

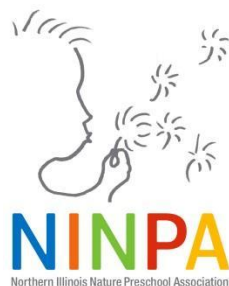
Worth the Risk: Exploring the Rewards of Connecting Young Children to Nature

Midwest Early Childhood Educator Symposium

June 3, 2017

The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Illinois Route 53, Lisle, Illinois
Thornhill Education Center, Arbor Room

*Presented in partnership by
The Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association and The Morton Arboretum*



Schedule

8:45–9:30 a.m. Registration and Demonstrations

9:30–9:40 a.m. Welcome and Introduction, Arbor Room

Speakers: Megan Dunning, The Morton Arboretum, Sean Shaffer, Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association, and Megan Gessler, Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association

9:40–10:40 a.m. Keynote Presentation, Arbor Room

Speaker: Ken Finch, founder of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood

10:40–10:55 a.m. Break

10:55 a.m.– 12:10 p.m. Session 1

Session 1A: Much More than ABC's and 123's – Using Nature and Service Learning to Assess What Really Matters

Speaker: Peter Dargatz, Hamilton School District, WI

Location: Arbor Room

Session 1B: On the Trails: The Benefits (and Challenges) of Hiking with Children

Speakers: Catherine Koons Hubbard and Collette Jarvela-Kuhnen, Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool, WI

Location: Founder's Room

Session 1C: Avoiding Ecophobia: How to help children love nature before asking them to save it.

Speaker: Katie Slivovsky, Chicago Children's Museum, IL

Location: Godshalk Hall

Session 1D: Exploring Scientific Inquiry Inside and Out

Speakers: Abby Dye and Amanda Smith, Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, IL

Location: Classroom B (downstairs)

12:15–1:10 p.m. Lunch – Box lunch pick up in Gallery (downstairs)

Seating in Classrooms C & D (downstairs), and Patio (upstairs)

1:10–1:55 p.m. Session 2

Session 2A: A Curriculum of Tools for the Urban, Nature-Based Educator

Speaker: Sarah Sheldon, Chicago Botanic Garden, IL

Location: Arbor Room

Session 2B: Turning Screen Time into Green Time

Speakers: Emily Dombrowski and Kimberly Adams, Kendall County Forest Preserve, IL

Location: Founder's Room

Session 2C: Who's Coming for Dinner? Plants & Pollinators

Speaker: Amy Hamilton, Plano School District, IL

Location: Godshalk Hall

Session 2D: Administrative Panel Open Discussion

Speakers: Ken Finch, Antioch University, Catherine Koons Hubbard, Schlitz Audubon Nature Preschool, Beth Wilson, Hobson School, and Teresa Weed, North Park Village Nature Center

Location: Classroom B (downstairs)

2:10–2:55 p.m. Session 3

Session 3A: Fostering Early Childhood Enthusiasm for Nature Education

Speaker: Matt Flower, Urban Ecology Center, WI

Location: Arbor Room

Session 3B: How Nature Play Supports STEM Learning

Speaker: Patty Born-Selly, Hamline University, MN

Location: Founder's Room

Session 3C: Managing Risk in Nature-based Early Education

Speakers: Beth Wilson, Hobson School, IL and Megan Gessler, Kendall County Forest Preserve, IL

Location: Godshalk Hall

Session 3D: Recycle Your Way to a Day of Play: Learning for those who love Mother Earth

Speakers: Laura Scheinholtz and Joyce Hemphill, Co-authors of *The Power of Playful Learning: The Green Edition*

Location: Classroom B (downstairs)

Session 3E: Sharing Honeybees with Kids – A Field Trip Without the Bus

Speaker: Ed Bell, Belfry Bees & Honey, IL

Location: Classroom C/D (Downstairs)

3:00–5:00 p.m. Cash Bar Reception at the Thornhill Shelter

Abstracts and Speaker Biographies

Keynote: Worth the Risk: Exploring the Rewards of Connecting Young Children to Nature

Speaker: Ken Finch, founder of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood

Young children's nature-based play inevitably involves a degree of risk, yet the danger is less than in many day-to-day activities that we hardly give a second thought to! Crucially, we are now coming to understand that managed risk is developmentally vital for children - and that nature provides perfect settings for age-appropriate challenges and the multi-dimensional rewards they can bring. Ken Finch's keynote address will urge us to reconsider our preconceived notions about risk, and help us learn why and how to safely incorporate it in our programs.

Biography: Ken Finch has been working in environmental education for over 40 years, with a focus on early childhood, nature-based play, and nature preschools. Ken has led three nature centers, served in senior management positions at two children's museums, and was the Executive Director of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood throughout its ten years of operation. Although Ken now claims to be retired, he continues to speak and write about children and nature, and is an adjunct faculty member in the nature preschools/forest kindergarten program at Antioch University New England.

Session 1A: Much More than ABC's and 123's – Using Nature and Service Learning to Assess What Really Matters

Speaker: Peter Dargatz

In this “assessment age,” reaching rising academic standards can take students and teachers away from what really matters. Using a unique “4P” philosophy that emphasizes nature and service learning, find out how assessments are used to reach today's standards while providing students what they really need (and want).

Biography: Peter Dargatz leads a nature kindergarten program at Woodside Elementary of the Hamilton School District in Sussex, Wisconsin. He received his Master's Degree in Elementary Education from Cardinal Stritch University and is a National Board Certified Teacher. He is also the Tyke Hike Coordinator for the Waukesha/Milwaukee County Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

Session 1B: On the Trails: The Benefits (and Challenges) of Hiking with Children

Speakers: Catherine Koons Hubbard and Collette Jarvela-Kuhnen

This presentation will address the following:

- The purpose of hiking in nature with children.
- What children gain from hiking that is unique to the trails, and unlike what they get in fenced-in outdoor play areas or indoor environments. Examples include a deep and lasting connection to nature, as well as a sense of unity and trust among classmates and teachers.
- Some of the challenges of hiking with children, including safety and bathroom concerns!
- The most practical solutions to these challenges
- Summary: what have our most successful hikes been, and why?

Biographies: Catherine Koons Hubbard is the Director of the Nature Preschool at Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was a Nature Preschool Teacher from 2008-2015. She holds a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of several essays on the benefits of nature-based play.

Collette Jarvela-Kuhnen is a Nature Preschool Teacher at Schlitz Audubon Nature Center. Before that, she was the Director of the Brown Deer Preschool in Brown Deer, Wisconsin. Collette has a degree in Psychology with a concentration in Early Childhood from the University of Wisconsin, Lacrosse.

Session 1C: Avoiding Ecophobia: How to help children love nature before asking them to save it.
Speaker: Katie Slivovsky

Through audience participation and lively discussion, we'll explore the research and philosophy of author/educator David Sobel and Dr. Louise Chawla--among others--as we dig into how bad news about the environment impacts children. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on the value of their own nature play experiences and examine how they relate to children today – especially when it comes to the value of risk. Participants will also explore which nature activities and conservation actions are best-suited to children of different ages.

Biography: Katie Slivovsky is Exhibit Development Director at Chicago Children's Museum. She has a BS in Wildlife Biology and writes about age-appropriate nature education for *NEWSWEEK* and many other publications. She developed Brookfield Zoo's *Hamill Family Play Zoo* which won the top exhibit award from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Session 1D: Exploring Scientific Inquiry Inside and Out
Speakers: Abby Dye and Amanda Smith

Explore strategies to engage young scientists in inquiry based learning by bringing the outdoors in and bringing the students outdoors. Participant will make observations as learners and engage in strategies for developing student skills of asking questions, making scientific investigations, and reflecting on and sharing discoveries.

Biographies: Abby Dye is the Early Education Programs Specialist at the Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, where she works on a multi-institutional partnership for early science educators. Abby has a M.A. in Child Development from Tufts University, a B.A. in Psychology/Education from Denison University, and classroom teaching experience.

Amanda Smith is a Museum Educator at Chicago Academy of Sciences/Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. She works to develop and implement programs and curriculum the Nature Museum offers to local schools. She holds a B.A. from Oberlin College and a M.S. from Bank Street College of Education in Museum Education.

Session 2A: A Curriculum of Tools for the Urban, Nature-Based Educator

Speaker: Sarah Sheldon

How can you support both nature-based education and emergent learning in an urban setting? With the use of tools of course! Tools can directly support the wonderment and awe of the natural world while developing affective, cognitive and psychomotor processes. Using tools can also help pave the way in finding appropriate spaces to indulge in nature-based play.

Biography: Sarah Sheldon is a Nature-based Early Childhood Educator for the Chicago Botanic Garden Nature Preschool. She holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies and is currently pursuing a MS.Ed. rooted in Nature-based Early Childhood Education. She was recently awarded a fellowship through Antioch University New England to document urban nature-based education.

Session 2B: Turning Screen Time into Green Time

Speakers: Emily Dombrowski and Kimberly Adams

Too much screen time can mean academic and behavioral challenges, obesity, social-emotional issues, and loss of attention span. Nature offers a great counter-balance. In this session, participants will learn how to integrate what their students are learning through screen time and adapt it to help them build connections with the natural world.

Biographies: Emily Dombrowski is an Environmental Education Coordinator for the Kendall County Forest Preserve District. She graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2015 with a B.S. in Earth, Society and Environmental Studies and a minor in Communication. Emily enjoys hiking, yoga and sharing her excitement about nature with others.

Kimberly Adams teaches first grade for a private Catholic School in Warrenville, IL and teaches part time for the Kendall County Forest Preserve District. She has a B.A. degree from Western Illinois University and a Masters degree in Elementary Education from DePaul University.

Session 2C: Who's Coming for Dinner? Plants & Pollinators

Speaker: Amy Hamilton

This session is designed to help you gain confidence in leading your students in an outdoor study of flowering plants and their pollinators. Come explore the incredible world of flowers!

Biography: Amy Hamilton as a groundskeeper for the Plano School District she has created native prairie gardens. These gardens improve wildlife habitat and offer teachers and their students outdoor spaces to learn about the natural world. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Science from Western Illinois University and an M.A. in Elementary Education from Aurora University.

Session 2D: Administrative Panel Open Discussion

Speakers: Ken Finch, Catherine Koons Hubbard, Beth Wilson, and Teresa Weed

A wealth of administrative knowledge is available in this facilitated session where participants are invited to ask questions pertaining to the executing of nature-based early childhood programs. The panel consists of a former director of two of the country's largest nature centers, a director of a nature-based preschool at a well-known nature center, a director of a child-centered cooperative preschool and a director of a forest playschool that exists on park district property. With this variety of knowledge in one room, it's the perfect time to come prepared with those questions that you have been dying to ask!

Biographies: Ken Finch has been working in environmental education for over 40 years, with a focus on early childhood, nature-based play, and nature preschools. Ken has led three nature centers, served in senior management positions at two children's museums, and was the Executive Director of Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood throughout its ten years of operation. Although Ken now claims to be retired, he continues to speak and write about children and nature, and is an adjunct faculty member in the nature preschools/forest kindergarten program at Antioch University New England.

Catherine Koons Hubbard, the Director of the Nature Preschool at Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was a Nature Preschool Teacher from 2008-2015. She holds a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of several essays on the benefits of nature-based play.

Beth Wilson has 16 years of experience in education in both formal and complementary settings. Currently, Beth is the Director of Hobson Cooperative School in Naperville, IL. She has a B.S. degree in elementary education and a MS.Ed. in curriculum and instruction, specialized in early childhood and environmental education.

Teresa Weed spent summers as a kid learning that if you stand perfectly still by the sugar water with your finger extended, a hummingbird will land on it. She is the founder of Forest Playschool, an outdoor preschool at North Park Village Nature Center in Chicago. Teresa has an MA in Zoology from Miami University of Ohio.

Session 3A: Fostering Early Childhood Enthusiasm for Nature Education

Speaker: Matt Flower

Matt Flower, an environmental educator with the Urban Ecology Center, has been introducing nature to people aged 1 to 101 for over 10 years. Along with providing techniques, activities and templates for nature education, Mr. Flower (that's what the kids call him) will inspire you with this fun and practical presentation.

Biography: Matt Flower earned his B.B.A. from UW-Whitewater and after a 7-year stint in business, he decided to follow his passion for children and nature. Currently an Environmental Educator with the Urban Ecology Center in Milwaukee, Matt has been introducing nature to people aged 1 to 101 for the last 15 years.

Session 3B: How Nature Play Supports STEM Learning

Speaker: Patty Born-Selly

Nature is THE perfect context for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)-centric play. In nature play and exploration, young children naturally engage in the practices and thinking skills associated with STEM. Rather than striving to make nature play “academic,” learn how to recognize and support children’s joyful, STEM-rich play.

Biography: Patty Born-Selly is an assistant professor of STEM and environmental education at Hamline University in St Paul, MN. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in education. Her research focuses on the role of animals in children's development and how nature play helps children develop STEM thinking skills.

Session 3C: Managing Risk in Nature-based Early Education

Speakers: Beth Wilson and Megan Gessler

Join us as we identify the risks and benefits associated with a variety of nature-based experiences. Explore how incorporating the practice of Risk Benefit Assessment can enhance and improve risk management. Take home a resource list and a Risk Benefit Assessment tool to share with your community.

Biographies: Beth Wilson has 16 years of experience in education in both formal and complementary settings. Currently, Beth is the Director of Hobson Cooperative School in Naperville, IL. She has a B.S. degree in elementary education and a MS.Ed. in curriculum and instruction, specialized in early childhood and environmental education.

Megan Gessler is Director and Lead teacher at Natural Beginnings Early Learning Program. With over 12 years working in education, Megan found her calling in nature-based early childhood education (NbECE) and as such founded the Northern Illinois Nature Preschool Association. Megan is currently working on her MS.Ed. with a certificate in NbECE.

Session 3D: Recycle Your Way to a Day of Play: Learning for those who love Mother Earth

Speakers: Laura Scheinholtz and Joyce Hemphill

Being in nature means learning to respect nature. Come play with us and discover why creating toys and games from recycled or reusable materials is not only environmentally responsible, but fun and developmentally beneficial. Bring your very own homemade examples home with you!

Biographies: Laura Scheinholtz is an author and workshop designer, Laura has promoted recycle play in early childhood for 10 years. She holds a doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Wisconsin - Madison, where she received the Morgridge Center Civic Engagement Award for her work on play and child development in the community.

Joyce Hemphill is a former college professor for 25+ years. Joyce writes/gives workshops on creating playful learning activities using recyclables. In 2013 she, Laura, and another colleague received a U.S. Play Coalition Action Grant to promote play through community events. Joyce has a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from The Ohio State University.

Session 3E: Sharing Honeybees with Kids – A Field Trip without the Bus

Speaker: Ed Bell

This hands-on informative program will provide guidelines for evaluating potential presenters, provide educators with ideas & resources to present themselves, & ideas for selling it to admin/parents.

Biography: Ed Bell, ED.D, owner/educator of Belfry Bees & Honey, has been keeping bees and sharing the wonders of the honeybee's gift of life to all since 2006. Dr.Bell provides educational programs and classes in STEM-Based programs, bees and beekeeping while managing over 150 hives in Kendall, Kane and DuPage counties.

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other plants from around the world, to display them across naturally beautiful
landscapes for people to study and enjoy, and to learn how to grow them in ways
that enhance our environment.*

*Our goal is to encourage the planting and conservation of trees and other plants
for a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world.*