

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2015

We Are the World, We Are the Children

Unity: a sense of belonging and being part of a whole, a whole community of humans vitally connected to the whole natural world

Peace: the absence of violence; rather, qualities such as caring, respect, empathy

Well-being: what people think and feel about their lives, such as the quality of their relationships, their positive emotions and resilience, the realization of their potential, or their overall satisfaction with life

Global Citizen: someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices

This edition of *Wonder* is focused on the Nature Action Collaborative for Children Universal Principle:

We believe that regular connections with the natural world encourage children to develop feelings of unity, peace, and well-being as global citizens.

At first glance this statement seems rather lofty and ambitious. After all, our adult society spends a great deal of time, energy, money, and resources searching for the best ways to achieve unity, peace, and well-being. Just think about the number of books dedicated to these ideas in the self-help section of your local bookstore. Let's take a different approach:

■ What if we think of unity, peace, and well-being as capacities that children are born with?

■ What if we pay close attention to the way regular connections to the natural world support children's deepening understanding of these qualities?

■ What would we do differently?

Let's take some time in the next few weeks to reflect on the following ideas, try some of the activities, and relate our own experiences to others. Perhaps we'll discover or reaffirm that our children are, indeed, becoming global citizens through their everyday experiences with the wonders of nature.



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Future Issues of *Wonder* We invite you to email your ideas, stories and photos that relate to the following Universal Principle for Connecting Children with Nature to Tara Hild:

tarah@natureexplore.org.

We believe nature-based spaces should stimulate all the senses.



Environmental Action Kit

The information found in the Environmental Action Kit was compiled to strengthen worldwide efforts at helping the next generation grow up in a 'greener' world. Finding ways to inspire children's love for the Earth today will help them become tomorrow's generation of caring environmental stewards. Here is an excerpt from the Professional Collaborations section of the Environmental Action Kit.

by Al Stenstrup, Director of Education Programs, American Forest Foundation

The holistic nature of Early Childhood Education requires collaboration to be successful and sustainable. It is through collaborative partnerships that the Early Childhood community can develop shared visions and deliver comprehensive services and quality materials to young children and their families. This strengthens the foundation of Early Childhood programs in your communities.

Successful collaboration in Early Childhood Education communities provides the foundation for sustainable programs for young children around the world. Collaboration builds on the values of diverse people, ideas, backgrounds, and experiences. Each education partner can bring unique strengths to the process and, in turn, can reach different audiences in the community.

Two examples of Early Childhood collaboration at the national level in the United States provide good examples of the benefits of collaboration:

Project Learning Tree

Project Learning Tree (PLT), a program of the American Forest Foundation, uses collaboration as a critical element in developing and implementing all of its education programs. In January 2010, PLT published *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* that includes 11 field-tested activities showcasing over 130 early childhood experiences integrating investigations of nature with music and movement, art, literature, math, and science.

PLT has had the opportunity to work with an incredible number of enthusiastic and talented educators and early childhood specialists. Hundreds of individuals contributed their time, talents, and expertise to develop the guide and accompanying music CD. The collaborators included many PLT state coordinators, workshop facilitators, and early childhood educators who had skills and experience in both early childhood education and youth site design. The individuals participated in writing workshops, developed the concepts, wrote activities and background information, and reviewed and field-tested the materials. The process included an advisory member and pilot-test educators from México, and the final product includes bilingual Family and Friends pages to support the program.

You will find this PLT work highlighted in the Resources section and the Toolkit for Educators sections of this Environmental Action Kit: www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc/index.php 5

North American Association for Environmental Education

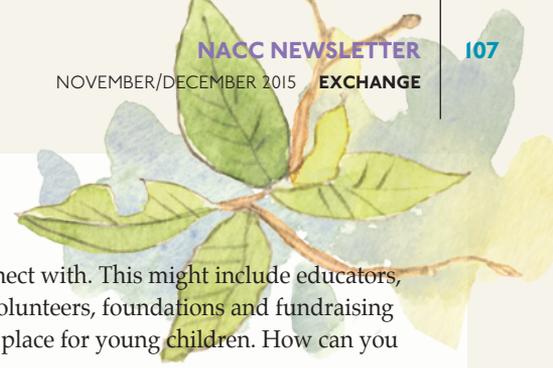
Another project that features collaboration of Early Childhood professionals is the development of the Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). The project is committed to synthesizing the best thinking about environmental education through an extensive process of review and discussion. Hundreds of individuals and organizations representing all aspects of early childhood education and environmental education reviewed working outlines and drafts. Reviewers included classroom teachers, early childhood education center staff members, educational administrators, environmental scientists, curriculum developers, design professionals, and natural resource agency and education department staff members. A link to these guidelines can be found in this Environmental Action Kit:

www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc/index.php

These examples clearly show some of the benefits of collaboration that include:

- serving as a source of stimulation and creativity. The cross-pollination of ideas generates new insights or perspectives that individuals may not have seen on their own.
- transferring knowledge and skills. We readily learn from and with others in this process.
- extending the reach of the group. The sum of the networks is far greater when individuals team together.

Collaboration is a tool that can be used in many ways to extend resources and expand communities' reach in order to bring a healthier environment and quality education to young children around the world.



Consider this:

- Think of the different organizations and individuals in your community that you can connect with. This might include educators, landscape and planning professionals, environmental agencies, community leaders and volunteers, foundations and fundraising professionals, and others that share your passion to help make their communities a better place for young children. How can you work together?

Think Globally, Act Locally

Global citizenship is a 21st-century approach to living in which principles of global responsibility and accountability are applied to everyday, local actions. Many thinkers and writers have put forward their own ideas of what it means to be a global citizen in the 21st century. There may be disagreements as to the particulars, but the overall philosophy has several consistent points. Across the board, global citizens:

Photograph ©NatureExplore

- Respect fellow humans, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, or political views.
- Appreciate diversity and the benefits it can offer any advanced society.
- View no single society or culture as inherently superior to any other.
- Cherish the natural world and respect the rights of all living things.
- Practice and encourage sustainable patterns of consumption and production.
- Work to eradicate poverty and inequality in all its forms.
- Support economic institutions that act transparently and in the public good.
- Strive to resolve conflicts without the use of violence.
- Feel responsible to help solve pressing global challenges in whatever way they can.
- Think globally, act locally.

(From <http://univetica.com/index.php/what-we-can-do-for-you/articles/119-what-it-means-to-be-a-global-citizen-in-the-21st-century>)

Consider this:

- How do these broad statements translate into the experiences children have in your natural setting?
- How are you ensuring that children's experiences are developmentally appropriate?



The Pale Blue Dot

For your own adult reflection, watch and listen to Dr. Carl Sagan's "The Pale Blue Dot" on YouTube. The Pale Blue Dot is a photograph of planet Earth taken in 1990 by Voyager 1 from a record distance, showing it against the vastness of space. By request of Carl Sagan, NASA commanded the Voyager 1 spacecraft, having completed its primary mission and now leaving the Solar System, to turn its camera around and to take a photograph of Earth across a great expanse of space. During the narration Dr. Sagan states, "Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives." He concludes by saying, "There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known."



Photograph by NASA / Goddard Space Flight Center

Consider this:

- How will you model new ways to preserve and cherish the natural environment that children experience every day?
- How can you support children's exploration of the natural world as 'home'?



"There are two basic motivating forces: fear and love. When we are afraid, we pull back from life. When we are in love, we open to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance. We need to learn to love ourselves first, in all our glory and our imperfections. If we cannot love ourselves, we cannot fully open to our ability to love others or our potential to create. Evolution and all hopes for a better world rest in the fearlessness and open-hearted vision of people who embrace life." — John Lennon, *In His Own Write* (Simon and Schuster, 2000)

Environmental educator Dr. Ruth Wilson reminds us,

"We know that children don't learn to care by talking about what it means to care or listening to others talking about care. To learn to care, children need to experience being cared for, see others engaged in the act of caring, and participate in meaningful activities where they nurture and care for something outside of themselves.... Caring for simple things in nature — like caterpillars, flowers, and ladybugs — helps children develop a sense of themselves as nurturers and as people who care. This sense of self contributes to a peaceful way of living — with self, with others, and with the natural world.

Consider this:

- How do these two quotes relate to your work with children and nature?
- What are some ways that time in nature is helping you learn to accept and express your uniqueness so you can support your children in doing the same?
- Have a "Beneficial Bug Adventure" with children. See page 63-65 in the Environmental Toolkit for Educators www.worldforumfoundation.org/working-groups/nature/environmental-action-kit/materials/educators/
- Create a compost/worm bin; see www.cityfarmer.org/wormcomp61.html for information to help you get started.

Reference

Wilson, R. A. (2009, May/June). The color green: A 'go' for peace education. *Exchange*, 187, 40-43.



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