

Wonder

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

JULY/AUGUST 2017

Let's Grow Together

The mission of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NACC) is to re-connect children with the natural world by making developmentally appropriate nature education a sustaining and enriching part of the daily lives of the world's children. We are committed to helping children re-connect to the joys of nature. In 2008 the Working Forum on Nature Education brought together 280 educators, environmentalists, designers, and landscape architects from six continents, who gathered to share ideas on re-connecting children with nature. As we continue to share together from different professions and locations, our global community has become a source of support and empowerment. Our individual endeavors are strengthened through new collaborations, networking, and a global exchange of ideas. Let us know about your efforts. We would love to include your ideas and photos in future Issues of *Wonder*. Email Tara Schroder (taras@natureexplore.org) — she is waiting to hear from you!

Canada 150 Gardening Challenge: From Seed to Table

The Manitoba Nature Action Collaborative for Children (MNACC) is a regional chapter. Discovery Children's Centre's Executive Director, Ron Blatz, leads this group and the group continues to meet in Winnipeg, Canada several times a year.

In 2016 the Discovery Children's Centre began to dream about growing ten percent of our snack food on site. For us, this meant trying to grow enough food in our garden boxes to supply at least one snack per week for our children. As beginner gardeners we wondered how doable this goal really was, and we were curious about how many weeks of the year we could keep this up. We had such amazing success and wonderful experiences with this challenge that we are now confident that this ten percent goal is attainable and is worthy of a bit of competition!

So, in Celebration of Canada's 150 birthday, the MNACC group and Discovery Children's Centre are throwing out a challenge to the early childhood community around the world! We urge you to join the challenge and begin the planning process to grow ten percent of your snack food, for as many weeks as possible in 2017–2018. For those of us in the prairies of Canada, it will be a strong reminder of the big role that the production of food has been in the history of our great country.

If you have made a decision to try the Canada 150 International Gardening Challenge, you can sign in using the link below to show how we are working together across the globe. Thanks so much for celebrating with us by instilling a love of gardening in a new generation. www.discoverycc.com/manitoba-nature-action-collaborative-for-children/



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WorldForumFoundation.org/nature

Future issues of *Wonder*

We invite you to email your ideas, stories, and photos that relate to children's connections with nature to:

Tara Schroder: taras@natureexplore.org

Wisconsin Environmental Education Foundation and WiNACC

WiNACC was organized in 2009, following the October 2009 Working Forum on Nature Education, held at Arbor Day Farm in Nebraska. Members of the leadership team were inspired at that gathering to participate in global efforts to reconnect children with nature. The work of the Wisconsin Nature Action Collaborative is being accomplished through volunteer efforts. The leadership team continues to explore how to expand the WiNACC coalition, and replicate and expand the work throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Goals of WiNACC:

- To coordinate and sponsor nature-contact experiences aimed at increasing adult familiarity and comfort.
- To provide training and support in developmentally appropriate nature education, through both continuing education opportunities and credit bearing courses.
- To encourage, support, and facilitate collaboration to preserve, plan, and create outdoor nature spaces in early childhood programs, schools, and other locations.
- To establish and maintain a supportive network of Wisconsin early childhood educators enabling them to enrich and expand their individual programs through ongoing sharing of experiences and resources, and through various group experiences.
- To facilitate the linking of stakeholders and sources of support for the purpose of sharing knowledge and insights, and to coordinate efforts.

Visit www.eeinwisconsin.org and use the Resources tab, Browse Collections to view School Garden and Food System Resources including the following selections.

Learners of all ages can benefit from spending time in the garden! Check out these resources to get started:
<http://eeinwisconsin.org/resource/about.aspx?s=129947.0.0.2209>

Teaching in Nature's Classroom: A Free Book for Educators

In "Teaching in Nature's Classroom: Core Principles of Garden-Based Education," veteran farm and garden educator Nathan Larson shares a philosophy of teaching in the garden through 15 guiding principles and engaging stories from the field. Free e-book and paperback editions are available in both English and Spanish.

Garden Lesson Ideas from Wisconsin Educators

During the 2015 Growing Minds course, participants were asked to briefly describe one lesson they have used in the garden that connects with core curriculum. There were so many ideas, we had to make an entire document! Use these short descriptions to spark ideas for your own lessons.

From the Environmental Action Kit: Have an Adventure!

Introduce children to the pleasure of a 'rainbow' of foods, and help them learn about healthy eating and the value of biodiversity in plants. Use the "Rainbow on My Plate" activities in the Environmental Action Kit (Toolkit for Early Childhood Programs, p. 81–83).

You can find the complete activity at: <http://connect.worldforumfoundation.org/environmental-action-kit/toolkits-2/>



Excerpts from *Provocations for the 'next big thing' in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability (ECEfS)*

Sue Elliott, University of New England, Australia

There is no question, current global uncertainties and with an ethical commitment to young children and their futures, all early childhood educators must keep the momentum going. But, what might be the 'next big thing'? I offer three provocations as to what this might be, namely:

Investigating theoretical discourses underpinning ECEfS

While there are now several reviews and compilations of ECEfS research available, the most recent review by Somerville and Williams (2015) offers interesting insights about current theoretical discourses. Overall, Somerville and Williams (2015) state methodologies and theoretical framing varied across the papers examined, but indicate that "the field is characterized by many unexamined methodological and epistemological assumptions that tend to determine the direction and methods of the research."

Moving The International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education, beyond 'nature by default'

I suggest play in nature is a comfortable and familiar space for early childhood educators and there is a risk of 'nature by default' being the approach universally adopted, without critical examination of all the dimensions of sustainability (Elliott & Young, 2015). The conceptualization of sustainability as multi-dimensional across natural, cultural, political, and social dimensions is well acknowledged (UNESCO, 2010) and in early childhood education we must actively explore all dimensions with children. Potentially, developing programs through a more inclusive eco-socio-cultural lens for sustainability...



Engaging in critical and transformative pedagogies supported by professional learning for sustainability

Timely reflection by various training providers about sustainability as integral to professional learning in the early childhood education field is long overdue and urgently required to facilitate broad and systemic change internationally. In essence, more of the same type of education, whether with young children or as professional learning with adults will not facilitate global sustainability. There is a provocation here for critically rethinking pedagogy and how we support sustainable futures for all, this is another 'big thing' to grapple with in the early childhood education field.

I argue that we urgently need to be an international network of early childhood educators, academics, and service or training providers who actively challenge and extend ECEfS research to more fully inform practice; seek to explore all the dimensions of sustainability with children, colleagues, and families; engage with and advocate critical pedagogies for shifting world views; and, identify professional learning for sustainability as core to being an early childhood educator in these globally challenging times.

Excerpts from The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) publication of the *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education* (ISSN 2331-0464, online) Volume 4, Number 1, Winter 2016.

https://naaee.org/sites/default/files/eepr/resource/files/ijecee_41_complete_issue.pdf

