



NEWSLETTER OF THE NATURE ACTION COLLABORATIVE FOR CHILDREN

MAY/JUNE 2017

Start with Wonder

The reflection shared in this edition broadly reflects the Nature Action Collaborative for Children Universal Principle:

We believe nature based learning environments should inspire wonder and discovery.

Nature is the Essence of Life

Juliana Gatti Pereira Rodrigues, Brazil

Since my early childhood, I have had the opportunity to be in contact with a great diversity of natural environments together with my family. I remember being at my grandparents' country house gathering strawberries, feeding the chickens, and collecting leaves from different plants. I spent countless hours discovering a huge diversity of insects (their shapes, sizes, colours, and life stages), learning to hear and sing bird songs, finding the perfect stone, picking up fruits to eat, spending lots of time under my three favourite fruit trees — avocado, jaboticaba (endemic to



Photograph from Juliana Gatti Pereira Rodrigues

Brazil), and mulberry. I would play with the soil, prepare mud meals, and eat fresh grown fruit. In that special place, feeling complete and one with nature, I could just be — forever; I was totally living my present.

I will never forget that feeling. In part, it is what led me to idealize Instituto Arvores Vivas's (Living Trees Institute) mission to reconnect children and adults to nature, formed in 2006. To re-establish the connection that has been lost, even more in urban areas, we created a Children and Nature Festival that happens every year in the beginning of spring — here in Sao Paulo it starts on September 22. We contact schools from all different regions of the city and create sensorial, creative, artistic, investigative and hands on activities inside public parks.

Most of the schools' teachers and coordinators share with us that the Festival is the only time of the year they invite the students to spend some time in the natural areas, even though it is not more than a few blocks away from their classrooms.

We call one of our best activities Green Walk. We invite children to use all of their senses to explore and discover everything — a tiny ant, air temperature, the dance of the wind on their bodies, the heat of the sun and cool of the shade, texture of bark, size and shapes of leaves, seeds, and fruits found on the paths they go through. As they do, they learn information about the relationship between plants and animals, the perception of all animals'



The mission of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children 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.

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natural homes, the importance of each species and nature element to life, the natural and living source of the food they eat, the quality of the air they breathe, and the peace and tranquillity felt as they are close to nature. We stop at a huge tree that is more than 150 years old and invite them to wonder, is this tree alive? Do trees eat? Do they breathe? If they had a mouth, where would it be? What is bark to a tree compared to their human bodies? Which element of their body is so hard and strong like wood? How long can we live? How old is the most ancient tree? Do trees reproduce? The conversations start endless discussions that we organize into opportunities to connect with all subjects from school.

More so, the Green Walk experience strengthens their perception that **they are nature**. It promotes empathy, respect, care, and appreciation of all gifts around every one of us every day. Nature is just waiting to blossom in the hearts of our children, to nurture them with its incredible and endless presence.

Instituto Arvores Vivas is a non-governmental organization based in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Juliana Gatti Pereira Rodrigues has been working with sustainable development, art, and environmental educational approaches for 15 years. Please contact julianagatti@arvoresvivas.org.br with questions, suggestions, to get involved, or to offer support.

Consider this:

- Could you plan a program-wide or community-wide celebration in nature?
- What experiences can children in your care have to strengthen their perception that they are nature rather than separate from nature?
- What can you add or change in your outdoor space to inspire more wonder and discovery?

Have an Adventure!

Use the “You and a Tree” activities in the Environmental Action Kit (Toolkit for Early Childhood Programs, p. 3–5).

Fun Facts about Trees!

Help children think about the many gifts trees provide for people, such as food, medicine, clothing, or furniture. Here are some great examples...

Coconut trees are palms that grow up to 30 meters high. Known as the ‘tree of life’ because of their huge variety of uses, they grow throughout the tropics. In many parts of the world, people use their leaves to make clothing, mats, baskets, and roofs. Their fruits provide food, drink, oil, and medicine, and their wood helps build houses and boats.

Find the complete activity at:

<http://connect.worldforumfoundation.org/environmental-action-kit/toolkits-2/>



Future issues of *Wonder*

We invite you to email your ideas, stories, and photos that relate to children’s connections with nature to:

Tara Schroder: taras@natureexplore.org