



# In Bloom in Maine

*Promising Practices in Nature-based  
Early Childhood Education*

**Saturday, April 22, 2017 ❖ 9:00 am – 4:00pm**

**Eyes of the World Discovery Center**

The Kittery Community Center, Kittery, Maine

Antioch University New England hosts three **In Bloom** east coast conferences this spring; first we're on the road to Kittery, Maine, then back home to Keene, New Hampshire and then on the road again to New Haven, Connecticut. While we will miss Vermont, we are confident the opportunities from Shelburne Farms will keep the momentum sustained. Witnessing the enthusiasm of early childhood professionals in this muddy effort to get children outside has been both inspirational and heartwarming! These conferences allow a place to share the work of some of the best nature-based early childhood educators. And in return, we have learned so much from you! We invite you to come to one or all of the **2017 In Bloom Conferences: Promising Practices in Nature-based Early Childhood Education!**

Each conference has two keynotes and two workshop sessions, bringing together well-recognized professionals from the conference region and beyond. When registering, be prepared to select the morning and afternoon workshops of your preference.

## **Boundaries**

*There is a place where the town ends,  
and the fields begin.  
It's not marked but the feet know it,  
also the heart that is longing for refreshment  
and, equally for repose.*

*Someday we'll live in the sky.  
Meanwhile, the house of our lives is this green world.  
The fields, the ponds, the birds.  
The thick black oaks—surely they are  
the inventions of something wonderful.  
And the tiger lilies.  
And the runaway honeysuckle that no one  
will ever trim again.*

*Where is it? I ask, and then  
my feet know it.*

*One jump, and I'm home.*

from **Red Bird** 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
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

## The Forest is Your Classroom

**Dawn Jenkins**, Director, *Eyes of the World Discovery Center, Kittery, Maine*

A classroom without walls or set lesson plans? We will go on a hike through the forest and learn how children are able to naturally develop their fine motor & gross motor skills through spontaneous nature play/work. You will see how science, math and language development occur through these experiences. When the children are allowed the time and space to explore, they create their own “lesson plans” without even realizing it! We’ll discuss how to encourage this type of learning. Please dress for the weather; we will be outdoors! Boots and “rain” pants are encouraged.



# Morning Keynote

## From Preschool to Early Elementary: Learning from One Community’s Journey with Nature-Based Education

For over twelve years **Rachel Larimore** served as the Director of Education at the Chippewa Nature Center in Midland Michigan. In 2007 she founded the Chippewa Nature Preschool, a licensed nature preschool –one of only twenty of its kind in the country at the time. During her tenure she also co-chaired the construction of a LEED certified preschool facility at the Nature Center. She is now a doctoral student at Michigan State University and conducts research in nature-based early childhood education for Antioch University New England.



High-quality nature-based early childhood education doesn’t happen overnight, but through community collaboration NbECE can be integrated into all levels of early childhood education. Using preschool and early elementary programs in Midland, Michigan as an example, Rachel will provide ways to better integrate nature into your program structure and broader community, no matter your starting point.

## Becoming Animals

**Amy Butler**, Education Director, *North Branch Nature Center, Montpelier, Vermont*

Children love to learn about the world around them through pretend and imaginary play. Learning through play can also make abstract subjects more concrete. In this workshop, we will utilize imaginative play to explore the world of animals. We will become animals by asking questions about the creatures that live around us, building animal homes, collecting food and creating our own animal stories. We will discuss the opportunity for experiencing empathy and care for living things by becoming those things. This will be a great opportunity for elementary public school teachers to draw out performance expectations or align your literacy program within the experience of *Becoming Animals!*

## Forest Adventures in Literacy

**Jessica Labbe**, Teacher, *Eyes of the World Discovery Center, Kittery, Maine*

Take an adventure and see Kittery’s own Roger’s Park through the eyes of a child. Learn about implementing a child-led curriculum that includes building literacy and language skills in the outdoor setting. On this adventure we will build a connection between nurturing a child’s self-awareness and autonomy with other important life skills. Jessica will discuss how to create a peaceful and nurturing learning environment in an outdoor setting while enriching play.

# Morning Workshops

## **All they do is play all day! Where is the Learning?**

*Deb Kardane, Teaching Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, New Hampshire*

What's really going on when young children engage in play? How can early educators facilitate developmentally appropriate outdoor play in order to maximize children's learning opportunities?

With today's focus on academics in early education, it has become increasingly important for teachers to understand the role of play in laying the foundation for future academic learning. By building our awareness of the language, literacy and cognitive underpinnings of play, we are empowered to extend and deepen our children's experiences in the outdoors. In this workshop, we will explore the underlying learning that occurs each day when young children engage in nature-based play. Get ready to play, sing, reflect and share ideas as we develop our own 'academically' infused outdoor experience.

## **Movement Outdoors**

*Martha Coombs, Kindergarten and Movement Teacher, Seacoast Waldorf School, Eliot, ME*

Ensuring young children engage in a variety of locomotor skills in the outdoors can be challenging. In order to get a good balance of movement, especially for phlegmatic children, we augment our outdoor areas with a few simple additions and routines. We will discuss setting movement goals in outdoor learning. We'll also trouble shoot and brainstorm ways to enrich even the most challenging outdoor space.

## **Storytelling on the Spot**

*Amy Fredland, 7th grade teacher, Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee, Vermont and storytelling mom for two!*

Books can be filled with magnificent tales and illustrations, yet often the most poignant and powerful tales we can tell our children are the ones we give voice to ourselves. This playful and practical workshop explores the value of the story we listen for, speak, and offer to our children at a moment's notice. We'll consider how stories enhance our experience of nature, and how a story we "listen for" invites a deep connection between storyteller and listener. Discover how stories support a child's growing ability to listen, and experience the impact of quality of voice and gesture. We'll practice ways to grasp a story's beginning thread; and gain confidence in following its path and knowing when we've found its end.

# Lunch

# Afternoon Keynote

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

*Amy Butler is the Director of Education at the North Branch Nature Center in Montpelier, Vermont and has been connecting adults and children with the natural world for 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.*



Amy will share the successes and challenges of getting children outdoors on a weekly basis while still prioritizing the expectations of NGSS and Common Core standards. 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.

# Afternoon Workshops

## **The Yucky and the Dangerous: Risk Management in Nature-based Early Childhood Education**

*Anne Stires, Founder and Director, Juniper Hill School, Alna, Maine*

**Poison Ivy + Berries + Mushrooms + Feathers + Bones + Slush + Dead Animals + Mud + Ticks + Water + Trees = Excited Children & Nervous Parents!**

As soon as children enter the natural world, whether as classroom or play space, they discover and explore. They are sure to come across biting insects, poisonous berries, dead animals, mud and all the exciting loose parts that make up their world. Our job, as guides and educators, is to support their development by encouraging safe and appropriate explorations. Children are naturally drawn to what is yucky and dangerous. As the adults in their lives, we have a choice: encourage fear and worry, or increase their knowledge base through play first and information next? The latter increases children's confidence and resilience. Explore the "Yucky and the Dangerous" with hands on, outdoor activities for children and through role playing conversations with parents.

# Afternoon Workshops

## Plant Foraging for Teachers of Young Children

*Jenna Darcy, Forager/Owner, Twinflower Farm, South Berwick, Maine*

We will walk around the schoolyard and wooded outdoor classroom and learn about common plants you are likely to encounter at your own schools and homes. We'll talk about the identification of these plants and also their uses and how those might be incorporated into a classroom. We will talk about good rules and resources for beginner foragers and children. We will talk about ethics, laws, safety, and fun!

## The Science in Nature-based Education

*Rachel Larimore, Nature preschool consultant and founder of Chippewa Nature Preschool, Midland, Michigan*

STEM learning has been receiving a great deal of attention in recent years, and this session will focus specifically on science. We'll discuss science knowledge and practices outlined in the Next Generation Science Standards, in addition to children's approaches to learning, that can be integrated into nature-based science teaching and learning. Also, using a variety of loose parts, we'll bring those science concepts and skills to life by constructing our visions of science in nature-based early childhood education.

## Developing a Connection to Place

*Julie Goldberg and Jen Del Deo, Acorn Weevils Forest Kindergarten, White Pine Programs, Cape Neddick, Maine*

Acorn Weevils, part of White Pine Programs (WPP) is an all-outdoor education opportunity for children ages 4-6. The mission of WPP is "to deepen awareness of place, awaken the wild within and build resilient community through nature connection." We will lead an experiential workshop that uses mapping, song, story lines and awareness to develop a connection to place. Participants will experience the workshop the way our young Weevils might—exploring, observing, creating, and tapping into their own powerful sense of wonder.

## Working with Two Year Olds: Toddlers in the Outdoors

*Alison Flynn and Fred Hoyt, Teachers, Eyes of the World Discovery Center, Kittery, Maine*

How do we prepare toddlers for outdoor play and learning that nurtures independence? How can you safely bring a group of toddlers into a "classroom without walls"? We will discuss how the four seasons make a forest setting a very stimulating and multi-sensory place for toddlers to play and discover and how teachers and parents can safely provide that type of guidance to the youngest of children.

## Language Development, Movement and Nature Education

*David Sobel, Senior Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, New Hampshire*

Early language development can be rooted in understanding the natural world. We'll examine how language emerges in traditional cultures and how we can foster language development through scaffolded explorations in nature. We will tie vocabulary development and language differentiation to the kinesthetic and tactile sensory modes. And we'll hearken back to old-fashioned movement education and try to revive it outdoors. Be prepared to go barefoot, and to create/enact mini adventures inspired by lots of active verbs.

### Registration Fees:

Working Professional . . . . .	\$125.00
Groups of 3 or more from same organization . . .	\$75.00
Antioch University Alumni . . . . .	\$75.00
Antioch University Students . . . . .	\$50.00

Lunch is included.

Please indicate dietary restrictions when registering.

Register Here:

[www.antiochne.edu/in-bloom-2017](http://www.antiochne.edu/in-bloom-2017)

Questions? Contact Peg Smeltz, 603-283-2301  
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