



In Bloom in New Hampshire

Promising Practices in Nature-based Early Childhood Education

Boston Outdoor Preschool Network

Saturday, May 18, 2024

Symonds Elementary School
Keene, NH

We planted **In Bloom in Keene** in the spring of 2011. It was part and parcel of the inception of the Nature-based Early Childhood program at Antioch New England. We did a couple of annual events in Keene and then we moved further afield—down to New Haven, CT, up to Burlington, VT, over to Kittery, ME. We liked exploring the early childhood communities around New England, but eventually we started to feel a bit homesick. So it feels right to come home with **In Bloom in New Hampshire**.

The conference will be held at Symonds Elementary School in Keene—a charming, arts-filled, neighborhood elementary school with good outdoor learning spaces and easy access to surrounding Wheelock Park. Symonds has a number of teachers conducting forest days in the early elementary grades and you'll enjoy all the beautiful child-created art work on the walls throughout the school. The school provides great examples of how to incorporate nature-based education into the public school curriculum.

Antioch University New England acknowledges and honors, with gratitude, the lands and waterways, and the alnobak (people) who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations. We pay respects to the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Confederacy Peoples, past and present, on whose traditional ancestral lands we reside.

*Teach the Children
by Mary Oliver*

Teach the children. We don't matter so much, but the children do. Show them daisies and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen. The lives of the blue sailors, mallow, sunbursts, the moccasin flowers. And the frisky ones—inkberry, lamb's-quarters, blueberries. And the aromatic ones—rosemary, oregano. Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them up-stream, rejoice as they learn to love this green space they live in, its sticks and leaves and then the silent, beautiful blossoms.

Attention is the beginning of devotion.

Schedule for the Day

8:15 am-9:00 am	Registration-Select Workshops Morning Refreshments
9:00 am-9:15 am	Opening Circle
9:15 am-10:15 am	Morning Keynote
10:30 am-Noon	Morning Workshops
Noon- 12:50 pm	Lunch
12:50 pm-2:00 pm	Afternoon Keynote
2:15 pm-3:45 pm	Afternoon Workshops
3:45 pm-4:00 pm	Closing Circle

Morning Keynote

We're New England, We're New Hampshire, We are Keene: Connecting With our Place through Music, Movement, and Story

Peter Siegel, Music Teacher, Symonds Elementary School, Keene, NH. Award-winning Songwriter, Music Producer, Founding Member of the folk-funk-world beat band, The Gaslight Tinkers, Brattleboro, VT

The arts spark children's enthusiasm for their surroundings and local ecosystems. When we weave a song into a place-based lesson, we stir emotion and build personal connection. There are lessons to be learned from folksinger and activist Pete Seeger who helped give birth to the hands-on environmental education and advocacy movement in the late sixties and early seventies. He believed that with song, dance, puppets and celebratory events, you can inspire a generation to advocate for clean air and water. We can't expect to teach our children to get their hands dirty without fun and creative expression and we can use the methods of the movement to inspire children to be invested in their outdoor learning. Let's do as Pete would and teach our children to honor place with song and creative expression.



Peter Siegel is an educator, composer, producer, and performer living in southern Vermont. He's a K-5 music teacher at Symonds Elementary School who also brings his lifelong experience working outdoors to the classroom. He began his journey as a teenager on the Sloop Clearwater as an environmental educator on the

*Hudson River while simultaneously studying world music and dance traditions. Peter was also an instrumentalist on Pete Seeger's grammy award winning album *Tomorrow's Children*. After earning his MS in Resource Management and Administration from Antioch University New England, he promptly fell back into teaching, applying lessons in outdoor learning and advocacy to the public school ecosystem. When not teaching, he's tending his garden and touring with his world music band, The Gaslight Tinkers.*

Morning Workshops

You Can Teach THAT Outside? Meeting MA and NH State Standards through Outdoors Learning

Rachael Basdekis, Kindergarten Teacher, Swift River School, New Salem, MA

Integrating the Massachusetts and New Hampshire state educational standards into outdoors learning can be a daunting task for educators. Each Wednesday, my Kindergarten class spends the whole day outdoors, no matter the weather! In this workshop we will incorporate natural materials that lend themselves to early math and literacy concepts by engaging in standards based activities that can be used outdoors all year long. We'll use frequently found natural objects combined with classroom tools for a new spin on counting and decomposing numbers, letter sounds and formation, incorporating diverse literature, writing, and drawing. We will explore activities that can be done in the woods, on your playground, and anywhere in between!

Becoming Animal: Using Imaginative Play to Deepen Connection with Nearby Nature

Jaime Hutchinson, Teacher-Naturalist and Professional Learning Facilitator, Harris Center for Conservation Education, Hancock, NH

Come eat like a chipmunk, build a nest like a mouse, and howl, yip, and sniff like a coyote. Learn how providing opportunities and playscapes for young children invites them to deepen their connections to the animals in their world. Discover how animal affinity in young children can help them develop a deep and powerful environmental ethic that can last their lifetime. Come prepared to chuff like a bear!

Buds, Branches and Bark: Investigating Trees with Young Learners

Tracy Jones, Preschool Educator, Beaver Brook Association, Hollis, NH

Do you have trees in your nature-space, outside your window or lining your street? Trees are all around us, and they provide a multitude of opportunities to spark wonder in young learners. Join us as we investigate, identify and befriend trees to deepen our understanding of place and strengthen our connections with the natural world. Exploring trees naturally lends itself to rich, sensory experiences for young learners. In this hands-on workshop we will engage with topics including the basics of identifying trees in winter, mapping with trees, arts integration, mindful movement, and branching out with trees across the curriculum. We will discuss ways to modify activities for indoor or outdoor learning. Bring your favorite tree-themed picture book or resource to share with the group!



Educare Central Maine

Morning Workshops

Nature Journaling for Your Students and YOURSELF: A Tool for Reflection, Documentation & Mindfulness

Liza Lowe, Director of Inside-Outside and Affiliate Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

What happens when we slow down and focus on one thing? How might investing time in observation and reflection nurture ourselves and our students? Together we will create nature journals, practice some journaling techniques, and stretch our bodies, minds, and comfort zones as we move toward a sense of place and a state of rest. In a time when school days are tightly scheduled, governed by bells and proficiency, this session is an opportunity to get still and quiet, to give to yourself and in turn, give to the K-3rd grade children with whom you work.

Who is the Forest? Integrated Curriculum with First- and Second-Graders

Eliza Minnucci, Co-Founder, Forest Kinder, Co-Author, The Forest Days Handbook, Forest Days Teacher, First Branch Elementary School, Tunbridge, VT, Adjunct Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

As the Forest School teacher at First Branch Elementary school, Eliza collaborates with classroom teachers to cultivate outdoor experiences for students that complement and enrich scripted classroom learning. In this workshop, experience the routines and tasks developed for first and second graders as they practice reading, writing, and math— embedded in getting to know the forest. Just as the students do, you'll observe, wonder, sketch, write, collect, identify, map, graph, chat, and sing. And play!

Play-Based Learning Stations That Cultivate Early Scientists and Mathematicians

Amy Randall, Kindergarten Teacher, and Virginia Gitchell, Fourth Grade Teacher, Chesterfield School, Chesterfield, NH

"Imagination and play are important elements of children's science inquiry, with implications for early science education.

Vartiainen & Kumpulainen, 2020

Playing and learning outdoors is exciting and research suggests that it is both beneficial and, we dare say, essential for student development. But are you also striving to connect your science and math learning standards to your outdoor learning? This workshop will look at how students can engage in and with the natural environment through play-based learning stations. Even our youngest budding scientists and mathematicians can collect and record data as well as use measurement tools! We will showcase how to transition through learning stations, offer group management techniques, and share some great spring station ideas that align with state standards via engaging inquiry and play.



Educare Central Maine

Lunch

We enjoy treating you to a tasty and healthy lunch. During the lunch hour, we will update you on *Inside-Outside*, our network for nature-based educators. Learn how to join or start a chapter. Contact Liza Lowe at elowe@antioch.edu.



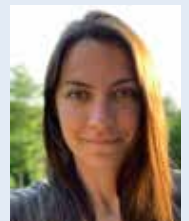
Afternoon Keynote

Forest Days: Small Stories from A Decade of Taking Public School to the Woods

Eliza Minnucci, Co-Founder, Forest Kinder, Co-Author, The Forest Days Handbook, Forest Days Teacher, First Branch Elementary School, Tunbridge, VT, Adjunct Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

Eliza Minnucci tells her story of a decade focused on getting students outdoors for play and learning. This hyper-local and personal presentation aims to sound familiar and inspiring all at once. The audience can expect to exclaim "I've done that!" and "I could do that!" in equal measure. A big story of educational paradigm shift will be made up of our small stories, all the more effectively if we sit together and share them as we will do during this keynote.

Eliza Minnucci was a kindergarten teacher in Vermont when she began Forest Fridays in 2013. Eliza published A Forest Days Handbook in 2018, and has provided professional development for early childhood and elementary educators around New England. She is an adjunct professor at Antioch University New England where she has instructed the Nature-based Early Childhood Curriculum course since 2017. She is now most focused on her work as the Forest School teacher at the First Branch Unified District Elementary School where she lives with her family in Tunbridge, Vermont.



Afternoon Workshops

The Wonder of Worms: Exploring the Relationship Between Soil and those Wiggly, Decomposers we call Worms

Jessica Arrow, Kindergarten Teacher, Symonds Elementary, Keene, NH

This session will dig into an experiential life science unit to discover the wonders of native earthworms and red wigglers. Get ready to observe, discover, and get your hands dirty as we follow an inquiry process that leads to deep understanding and appreciation for these wiggly, wriggly invertebrates. Through engaging activities and lessons that take place both inside and out, we will explore how to build children's understanding of the impact these tiny soil organisms have on the natural world, as they engage in essential roles as decomposers, soil aerators, and nutrient providers.

Mapping a Sense of Place

Hannah Lindner-Finlay, Kindergarten Teacher, Academy School, Brattleboro, VT

Come explore the role teachers can play in deepening our student’s sense of place. During this session, we will learn about cultivating a culture of inquiry in our class community. Together, we will practice routines for noticing and wondering together. We will discuss ways that we can get to know one place deeply and address making meaningful connections when exploring further afield. After going on our own brief adventure, we will map our journey together. This session will provide rich connections for meeting Common Core Literacy Standards while engaging children in documenting their growing sense of place through mapping.

Fire as Teacher and Caretaker

Amy Butler, Author, Educating Children Outdoors, Educator and Backcountry Explorer, Jay, VT

Fire can light a dark night, provide warmth and produce a flame to cook over. Teaching with fire allows us to expand our time outdoors during the colder months as well as cultivate a sense of connection to one another and the earth. In a time of increasing danger brought on by wildfires, it is important that we consider all of our students’ experiences with fire and scaffold fire lessons with intention and care. In this workshop Amy Butler, author of *Educating Children Outdoors: Lessons in Nature-based Learning*, will help educators consider the meaning of teaching with fire and provide lessons and safety protocols for bringing fire into the outdoor classroom.

Supporting the Development of Executive Function through Outdoor Games

David Sobel, Professor Emeritus and Author, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

Research over the past decade suggests that it’s more important to focus on the development of executive functions in preschool children than to focus on early literacy and math skills. But what is “executive function (EF)” anyway, how do you measure it, and what can you do to develop it? After a brief review of the research on EF in preschool children, we’ll engage in an array of outdoor games (some traditional, some new), and we’ll analyze how different components of the games develop different aspects of EF. Be ready to play Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, a variation of Head & Shoulders, Knees & Toes and other old and new games.

Photographs used with permission.



Harrisville Childrens Center

Seasonal Crafts and Celebrations

Linda MacGillvary, Director, Harrisville Children’s Center, Harrisville, NH

The curriculum at the Harrisville Children’s Center honors and follows the seasons. The children make autumn crowns and sing autumn songs at local businesses in October. In mid-winter, children and teachers parade through the village wearing a large, child-made dragon puppet to celebrate Lunar New Year. In spring children sneak around the village to leave flower-filled May Day baskets at nearby homes. In summer, children make wands and wings and have a Fairy Tea Party. In this workshop, Linda will engage you in some of the

seasonal crafts activities conducted at the school and share resources to help you create a “phenological” curriculum—a curriculum that follows the weather patterns and uniqueness of each season.

Music IS Connection: Song, Games, Movement, and Hand-Clapping Exercises for Young Children In and Outdoors

Peter Siegel, Award winning Songwriter, Music Producer, Teacher at Symonds Elementary School and Founding Member of the folk-funk-world-beat band The Gaslight Tinkers. Keene, NH and Brattleboro, VT

Music, art and movement are foundational to the human experience, reconnecting us to who we are and where we live. For the better part of 200,000 years humans communicated with each other and our surroundings through rhythm, song and group movement. Somewhere in the last 12,000, we’ve lost ground. We’ve learned to believe that to sing you need to be a “singer,” or to dance you need to be a “dancer.” Let’s break that notion and immerse ourselves in song, dance, and hand clapping games that connect children to where they live and with whom they are sharing space, in the classroom, outdoors, in the community, and on earth.



Workshops will be selected at Registration Check-In on the morning of the conference.

REGISTER HERE

www.antioch.edu/annual-events/in-bloom-conferences

Questions or challenges with registration, contact: Peg Smeltz, msmeltz@antioch.edu, or text cell-603-762-0012.

Registration Fees	
Individual Working Professional	\$125
Group Rate	\$100
<i>(per person; 3 or more from the same school)</i>	
AU students or alumni	\$75