

8TH ANNUAL

# NATURE PRESCHOOL CONFERENCE

APRIL 12 - 13, 2019

**AWARD-WINNING  
CONFERENCE DESIGNED FOR:**

PRESCHOOL EDUCATORS  
DAYCARE PROVIDERS  
ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS  
HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES

 **Irvine**  
NATURE CENTER

 **Nature Preschool**  
at Irvine Nature Center

# ABOUT THE NATURE PRESCHOOL CONFERENCE

Participants engage in discussion, hands-on learning, and the sharing of ideas guided by knowledgeable early childhood educators passionate about nature-based child-led learning. We encourage you to think critically, ask questions, reflect on your practice, and share your experiences with all as we strengthen our growing community dedicated to powerful learning through play and interaction with the natural world.

In addition to a keynote address on Friday evening and enrichment activities, four different break-out workshop sessions are offered throughout Saturday. Attendees are asked to select one workshop per session to attend.

## Workshops focus on one or more of the following themes:

- Intentionality in Nature Based Teaching and Learning
- Building Connection Between Individuals and the Natural World
- Best Practices and Curricula in Nature Based Early Learning
- Growing the Forest: Engaging in Nature Based Learning and Play

## WORKSHOPS & PROGRAMS

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019

Open House, Friday, 5:00-7:00p.m. 🍄

### **Creativity Runs Wild**

Katie Rooney, *The Nature Preschool at Irvine*

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

Keynote, Friday 7:00-9:00 p.m. 🍄

### **Guided by the "Why?"— Making Intentional Decisions in the Nature-Based Early Childhood Classroom**

Rachel Larimore, *Samara Early Learning, LLC*

Educators make thousands of decisions every day that influence children's learning. We should consider the goals of nature-based programs and whether our teaching and administrative practices reflect those goals. Rachel will challenge attendees to assess how well program structures, physical spaces, and teacher-child interactions align with the "Why?" of nature-based early childhood education.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Rachel Larimore  
Samara Early Learning, LLC

Author of *Establishing a Nature-Based Preschool*, *Neighborhood Naturalist Club: A Model for Designing After School Programs*, Rachel will inspire your practice. For a full biography, please visit our website at:

[www.ExploreNature.org](http://www.ExploreNature.org)

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019

## SATURDAY MORNING ENRICHMENT

(8:00-8:30am); optional - select one or none

### Rise & Shine Yoga

Jess Gruber, Instructor at Little Moon Yoga  
Start the day with yoga poses inspired by nature and learn how to infuse mindful approaches into your curriculum.

### Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing)

Erika Piotrowski, Irvine Educator  
Take a mindful stroll through Irvine's forest to practice Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing. Studies have shown that this Japanese practice can improve your mood and relieve stress.

### Bird Walk

Simon Best and Keith Eric Costley  
Novice or not, join our experienced birder for a morning stroll to listen and look our feathered friends. We'll visit bird blinds, the meadow, and wherever the eagle flies. Binoculars encouraged, but not required.

## OPENING EXERCISE

(9:00-10:30am)

### Experiential Learning

Amy Beam, Metro Montessori Schools, MD  
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.



### WORKSHOP AGE GROUPS KEY

 - All ages

 - Birth to 3

 - Preschool

 - Elementary School

# SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019: EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOPS

(Select one workshop per session)

SESSION A: 10:45 - 11:45am (choose one)

## **Going to the Great "Beyond"** 🍄

*Rachel Larimore, Samar Early Learning LLC*  
Nature-based early childhood education includes excursions to wild spaces beyond the fenced play area. This session will explore the purpose of the "beyond" and how we can move away from learning in or about nature to learning with nature.

## **Nature is Everywhere** 🍄

*Atiya Wells, Backyard Basecamp*  
Outdoor education is valuable for all children, even in public school! Join us for a discussion on the important work of creating space and time for outdoor education in our public schools. Atiya will share her experiences in volunteering at a Baltimore City elementary school to help teachers make nature-based education and play a reality at their own site.

## **Mindfulness + Yoga in Nature-Based Education** 🍄

*Jessica Gruber, Little Moon Yoga*  
This workshop will consider the influence of movement, breath, and mindfulness on the nervous system and how this affects child development. We will practice deep breathing and mindfulness techniques that are perfect to use on the trail, in the classroom, or for yourself. As we explore the effects of various yogic and mindfulness tools, we will ground these practices in neuroscience and physiology.

## **Guided Hike** 🍄

*Naturalists, Irvine Nature Center*  
Join an Irvine Naturalist for an hour long, guided hike through the different habitats found on our property. Questions and photographs welcome!

SESSION B: 12:45 - 1:45pm (choose one)

## **Natural Playthings** 🍄

*Katie Rooney, The Nature Preschool at Irvine*  
Handmade games and manipulatives spark creativity and learning in a whole new way! Children discover how to be resourceful and how to repurpose plentiful natural and recycled materials while refining foundational skills. Come and create playthings for your school during this hands-on workshop.

## **The Importance of Risky Play for Our Children** 🍄

*Jay Parker, The Institute for Leadership & Purpose at Calvert School*  
We all want to protect our children from physical harm, stress and anxiety, and the difficult experience of failure. But are we too protective? For students to mature into confident, independent and interdependent adolescents we must empower them by creating a culture and conditions where it is safe to take age-appropriate risks and learn from them. We will identify best practices and current research to clarify strategies for implementing elements of healthy, risky play in our schools. Ultimately, it is these life experiences that provide a foundation for capacity-building, confidence, and motivation in our children.



## SESSION B: continued (choose one)

### **Indoor and Outdoor Nature-Based Learning for Infants and Toddlers**

*Sue Penix, Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center*

Long before electronic toys, LEGOS or even stuffed animals, infants and toddlers learned in and from their natural environment – nature! There is an unending list of items to see, touch, feel, hear, climb and explore in nature, contributing to learning in every early childhood domain. This training will identify Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence “Naturalist” and ways in which Infant and Toddler programs can incorporate play based nature experiences in their indoor and outdoor environments. Participants will gain skills, strategies and techniques for implementing natural STEAM in developmentally appropriate ways for infants and toddlers.

### **Guided Hike**

*Naturalists, Irvine Nature Center*

Join an Irvine Naturalist for an hour long, guided hike through the different habitats found on our property. Questions and photographs welcome!

## SESSION C: 2 - 3pm (choose one)

### **Natural Playthings**

*Katie Rooney, The Nature Preschool at Irvine*

Handmade games and manipulatives spark creativity and learning in a whole new way! Children discover how to be resourceful and how to repurpose plentiful natural and recycled materials while refining foundational skills. Come and create playthings for your school during this hands-on workshop.

### **Partnering with Families to Maximize Nature-Based Experiences**

*Cara Bethke, Sense of Wonder Early Childhood Consultants, LLC*

This session will explore strategies to engage families of diverse backgrounds and needs in your program. We will identify motivators and develop plans to set the stage for meaningful and empowering interactions through case studies, discussion, and reflection.

### **Sense of Place: Mapmaking in Forest Kindergarten**

*Shannon Earle & Julie Walkup, Audubon Nature Preschool*

We all want children to develop a strong connection to nature - to know and love a piece of forest, a creek-bed, or a pond. One way to forge that sense of place, while also building key early academic skills, is through mapmaking. At the Audubon Nature Preschool, Forest Kindergartners start learning mapping concepts with 3D maps of the play-yard and classroom. From 3D maps, we move to 2D teacher-created maps, and then to child-created maps that grow outward in scale, from miniature “fairy park” maps to a collaborative class map of our 40-acre sanctuary. This session will introduce mapmaking education through a presentation, discussion and hands-on activities.

### **Guided Hike**

*Naturalists, Irvine Nature Center*

Join an Irvine Naturalist for an hour long, guided hike through the different habitats found on our property. Questions and photographs welcome!

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**Elemental Storytelling** 

*Amy Beam, Metro Montessori*

Storytelling and the practice of story creation have been used for centuries to entertain, educate, and connect.

Join Amy on a literary adventure into the elements of storytelling as we explore fairy tales, the hero's journey and stories of the day as a means to build language skills, social connection, and magical worlds. She'll share the recipe she uses with her students, demonstrate the power of storytelling, and assist you in spinning your own tales!

**Exploring Full Day Nature Preschool** 

*Lavonne Taylor, Forest Hill Nature Preschool and Childcare*

This workshop will examine how a nature-based program can be supported in a full-day preschool schedule to support students and their families. At Forest Hill we provide a full day schedule for working families, accept subsidy payments, and partner with families of students with special needs, diversifying our learning community. A full day also provides opportunities to further enrich a nature-based program with specialized activities such as Art Studio, Yoga, Spanish, and additional reading instruction. We will identify how Forest Hill Nature Preschool's program and schedule has been strengthened by the students and families we serve.

**Guided Hike** 

*Naturalists, Irvine Nature Center*

Join an Irvine Naturalist for an hour long, guided hike through the different habitats found on our property. Questions and photographs welcome!

**Mud, Leaves, Stones, and Sticks:**   
**Land Art and Science for Young Learners**

*Stephanie Holzman, Irvine's Homeschool*

In this unique blend of science and environmental art, Stephanie will guide you in how to present lessons and provocations for STEM and ephemeral arts to young children. Exploring and replicating eco artists' work leads to integration of ideas for biology, physics, plant science, soil science and geography. This workshop will include a short hike and an outdoor experience to try out some simple, fun, and engaging activities. The tapestry of connections we make to the land enhances stewardship and is so important!



**WORKSHOP AGE GROUPS KEY**



- All ages



- Preschool



- Birth to 3



- Elementary School

## MSDE CREDIT HOURS

This Nature Preschool Conference has been approved by the Maryland State Department of Education as meeting the requirements of a state conference.

Participants are eligible for a total of 9.5 clock hours if attending the full conference.



## 2019 REGISTRATION

Register early to secure your space!

Visit: [www.ExploreNature.org](http://www.ExploreNature.org)

### PRICING

#### Full Conference

**Cost:** \$195

*Friday - Saturday, April 12 - 13, 2019*

Includes all Friday and Saturday events and workshops including Friday Happy Hour with drinks and appetizers and Saturday breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

#### Full Conference w/Camping Fee

**Cost:** \$220

*Friday - Saturday, April 12 - 13, 2019*

Includes all Friday and Saturday events and workshops including Friday Happy Hour with drinks and appetizers and Saturday breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Price Includes \$25 on-site camping fee. BYOT: bring your own tent!

#### Friday Evening Only

**Cost:** \$60

*Friday, April 12, 2019*

Includes Happy Hour with drinks and appetizers, classroom Open House, Bird Hike, Opening Address and Campfire Networking

#### Saturday Programs Only

**Cost:** \$145

*Saturday, April 13, 2019*

Includes all events, workshops, breakfast, lunch, and snacks

#### On Site Camping Fee

**Cost:** \$25

BYOT: Bring your own tent!



## CAMPING ACCOMODATIONS:

Ensure your conference time is filled with rejuvenation and reconnection day and night! Pitch your own tent on our property for a minimal fee (\$25).

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.)*

Register for camping and the conference.

**Visit: [www.ExploreNature.org](http://www.ExploreNature.org)**

## EARLY CHILDHOOD NATURE EDUCATOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

Do you know an incredible nature educator? Irvine Nature Center is accepting your nominations for this year's Margaret O'Neill Early Childhood Nature Educator Award!

The Margaret O'Neill Early Childhood Nature Educator Award recognizes the contributions of an outstanding early childhood educator who facilitates nature-based learning to provide meaningful programming for young children.

To nominate an educator you admire, visit:

**[www.ExploreNature.org/ONeillAward](http://www.ExploreNature.org/ONeillAward)**





## CONFERENCE SPONSOR

Special thanks to Qi Mary P, LLC for their sponsorship of the 2019 Nature Preschool Conference at Irvine Nature Center.



# NATURE PRESCHOOL CONFERENCE 2019 SCHEDULE

*Upstairs Classroom will be set up for viewing throughout the conference!*

## FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2019

WORKSHOPS + ACTIVITIES	TIME	LOCATION
Arrival & Registration	5:00-6:00p.m.	Exhibit Hall
Welcoming Happy Hour/ Open House/Bird Walks	5:00-7:00 p.m.	Exhibit Hall, Deck, Classrooms, Trails
Keynote: Guided by the "Why?" — Making Intentional Decisions in the Nature-based Early Childhood Classroom <i>Speaker: Rachel Larimore</i> <i>Samara Early Learning, LLC</i> <i>and renowned author</i>	7:00-9:00 p.m.	Amphitheater
Campfire Networking	9:00-11:00 p.m.	

## SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019

WORKSHOPS + ACTIVITIES	TIME	LOCATION
Coffee Wake-up Call	7:30 a.m.	Tent
Arrival & Check In	8:00-9:00 a.m.	Exhibit Hall
Early Riser Yoga, <i>Jessica Gruber, Little Moon Yoga</i>	8:00-8:30 a.m.	Deck
Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing), <i>Erika Piotrowski, Irvine Nature Center</i>	8:00-8:30 a.m.	Trailhead
Bird Walk, <i>Simon Best &amp; Keith Eric Costley</i>	8:00-8:30 a.m.	Trailhead
Welcoming Breakfast	8:00-9:00 a.m.	Tent
Opening Exercise: Experiential Learning <i>Amy Beam, Metro Montessori</i>	9:00-10:30 a.m.	Amphitheater
Break	10:30 a.m. – 10:45 p.m.	
<b>SESSION A WORKSHOPS:</b>	<b>10:45-11:45 p.m.</b>	
Going to the Great "Beyond", <i>Rachel Larimore, Samara Early Learning, LLC and author</i>		Fern A
Nature is Everywhere, <i>Atiya Wells, Free Forest School</i>		Fern B
Mindfulness & Yoga in Nature-Based Education, <i>Jessica Gruber, Little Moon Yoga</i>		Meadow/Amphitheater
Guided Hike, <i>Irvine Naturalists</i>		Trailhead

## SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019 (cont'd)

WORKSHOPS + ACTIVITIES	TIME	LOCATION
Lunch & Learn: Book Signing with Rachel Larimore; visits with Irvine's Animal Ambassadors	11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.	Tent / Amphitheater
<b>SESSION B WORKSHOPS:</b>	<b>12:45-1:45 p.m.</b>	
Natural Playthings, <i>Katie Rooney, The Nature Preschool</i>		Downstairs Classroom/ Under Deck
The Importance of Risky Play for Our Children, <i>Jay Parker, The Institute for Leadership &amp; Purpose at Calvert School</i>		Fern Room B
Indoor & Outdoor Nature-Based Learning for Infants & Toddlers, <i>Sue Penix, Baltimore City Child Care Resource Center</i>		Fern Room A
Guided Hike, <i>Irvine Naturalists</i>		Trailhead
<b>Break</b>	<b>1:45-2:00 p.m.</b>	
<b>SESSION C WORKSHOPS:</b>	<b>2:00-3:00 p.m.</b>	
Natural Playthings, <i>Katie Rooney, The Nature Preschool</i>		Downstairs Classroom/ Under Deck
Partnering with Families to Maximize Nature Based Experiences, <i>Cara Bethke, Sense of Wonder ECE</i>		Amphitheater/ Fern A
Sense of Place: Mapmaking in Forest Kindergarten, <i>Shannon Earle &amp; Julie Walkup, Audubon Nature Preschool</i>		Fern Room B/ Outdoor Classroom
Guided Hike, <i>Irvine Naturalists</i>		Trailhead
<b>Break</b>	<b>3:00-3:15 p.m.</b>	
<b>SESSION D WORKSHOPS:</b>	<b>3:15-4:15 p.m.</b>	
Exploring Full Day Nature Preschool, <i>Lavonne Taylor, Forest Hill Nature Preschool &amp; Childcare LLC</i>		Fern B
Elemental Storytelling, <i>Amy Beam, Metro Montessori</i>		Outdoor Classroom
Land Art and Science for Young Learners, <i>Stephanie Holzman, Irvine's Homeschool Programs</i>		Woodland Garden
Guided Hike, <i>Irvine Naturalists</i>		Trailhead
Closing Remarks, Survey & Assessment Collection	4:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Amphitheater/ Exhibit Hall



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**JOIN US FOR THE:**

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