



COLORADO
Department of Education



Colorado State Library
GRT Quick Bites
20 Minute Topics in Early Learning

Getting Back to Nature
with Melody Garcia



Your Colorado Early Literacy Support Team



Kate Brunner

Melody Garcia

Gail Yerbic

Kate Brunner, Melody Garcia, and Gail Yerbic - Photo by N. Romano (2019)



Program Background & Goals

Growing Readers Together & Early Childhood in Colorado

- Up to 57% of children under 6 are cared for informally by family members, friends, & neighbors (FFN caregivers)
- GRT prioritizes & supports library service to FFN caregivers
- GOAL: To increase FFN's awareness of library resources and services through outreach, community partnerships, and relationship building.



One study revealed that toddlers on average on spent 3 hours a week outdoors.



44% never held a bug



36% had never collected sticks



35% had yet to play in the mud



**On average,
children today
spend 35% less
time outdoors than
their parents did.**

2018 survey of children 3-12 by Kamuk Outdoor Apparel



Photo by Markus Sinske from Unsplash.



Benefits of Outdoor Play

“You can’t bounce off of the walls if there are no walls.”

Erin Kenny, founder of Cedarsong Nature School

An outdoor environment:

- Increases sensory input
- Reduces stress/anxiety
- Increases focus
- Offers greater motor development options
- Enhances reasoning and observation skills





Outdoor Programming as Outreach



- Does signage inform onlookers what's happening?
- Is there flexibility to allow late comers to participate?
- Are you ready to welcome them?
- Do you have information on hand?



Beyond Outdoors: Initiating Nature Play

Nature play is defined by it's unstructured and child directed interactions with natural materials and environments.



- Children play WITH nature
- Invitation to engage in guided play
- Space for invention and discovery
- Focus on sensory experiences
- Risks and messes are welcomed

The average American child spends 4 to 7 minutes a day in unstructured play outdoors
Child Mind Institute



Examples of Nature Play



- Mud and water play
- Building forest homes
- Scavenger hunts
- Potion making
- Nature faces
- Painting with nature
- Collecting nature treasures for art
- Natural science activities
 - Forces
 - Melting ice
 - Float/Sink
 - Natural engineering
 - Sound/ acoustics





Including Nature Play in Storytime

Take time to notice the environment.
Has anything changed?

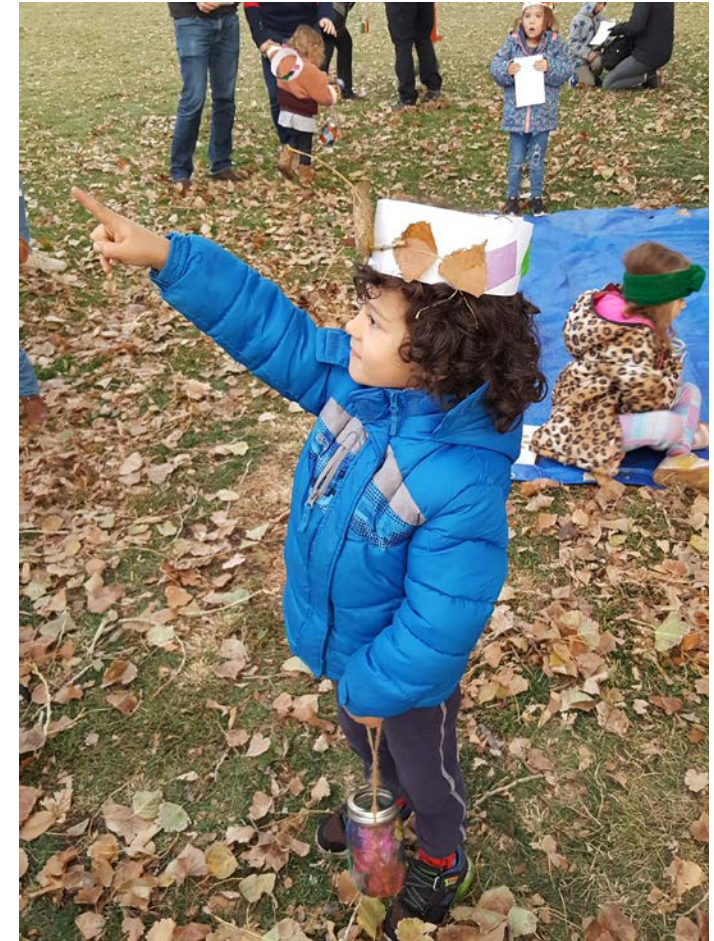
Engage children's senses- what can we
feel, hear, smell?

Allow for discoveries in nature.

Plan themes that elicit exploration.

Include nature-based process crafts.

End storytime with an invitation to
engage in nature play





Bringing the Outside In



Sensory Tables

Process crafts with natural media (sticks, rocks, leaves, flowers, water/ice)

Walking field trip to collect nature treasures

Partner with local parks department



Creating Nature Play Spaces

Boulders to climb

Streams to dam

Ponds to splash in

Sticks and rocks for building

Logs and rocks to practice balancing

A multisensory garden to explore





Connecting Families with Nature

Resources for Families:

- ❖ Generation Wild
- ❖ CO State Parks Pass
- ❖ And YOU!
 - Recommend books that support nature play
 - Create outdoor Take & Make activities
 - Read books that show ALL children in nature



Photo by Joice Kelly on Unsplash



Questions?

Promising Practice

Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash





Thank You for Joining Us!

July 20 at 12pm MT

ABCs AND 123s! Numeracy and Early Literacy
with Kate Brunner

July 19 at 1pm MT

CLEL Member Meetup: Outdoor Programming
via Zoom- email info@clel.org for link

Contact Melody Garcia:

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We Welcome Your Input!

Please complete this short
feedback survey:

<https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/4404594/>
GRT-Team







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