

Wonder

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

Nature Connects Us Near and Far

Nature provides a way for all of us to feel connected to something greater than ourselves. We can also connect to each other on a global scale when, together, we celebrate universal elements of nature. Sometime tonight before you head off to bed, look up in the night sky and find the moon. What do you notice? What does it make you think of? What does it inspire you to wonder? As you read the following reflection, imagine children, families, teachers, neighbors, community members, and policy makers across the planet looking up at the moon and sending ALL of our world's children and each other messages of celebration, hope, encouragement, resilience.

Until next time, be bold – choose to be extraordinary.

Sima



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.

WorldForumFoundation.org/nature

#Vikram We Are With You

(The following originated as a Facebook post from September 7, 2019, written and shared by Swati Popat Vats from India, in response to the anxious wait for a signal and uncertain outcome of the Vikram Moon Lander.)

I love the way the whole country (India) is rallying behind our scientists and the positivity that our dear Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought to us, and everyone at Indian Space Research Organization, even as we struggled with disappointment and hope. Modi said, “Resilience and tenacity are central to India’s ethos.” This is exactly what we, as educators and parents, need to learn from Chandrayaan- 2, the second lunar exploration mission developed by the ISRO.

All is not lost. Maybe Vikram has just lost communication; maybe it has landed and is not able to connect. One of our senior kindergarten children said to his teacher as he drew the Indian flag and Chandrayan-2, “Vikram is lost near the moon and soon we will find it.”

There is so much to learn from this experience. Here are five things for all parents and teachers:

1. There is no such thing as failure or the end. Nothing ends because children fail. Celebrate each child’s success and failure. Celebrate each child—the cranky, the bully, the restless, the pouty, the pushy, the belligerent, the slow, the hyperactive. They all also have positive attributes. There are many “Vikrams” out there, who have lost their connection with you; work with positivity to bring back the connection.

2. Prime Minister Modi went back this morning to motivate our scientists, and what a speech he gave! As leaders of teams and organizations, know when to support your teams even in their failure. Especially students.
3. We cried together as a nation as we anxiously watched our screens and witnessed Prime Minister Modi warmly hug Dr. Shiven, the director of India's space program. That moment signifies the importance of touch and a warm hug when needed the most. The Prime Minister of a great nation was hugging a scientist. Hug your child when your child needs you the most.
4. Dr. Shiven came from a very poor family. He is a farmer's son, and studied in a Tamil medium school. He is the first graduate from his family. There are so many things to learn from his journey. Here is my earnest request to all educators: Don't write off children in our anganwadis (a type of rural child care center in India) and government schools. Don't write off schools that teach in the mother tongue. Don't write off poor children. A child is a child and deserves the best from us. There are so many hidden "Dr. Shiven's" in our schools.
5. Remember the child in our kindergarten who drew his lovely drawing and said, "Vikram is lost near the moon and soon we will find it." Let's learn to be positive for our children. It is not marks or grades or certificates which will guide them in their tough times. Resilience and tenacity will be their strength. Children will have many questions about Vikram and what happened to it. Let their questions become their quest. Your replies will help build their scientific temper.

I urge all schools to talk to the kids, whatever the age, about Vikram, and let them share with you what they think happened. Let them draw about Chandrayaan- 2, make art projects, and write letters to all the scientists at ISRO. This is inquiry-based learning. Let's not forget we are responsible for tomorrow's scientists, farmers, doctors, teachers, defense forces, media and heads of nations etc. There is a "Vikram" out there waiting to connect with you and a "Shiven" who needs your hug.

Dr. Swati Popat Vats, president of Podar Education Network, is a global educator with over 32 years of

experience. She is the president of the Early Childhood Association of India, the national representative, and a member of the planning committee of the World Forum Foundation and a member of the global think tank of Kidzania, and a member of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children, a working group of the World Forum Foundation.

Did you know? NACC is a partner of the Welcome to the International Association of Nature Pedagogy.

The International Association of Nature Pedagogy is a professional organization designed to promote and support all forms of nature-based education for children aged birth to eight years throughout the world. This includes forest kindergartens, forest schools, nature preschools and nature kindergartens. Founded by Claire Warden and structured by a board of innovative leaders and academics in the field of nature-based education, IANP aims to:

- Raise the profile of nature pedagogy as a professional way of teaching and learning.
- Inspire, innovate and influence lasting change in nature-immersive education through research, training and tertiary education.
- Promote and support all models of nature based early education.
- Connect and network with colleagues in the same field to create a professional association.

Trees are vital for the planet, but some humans view them as something to be unconditionally consumed for products, shelter, warmth and food. Trees' place in our heart and souls is often lowest on the list of benefits, and yet for many cultures, trees are symbolic of a greater sense of belonging. We're aware of the large-scale destruction of the Amazonian Rainforest, but trees are also being removed from everywhere that children live and play.

In October of this year, IANP hosted an online conference in Brazil and accessible everywhere, "Children and Trees." Colleagues from Brazil, Australia, Canada, Jordan, United States and UK shared perspectives on nature-based practice in these countries. While focused attention considered innovations in nature pedagogy

and explored the place of trees in children's lives, participants considered the issue of deforestation in the widest sense. Profits from the conference were given to local nature-based, nonprofit organizations that are making a difference to children. To learn more and become a member of this global community, visit www.naturepedagogy.com.

Claire Warden is an international educational consultant who has developed her approach to nature pedagogy and experiential learning through a variety of experiences, including work in a variety of types of centers, advisory work, and lecturing. Her community interest company, Living Classrooms, is at the center of the new International Association of Nature Pedagogy. Claire serves on the leadership team of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children, a working group of the World Forum Foundation.



Future issues of Wonder

Do you have an idea or story to share?

We invite you to email your ideas, stories and photos that relate to *Connecting Children with Nature* to Tina

Reeble: tinar@natureexplore.org

250 Harmonious experiences during togetherness enrich the relationship of the adult taking care of the child. Why, then, would we want to raise children any other way than respectfully and without violence?

Elsa Chahin

Exchange Issue 246

Exchange magazine has never shied away from addressing a vast variety of topics that challenge conventional educational practices, and examine ways to improve our field. It is heartening to know that, as we continue to critically evaluate the nature and role of early education and its function in society, we can rely on **Exchange** magazine to continue to ask the important questions, probe accepted practices, and shine a light on all aspects of the early childhood field, good and bad.

Francis Wardle