

In Bloom in Vermont:

Promising Practices in Nature-based Early Childhood Education



Saturday, May 19, 2018 ♦ Academy Elementary School

860 Western Avenue, Brattleboro, Vermont

Antioch University New England hosts three **In Bloom** east coast conferences this spring. We're heading down to the southern Appalachians to North Carolina first for **In Bloom in Asheville**, on Saturday, April 7, where we'll expand the curriculum focus from pre K up to 3rd grade. Then we're back north to Kittery, Maine on April 21 for **In Bloom in Maine**, and a return to our early childhood focus. On April 28, David Sobel will head out to Jackson, Wyoming to collaborate with the Teton Science Schools for their first **In Mud** conference. To close out the spring, we'll be back home in the heart of New England, in Brattleboro, Vermont, (rather than Keene, New Hampshire) on Sat. May 19, for **In Bloom in Vermont**, to celebrate a new partnership with the Brattleboro public schools.

Witnessing the enthusiasm of early childhood professionals in their valiant efforts to get children outside has been inspirational and heartwarming. As before, at each conference we will feature the good work of practitioners from each region as well as spotlight the work of Antioch New England faculty members who teach in the Nature-based Early Childhood Certificate program. We invite you to come to one of our 2018 conferences, **In Bloom: Promising Practices in Nature-based Early Childhood Education!**

Each conference has two keynotes and two workshop sessions, bringing together a diverse array of early childhood professionals, higher education faculty, environmental educators, mindfulness practitioners and naturalists.

At lunch we will show the new movie, *The Best Day Ever: Forest Days in Vermont Kindergartens*. The movie was filmed in public school kindergartens in Hartland and Norwich, Vermont and illustrates the benefits of one day each week spent outside, year round, with Kindergarten children. This grassroots movement has spread to more than two dozen public schools in Vermont, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

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Children, It's Spring

*And this is the lady
Whom everyone loves,
Ms. Violet
in her purple gown*

*Or, on special occasions,
A dress the color
Of sunlight. She sits
In the mossy weeds and waits*

*To be noticed.
She loves dampness.
She loves attention.
She loves especially*

*To be picked by careful fingers,
Young fingers, entranced
By what has happened
To the world.*

*We, the older ones,
Call in Spring,
And we have been through it
Many times.*

*But there is still nothing
Like the children bringing home
Such happiness
In their small hands.*

by Mary Oliver

Schedule for the Day

8:15 am – 9:00 am	Registration Opens Morning Refreshments
9:00 am – 9:10 am	Opening Circle
9:15 am – 10:15 am	Morning Keynote
10:30 am – 12:00 noon	Morning Workshops
12:00 noon – 1:00 pm	Lunch, Movie
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Afternoon Keynote
2:15 pm – 3:45 pm	Afternoon Workshops
3:50 pm – 4:00 pm	Closing Circle

Morning Workshops–10:30am

Singing to Sit Spot

Amy Butler, Director of Education, North Branch Nature Center, Montpelier, VT.

The beat of the drum reverberates through the forest. Children gather in a circle and join together in song. A teacher gently taps children one by one on the head and they silently fox walk to their sit spot. In this workshop we will sing, sit and discuss the importance of routines in a nature immersion program. We will also investigate where these routines originate from and why they work so well for young children. Know that you will walk away with new tools for your backpack that will help you to create an invisible classroom in an otherwise wild space.

Where Did My Shadow Go?

Hannah Lindner-Finlay, Early Childhood Educator and Consultant, Westminster, VT.

What is a shadow? Why do shadows change directions? What happens to shadows on rainy days? How many shadows can we find together? Can we make our shadows change shape or color? What are some important strategies for shadow tag, and why do they work? These are some of many questions we will explore while learning to facilitate scientific inquiry for young children outdoors. During this class, you will learn strategies for balancing exuberant discovery with focused reflection. You will also gather many ideas for exploring shadows with children in any setting—indoors or out!

Developing Literacy in Nature

Deb Kardane, Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH, and **Pam Maile**, Marlboro Elementary School, Marlboro, VT.

Young children delight in being outdoors and they love familiar stories. Repeated exposure to time-honored tales has implications for later reading comprehension. We'll discuss why it's important to provide children with opportunities to internalize the structure of narrative stories and how this relates to later literacy development. Expanding upon classic folktales, we'll explore ways to engage our students in nature-oriented dramatizations where they collaboratively recreate and perform favorite stories outdoors. Come prepared to sing, act and get silly as we develop and perform our own favorite fictional tales!

Morning Keynote–9:15am

Martin Besford

A Portrait of Highway Farm

At Highway Farm, teachers embrace the environment as the third teacher. Martin will reflect on how community engagement supports this practice and how a commitment to staff, children and parent contributions in both the design and development of program spaces creates a magical, inspiring canvas for children's direct engagement and learning. Martin will provide a portrait of Highway Farm, focusing on how it started and how it has evolved over time. He'll tell of trials, tribulations and triumphs, emphasizing how continual development has led to the success of a high-quality environment, and encouraging participants to ask questions and share experiences.

Martin Besford owns and manages the Highway Farm Activity Centre in Redruth, Cornwall, UK. He heads the Farm's Early Years and Little Explorers programs. He has worked outdoors with children for more than 18 years, and specializes in developing and advising on outdoor spaces.



Robinson Elementary School, Starksboro, VT



Lime Hollow Forest Preschool
Cortland, NY



Robinson Elementary School, Starksboro, VT



Wildroots Nature School
Chesterfield, NH

Morning Workshops (cont.)



Robinson Elementary School, Starksboro, VT

Out We ALL Go!

Ellen Martyn, Kindergarten Teacher, Marlboro Elementary School, Marlboro, VT.

Some teachers worry about bringing children outside—especially when there are learning challenges, social-emotional issues, or surprising behaviors to consider. If you are among them, this workshop will help relieve your worries. Ellen has been bringing kindergarten children to the forest every afternoon in all kinds of weather for the past four years. Many of her students have faced major challenges, yet thrived outdoors. Come discuss the pragmatics of supporting a diverse group of learners in a nature-based program. You'll be excited to push your own comfort levels and grow with your students.

Little Explorers: Facilitating Parent-Child Programs

Liza Lowe, Wild Roots Nature School, Spofford, NH and Retreat Farm, Brattleboro, VT.

Join Liza to consider how to meet the needs of the parents and children in your outdoor program. Explore ways to create a predictable, reassuring rhythm, and learn songs and simple activities that are engaging and fun for a variety of ages. Discover how to use the seasons as a guide for the day's focus and invigorate your group with all that Mother Nature has to offer—whatever the weather!

Mindful Teaching: A Journey towards Freedom and Joy

Susan Dreyer-Leon, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH and Vermont Insight Meditation Center, Brattleboro, VT.

Young children are most always in the present moment, their happiness, curiosity and sorrow on the surface for all to see. For teachers, it's not so easy. We are the "responsible parties" who look ahead, plan, coordinate, curate, and scan the environment for threats. Afterward, we dissect each day through reflection, riding the waves as we recall activities that soared and those that sank. Many of us work with little ones because we love being in the company of such eager meaning-makers, but our ability to enjoy our time with them can be hampered by the circumstances of our work—circumstances that are not easily shifted and may be beyond our control. Can inner shifts have an impact? Find out what we're learning through the Mindfulness for Educators program at Antioch New England. Hear stories of personal and professional transformation and learn some simple approaches that can reduce stress and create greater spaciousness and ease in your own teaching life.

Lunch–12:00 noon

Light breakfast fare and lunch are included in the conference fee. Please indicate dietary preferences when registering.

Afternoon Keynote–1:00pm

Amy Butler

A New Path in the Forest: Moving Beyond the Classroom for Exploration, Creativity and Growth

Amy will share the challenges involved in getting children outdoors on a weekly basis while still prioritizing the expectations of NGSS and Common Core standards. She'll also celebrate the successes that result. This is the story of how a nature immersion program in public school can guide students to care for themselves, their classmates and the place they call home.



Amy Butler, Director of Education at North Branch Nature Center, Montpelier, VT has been connecting adults and children with the natural world for more than 20 years. She founded Vermont's first forest preschool and has nurtured its growth to serve the needs of local children and their families. In 2010, Amy founded ECO (Educating Children Outdoors), a standards-based nature immersion program that serves nine public schools in the central Vermont area. Each week Amy and her team facilitate outdoor learning with students and support teachers in extending their classrooms into the outdoors.

Afternoon Workshops–2:15 pm

Connecting to the Natural World Through Imagination, Story and Movement

Carla Beebe Comey, Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH.

Through the integration of story and movement we have the opportunity to nurture the child's understanding of the natural world via the gateway of imagination, sparking connection and understanding while simultaneously developing movement skills. When encountering a bird or a rabbit in a story, an inner capacity for empathy is nurtured along with the development of imagination. When participating in imaginative outdoor work activities, an appreciation for these activities, and joy in performing them, can be encouraged. Carla will lead several imaginative journeys and share guidelines for creating them so that you, too, can use story and movement to link children and nature.

Afternoon Workshops – (cont.)

Lime Hollow Forest Preschool

Creating an Inspiring Place to “Be”

Martin and Rachel Besford, Highway Farm Activity Centre, Four Lanes, Redruth, Cornwall, UK.

This very-hands-on workshop will begin with the outdoor space you already have. We'll explore ways to create, inspire and interact that can develop it into a quality, meaningful, engaging place. Learn how to embrace the design process and create, develop and produce an action plan. Participants will receive a toolkit to use in their own settings to develop their own outdoor spaces. We will also consider whom to involve, ways to engage the whole community and solutions for various budgets. By looking at the barriers and benefits to going outdoors and the practical elements to make it work, you should leave this session buzzing with inspiration to create an inspiring place to be – not just for children, but for adults, too.



Become a Licensed Waldkindergarten and Keep Your Core Values

Maryfaith Decker Miller, Founder and Director, Lime Hollow Forest Preschool, Cortland, NY.

Proposing to take kids outside can result in

roadblocks from administrators, regulators and licensing agencies. Understanding the regulations can help you determine where the difficulties lie and write protocols that make your program possible. Maryfaith will share how her three-hour, three-days-a-week forest preschool program grew to five days with early and after care through licensure. Is licensure right for your program, and can your vision materialize within the framework of regulations? Identify your own program's core values and use them as a compass to guide your next steps.

It's All in the Bag: Unpacking the Forest Teacher

Eliza Minnucci, Teacher, ForestKinder; Adjunct Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH.

Take a tour of a forest teacher's backpack, learning songs, games and nature-based lesson routines for young children along the way. Leave this session with lots of take-aways. Also leave with confidence, knowing that you can create meaningful and memorable experiences for your students with just a few trusty supplies. Eliza founded a public-school forest day program in 2013 and now consults with dozens of educators around New England who are doing the same.

Exploring Nature with Preschoolers: Collaborating with Parents and Colleagues

Carol Mandracchia, Preschool Teacher, Twin Valley Elementary School, Wilmington, VT.

Exploring nature with preschoolers involves more than simply taking kids outdoors. Developing a common vision with parents and colleagues is an essential part of the process. Open communication, collaboration, and a shared respect for the natural world are essential if a program is to grow and flourish. Learn how the introduction of nature-based learning experiences in one public preschool has extended into kindergarten and first grade, and consider how the vision you hold for your own school can blossom.

Vernal Pool Party!

Joan Carey, Environmental Educator, Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, Brattleboro, VT.

Join Joan for a foray into the wild woods of Heifer Hill to explore a vernal pool and meet the inhabitants who call this place home for a few months every year. This workshop will provide you with the opportunity to get your hands wet and your feet muddy as you challenge yourself to be the learner. Step into the role of the novice naturalist and experience the joy of unexpected encounters. Wellies (boots) recommended.

Thank You to our Co-Sponsors:

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Registration Fees:

Working Professional	\$125.00
Group Rate: per person for 3 or more from same organization	\$100.00
Antioch University Alumni	\$75.00
AUNE students	\$50.00

Register Here: www.antioch.edu/new-england/inbloom

Questions? Contact Peg Smeltz at Antioch University New England, 603-283-2301, msmeltz@antioch.edu,