

4TH ANNUAL

Nature Preschool Conference

FRIDAY – SUNDAY
JUNE 5-7, 2015



Irvine

Explore • Respect • Protect Nature

ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE

Nature-based preschools are re-focusing the lens on early childhood education. Join us for the fourth annual conference to address the unique benefits and challenges of nature-based curriculum in early childhood programs.

QUICK CONFERENCE DETAILS

- Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 5-7, 2015.
- At Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills, Md. (25 minutes outside of Baltimore).
- Prices range from \$50 - \$250.
- Rustic camping available on-site. Hotels are nearby.
- Professional development credits are available. Check online for details.

Attendees will participate in engaging workshops under the following strands:



Nature Immersion & Wild Nature Play



Nature-based Learning in Urban Settings



Best Practices and Curricula in Nature Preschools

ABOUT IRVINE NATURE CENTER

Irvine Nature Center is an environmental education organization. Our mission is to educate and inspire current and future generations to explore, respect and protect nature.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Playing in the World of Nature, Wherever You Are...

Wendolyn Bird: Tender Tracks, Fairfax, CA

Friday, 7 – 9 p.m.

Our time together will provide opportunities for you to explore the many forms of play within the context of developing deeper connections to the natural world. Whether you are a predominantly indoor or outdoor school you will be offered tools to enhance the benefits and gifts of nature.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Biography

Wendolyn Bird brings a unique and outstanding set of talents, training and experience to all her work with young children and caregivers. Her workshops and trainings for educators, caregivers and parents incorporate story, song and music and are based on thousands of hours out in the field running her completely outdoor preschool, Tender Tracks Tales and Trails, as well as her popular outdoor summer camps for older children.



Wendolyn's skill set is enhanced by her experience as a licensed Psychiatric Technician, who worked in child-adolescent psychiatric units, juvenile court schools and the county jail. She has taught for many years in schools with diverse populations, has been a professional storyteller and musician as well as a mother of two grown daughters.



WORKSHOPS

Presenters are invited from across the nation to share meaningful, inspirational workshops. We encourage participants to ask questions and share personal experiences with our community of conference-goers. It's how we all learn from each other!

WORKSHOP STRANDS



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KEYNOTE WORKSHOP

Tales From Earth to Sky

Wendolyn Bird: Tender Tracks
Saturday, 9-11 a.m.

This workshop explores the playful use of stories, songs and nature experiences to develop young children's relationship to the natural world. We will discover the art and practice of playful nature awareness games and participate in practices that reveal the benefits of singing and storytelling. We will also cultivate our own deeper connections to the natural world. Please bring your curious nature and a willingness to be with others in a welcoming and collaborative spirit.



From Vision to Reality:

Establishing a Nature Preschool

Monica Wiedel-Lubinski and Karen Madigan: The Nature Preschool at Irvine

Saturday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Sunday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Nature preschools are growing in popularity as research continues to prove that we thrive when we deepen our connection with nature. Discover practical approaches from Monica and Karen, founders of The Nature Preschool at Irvine. Our discussion will touch on policies, licensing, budgets, curriculum, student behavior, scheduling, parent relationships, hiring, assessment, health and safety topics – bring your questions as discussion is encouraged!



From the Big City to the Sheltering Woods

Amy Davidson and Jasmine Williams: The Ark Preschool

Saturday, 11-12:30 p.m.

The Ark at Johnston Square is Maryland's only MSDE-accredited preschool program designed for three- and four-year-olds in homeless situations. The Ark has partnered with The Nature Preschool at Irvine for three years by making monthly visits. This session explores our long-term partnership and its positive effect on students and staff. We will discuss the challenges of developing a nature component in an impoverished urban setting and how to facilitate

nature experiences for all children regardless of the setting.

Creativity Runs Wild

The Nature Preschool at Irvine

Saturday, 1-2 p.m.

Tour our classrooms and check out dozens of art projects, games and activities that reinforce emergent approaches to nature-based learning.

For the Love of Nature: Outdoor Learning at The Nature Preschool

The Nature Preschool team: The Nature Preschool at Irvine

The Nature Preschool at Irvine

Saturday, 2-3:30 p.m.

Exploration of the grounds and Outdoor Classroom at Irvine Nature Center will engage participants and highlight how The Nature Preschool students connect with nature. Bring your camera and a sketchbook for activities during our hike. Frog-catching encouraged!

Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors in a Nature Preschool Setting

Liza Lowe: Wild Roots Nature School at Stonewall Farm

Saturday, 2-3:30 p.m.

Saturday, 3:45-5:15 p.m.

Nature preschools and forest kindergartens attract a diverse group of children. As educators, we strive to understand our students' individual needs while working to meet the needs of the learning community as a whole – this can be difficult when one or more of the children before us is struggling with atypical emotions and behaviors. It is possible to meet the needs of your diverse class and enrich the lives of your students through nature-based programs. In this workshop you will learn ways to connect with allied health providers (PTs, OTs and speech-language pathologists), build relationships with families and create tools to use in your outdoor classroom for children with challenging behaviors.



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Risk-Taking and Action Research: The Journey Continues

*Lesley Romanoff: Takoma Park
Cooperative Nursery School*
Saturday, 3:45-5:15 p.m.

This presentation follows the journey of discovery a group of children and parents made into the outdoors and forest during a two-year action research project. Outdoor components featuring team-building and mindfulness exercises were added to a regular nursery school program in order to better support the specific developmental needs in a particular class. The goal was to introduce the children to the unknown by taking them into the forest on a regular basis. These children gained connections to each other, secured confidence in their abilities and exponentially expanded their ability to embrace imaginary play in nature.



Experiential Learning with Amy Beam

*Amy Beam: Metro Montessori Schools
and Kids Love Nature!*
Sunday, 9-11 a.m.

Follow Amy on the trail and go play on the landscape! She will model

techniques for outdoor learning like the art of questioning, the 50/50 principle and the importance of a 'sit spot.' She will also share nature songs and games, and offer practical management of groups during outdoor learning. Her workshop is rooted in the pedagogy of *The Coyote Guide to Connecting with Nature* by Jon Young.



Who Needs an Acre? Take 10 Steps Outside!

*Pathways to Nature Preschool,
Boston Nature Center*
Sunday, 11-12:30 p.m.

Early childhood educators often think that they need access to a large green space to help children understand the natural world. This workshop will address these concerns and present practical, easy and successful strategies for getting little ones outdoors and engaged with just 10 steps outside the classroom and a few handfuls of dirt.



A New Professional Community for Early Childhood Environmental Educators

*Christy Merrick: Natural Start
Alliance/NAAEE*
Sunday, 1-2:30 p.m.

Learn how you can join the North American Association for Environmental Education's (NAAEE) newest initiative to support environmental education for young children. The Natural Start Alliance is helping ensure that all children get the benefit of

experiencing nature from birth. Natural Start provides a professional community for nature-based early childhood educators, advocates for the field, promotes research and professional development, and more. Learn about how you can become engaged in this new alliance, and how you can use it to advance your work.



Turning Nature Inside Out

Alice Wetzel: Brown Memorial Weekday School

Sunday, 1-2:30 p.m.

Learn how an established community school is ramping up their nature education by bringing the children out into nature and bringing nature inside to the children. See documentation of the schools two-prong approach and playground transformation. Participate in a hands-on activity integrating nature, art, symbolic representation and collaborative learning.

Who will you nominate for the *Margaret O'Neill Early Childhood Nature Educator Award?*

This award recognizes the contributions of an outstanding early childhood educator who facilitates nature-based learning to provide meaningful programming for children birth through eight years old. To nominate someone you admire, visit www.ExploreNature.org/ONeillAward.

PERSONAL ENRICHMENT

Dependent upon the dates of your attendance, there are also several opportunities for personal enrichment included in the cost of attendance.

- **Early Riser Yoga**
(Saturday or Sunday morning)
- **Bird Song Morning Hike**
(Saturday or Sunday morning)
- **Lunch with the Animals**
(Saturday or Sunday afternoon)
- **Sunset Hike**
(Saturday evening only)
- **Onsite Project: Mud Pie Kitchen**
(Saturday evening only)
- **Mother Nature's Spa**
(Saturday evening only)

ACCOMMODATIONS

For your convenience, we have blocked off rooms at the Hyatt Place. Rather stay outside? Let us pitch a tent for you! Rustic accommodations do not include shower facilities, but sunrise over the meadow and morning bird songs are pure bliss. (Port-o-potties are in walking distance; campground is a 10 minute walk from the nature center.)



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2015 SCHEDULE

Fri., June 5

Arrival & Registration	5:30 – 6 p.m.
Welcoming Happy Hour	6 – 7 p.m.
Keynote: Wendolyn Bird	7 – 9 p.m.
Campfire Networking	9 – 11 p.m.

**If you plan to camp at Irvine, earlier arrival is welcome. Please call 443-738-9220 to make your plans.*

Sat., June 6

Coffee Wake-up Call	7:30 a.m.
Arrival & Registration	8 – 9 a.m.
Early Riser Yoga or Bird Hike	8 – 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast	8:30 – 9 a.m.
Opening Exercise: Wendolyn Bird	9 – 11 a.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) From Vision to Reality (B) Big City to Sheltering Woods	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Lunch	12:30 – 1 p.m.
Creativity Runs Wild Open House	1 – 2 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) For the Love of Nature (B) Challenging Behaviors in Nature Preschools	2 – 3:30 p.m.
Break	3:30 – 3:45 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) Risk-Taking & Action Research (B) Challenging Behaviors in Nature Preschools	3:45 – 5:15 p.m.
Happy Hour & Dinner	5:30 – 7 p.m.
Onsite Project: Mud Pie Kitchen or Sunset Hike	7 – 7:45 p.m.
Mother Nature's Spa	7 – 8:30 p.m.
Campfire Networking	8:30 – 10 p.m.

Sun., June 7

Coffee Wake-up Call	7:30 a.m.
Arrival & Registration	8 – 9 a.m.
Early Riser Yoga or Bird Hike	8 – 8:30 a.m.
Breakfast	8:30 – 9 a.m.
Opening Exercise: Amy Beam	9 – 11 a.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) From Vision to Reality (B) Who Needs An Acre?	11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Lunch	12:30 – 1 p.m.
Breakout Workshops (A) A New Professional Community (B) Turning Nature Inside Out	1 – 2:30 p.m.
Concluding Gathering Circle	2:30 – 3 p.m.



FOOD

If meals are included in your registration, please select one below:

No diet restrictions Vegetarian Vegan Kosher

Other: _____

ACCOMMODATIONS

For your convenience, there is a block of rooms at the Hyatt Place of Owings Mills (410-998-3630). Or pitch a tent and camp out at Irvine!

I plan to camp out at Irvine (\$25 fee). Will you bring your own tent?

Yes

No, please pitch a tent for me!

I will make other arrangements.

PAYMENT

I've calculated my payment, including the conference fee and cost for camping, if applicable. My total due is \$_____.

Check enclosed (*check payable to Irvine Nature Center*)

Please charge my VISA/MasterCard/American Express/Discover

Name on Card: _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please send complete registration form with payment to:

Irvine Nature Center
Attn: Clare Ng
11201 Garrison Forest Road
Owings Mills, MD 21117





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www.ExploreNature.org



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