

Wiggles, Worms, and Wonders

Nature Exploring Kits or Backpacks

(Adjust for age level safety)

Stage 1: Start small, grow with the children:

1. Small note pads (or folded paper) & pencils
2. Craft sticks – any size but the larger the better
3. Empty small jewelry boxes or plastic containers

Optional and useful:

- Hand gloves (non-latex)
- Hand wipes
- Small bottle of water

Stage 2: Consider adding these items when needed

4. *Hand lense(s)
5. *Bug boxes-handmade or bought
6. *Aquarium nets
7. *Tweezers

Optional and fun to use:

- Binoculars
- Field guides: such as Birds of Texas (Used book stores)
- Flashlight(s)
- Pen light(s)
- Hand fan
- Maps-handmade

SAFETY RULES

1. Take care of the environment and the living things in nature.
2. If you do not know what something is, do not touch it.
3. Never put anything in your mouth when working in nature.
4. Sometimes you will need to wear protective goggles & gloves.



Small Changes Work Best –

Do things you can maintain.

Ideas:

- Placing flowers & plants in pots and planters outside
- Spending more time outdoors
- Moving indoor activities outside
- Opening classroom doors and creating indoor-outdoor flow.
- Organizing and cleaning out storage areas.
- Swapping out some plastic items with nature items.
- Allowing children outside in the rain.

Oh, Golden Sun

Oh, golden sun so shiny bright,

Please warm us with your golden light.

Let's all hold hands that there may flow a golden stream of warmth and glow.

(Have children touch their toes and move their hands up their body stretching up high and breathing.)



Nature Walk Observation Ideas for Discussion or Journals

Plants & Animals

What types of plants do you see? (trees, grasses, flowers)

Choose one plant you see and draw it.

Describe the plant.

What animals did you see on your walk?

Did you see any "evidence" of animals? What animal do you think it would be?

Draw an animal that you saw or might have seen.

Under a Log:

Find a log on the ground and gently roll it over. What do you see?

What does the log look like underneath? How is it different from the top?

What does the ground look like under the log?

Draw what you see under the log.

Weather

What is the temperature?

Is it warm or cold or just right?

Is it sunny, cloudy, or partly cloudy?

Can you feel the wind? Can you hear the wind?

Is the ground wet or dry?

Draw how the sky looks today or a picture of you wearing the appropriate clothing for today's weather.

Sounds

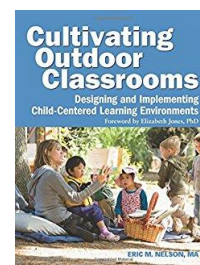
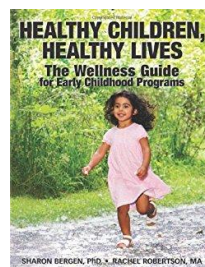
Sit or stand still and close your eyes. What do you hear? (animals, wind, cars, people)

Are there any sounds you hadn't noticed until you closed your eyes?

Draw what you hear.

Benefits to children's lives:

- ❖ Children regularly exposed to natural elements feel better about themselves and are better able to cope with stress, anxiety, and depression.
- ❖ Children with ADD experience fewer symptoms of ADD while in nature.
- ❖ As children step into the natural world, their creativity and imagination heighten, and conversing cooperatively becomes more distinct.
- ❖ The outdoors is a more robust and effective setting for learning and development.
- ❖ Nature encourages children to engage and interact with one another.
- ❖ Children who regularly play outdoors develop stronger gross-motor skills and show signs of better overall health than children who do not.



ABC's for Connecting Young Children to Nature

- A. Provide frequent, positive experiences in natural environments.
- B. Focus on experiencing vs. teaching.
- C. Respect children's fears and follow their interests.
- D. Model interest in and caring for the natural environment.
- E. Avoid telling young children to Save the Earth!
- F. Be sensitive to different families' priorities and views about the natural world and our interactions with it.
- G. Provide child-friendly tools to encourage closer observation and hands-on manipulation of natural materials.
- H. Focus on open-ended activities.
- I. Give children plenty of opportunities to choose their own activities.
- J. Keep it simple, keep it local.

