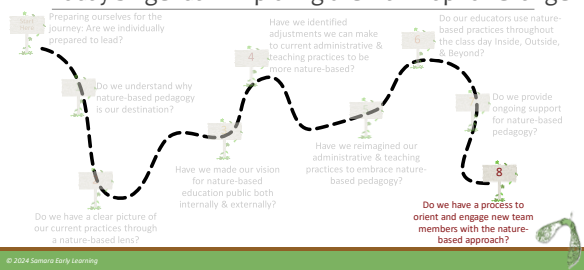
Leadership steps for ongoing support

- Leadership team continues to explore how to support team members through change
- Design a systematic way to assess educators' successes & needs
- Create genuine ways to celebrate successes & progress



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Leadership steps to orient & engage new staff

- Establish a process for orienting and onboarding new educators on the nature-based approach
- Establish a process for orienting and onboarding new leadership team members on the nature-based approach



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Possible tools to help orient & engage new staff

- Hiring materials clearly describe program philosophy & approach
- Policy & procedures manuals
- Foundational trainings & orientation meetings
- Videos (*tutorials, pedagogy-related, etc.*)
- Conversations & mentoring within your team



Inspiration is critical here as well!



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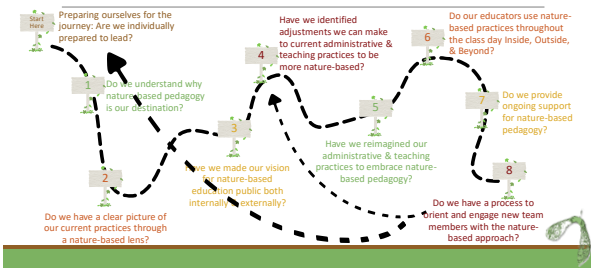
Tips for your journey



- There is no time limit!
- Slow & steady for the best journey (*because it's not a race!*)
- Remember you're a human leading other humans—have grace for everyone

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Where we've been...



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Thank you!

Samara
Early Learning
Helping nature-based education take flight

Rachel A. Larimore, Ph.D.

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Scan to take the Nature Journey quiz & get your custom Toolkit!

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