

Wonder™



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For Jordan children, a new way to play

Khatawat Program reaches to connect children and nature in Amman

BY RAED ABU-HAYYANEH

Children have an innate interest in all natural things; they always would like to play with nature elements like water, sand, mud, and watching birds and butterflies. Children who have regular contact with nature learn and develop better.

Education should be more than just sitting in a classroom and studying textbooks. Educational snippets, while gardening or even just sitting outside and watching the birds and the butterflies, can teach children not only theory, but how they fit into the natural world, the importance of looking after the environment. Also, gardening with kids of any age encourages their interest in nature early on in life, and will give an understanding of how the whole eco-system works.

Khatawat program is one of Save the Children's programs, and aims to increase children's access to early education through the creation of new kindergartens and the renovation of existing facilities. It works to enhance the quality of children's development and learning by introducing 'learning-through-play' approaches in the kindergarten classroom, improving teachers' knowledge and skills and supporting the leadership capacities of center supervisors.

Khatawat incorporates 'Child Friendly Spaces' and child protection concepts and approaches within a holistic, interactive kindergarten curriculum in line with the Ministry of Education's Interactive National Curriculum, and international standards. It engages parents and communities in early childhood education and development through activities in the community, classroom and at home.

Khatawat partners with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, and community-based kindergartens in urban and rural areas throughout Jordan, as well as with parents and whole communities in the ar-

reas surrounding the kindergartens.

During the last three months we implemented several community events in local kindergartens. These community events were developed with the cooperation of an outreach team, teachers, volunteers and parents.

We did these activities for children:

- In a road safety activity, the volunteers and the teachers explained to children the safe way to deal with roads, and how it is important to follow the regulations. They explained using simulation, games and practical activities.

- In a planting activity, herbal plants were planted by children. This was good for the children to understand the value of life.

- The children had fun painting a community mural, each one with a paintbrush and water colors. The volunteers told children to draw anything they wanted.

- Iraqi volunteers played traditional music (Jordanian and Iraqi music) and children joined in singing; they also tried to play music themselves.

We hope, with these programs, that we will reach out soon to all the kindergartens in the kingdom. □

Raed Abu-Hayyaneh works with Save the Children in Amman, Jordan; he is a member of the NACC Leadership Team.



~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.~

Nebraska NACC brings shared interests together

BY MARY-BETH PISTILLO

With Nebraska at the forefront of the nature education movement and the explosion of activities it has brought with it—workshops, demonstration and pilot sites, grants, work with schools and childcare programs—it only made sense to form a group to support the efforts and disseminate the information to make sure children and families throughout the state have opportunities to re-connect with nature. That group, which meets regularly, is called the Nebraska Nature Action Collaborative for Children (NeNACC) since it is part of the global Nature Action Collaborative for Children work. This group includes members from the Nebraska Department of Education, Arbor Day Foundation, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children, the University of Nebraska, and other organizations and individuals who believe in the importance of connecting children with nature.

The Nebraska group was formed in 2006 in response to the Working Forum on Nature Education, which was held in Nebraska City. NeNACC focuses its efforts on three areas:

- Promoting effective practices in nature education for all children, families, and educators working with children,

- Developing an interactive networking system to insure informational, fiscal and human resources are utilized to support site implementations, and

- Facilitating the linking of stakeholders for the purpose of generating new in-sight and knowledge about nature education and young children.

NeNACC has united to develop outdoor nature sites at early childhood programs and schools throughout the state, and has supported the use of developmentally appropriate activities in these settings. They also collaborated with the other state entities and the World Forum Foundation to develop the document, “Call to Action: Reconnecting the World’s Children to Nature.”

For more information on the Nebraska Nature Action Collaborative for Children or the nature education activities currently in place throughout the state, visit <http://ectc.nde.ne.gov/nature/nenacc.htm>.

NeNACC encourages other states, provinces or regional coalitions around the world to form local NACC groups as well to become part of this exciting world-wide nature education movement! □

Mary-Beth Pistillo is a training coordinator at the Nebraska Department of Education’s Early Childhood Training Center.

How do I get involved in the NACC?

□ **SEARCH** for the World Forum Foundation, NACC, and all of our friends on Facebook. You’ll meet all sorts of great people from around the world, all with the same devotion to bringing nature closer to the lives of children across the globe.

□ **SUBMIT** your photos and stories to the NACC Newsletter (by emailing chuck.lippstreu@gmail.com), or to the World Forum Foundation at www.worldforumfoundation.org.

□ **SHARE** the excitement of this growing movement with your own colleagues and friends; we’re active worldwide, and NACC leadership members are excited to build the movement in every country!

□ **SIGN UP** for events. From community meetings in your hometown to international gatherings such as the World Forum, you can be a part of this growing movement -- and you can bring others along, too!

The NACC Leadership Team: Who We Are

The NACC Leadership Team is a core group of early childhood educators, designers and landscape architects who came together in 2006 with a dream to change the world for young children. We represent six continents across the globe, and serve as key contact points for others around the world who have a desire to improve the lives of young children.

We meet periodically to discuss strategies for increasing NACC’s outreach and membership, and to find new ways for all of us to work together to further our common mission.

AFRICA

Irma Allen, Mbabane, Swaziland
Hadjah Nandyose, Kampala, Uganda
Sebastian Chuwa, Moshi, Tanzania

ASIA

Bishnu Hari Bhatta, Kathmandu, Nepal
Swati Papat, Mumbai, India
Raed Abu Hayyaneh, Amman, Jordan

NORTH AMERICA

Linda Esterling, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States
Berta MacGregor, Mexico City, Mexico
Jeanne McCarty, Fort Worth, Texas, United States
James Wike, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States

OCEANIA

Toni Christie, Wellington, New Zealand
Koodah Cornwall, Perth, Australia
Fiona Robbe, Arcadia, Australia

EUROPE

Helle Nebelong, Gentofte, Denmark
Claire Warden, Perth, Scotland
Marc Veekamp, Apeldoorn, Netherlands

SOUTH AMERICA

Martha Cecilia Fajardo, Bogota, Colombia
Caroline Hudicourt, Petion-Ville, Haiti
Wil Maheia, Punta Gorda Town, Belize

SUPPORT TEAM:

Bonnie and Roger Neugebauer, Seattle, Washington, United States; Nancy and John Rosenow, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States; Tara Hild, Lincoln, Nebraska, United States.

‘Wonder’ is edited by Chuck Lippstreu, Washington, D.C., United States

‘Wonder,’ the newsletter of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children, welcomes your stories, photos and other submissions to share with the world.

For more information visit the NACC online at:

WWW.WORLDFORUMFOUNDATION.ORG/NATURE

QUESTIONS/SUBMISSIONS CAN BE DIRECTED TO CHUCK LIPPSTREU: CHUCK.LIPPSTREU@GMAIL.COM.

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Lakeshore Learning connecting with nature

BY ERIN CALDWELL

One of Lakeshore Learning Materials' most exciting projects has been the construction of a Nature Explore Classroom at Kids & Company, our on-site preschool for employees' children.

When we learned about the Nature Explore Classroom concept, we were eager to integrate it at our school. Developed by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Dimensions Foundation, Nature Explore Classrooms represent a nationwide U.S. effort to transform preschools and elementary schools into natural settings that promote active outdoor learning that makes nature an integral part of children's daily experience. Especially relevant for urban learning environments, Nature Explore Classrooms promise to enhance a child's imagination and learning skills through the sights, textures and beauty of nature.



This last concept really ignited our enthusiasm.

Lakeshore Learning Materials is settled right in the middle of an industrial area. We're surrounded by large concrete warehouses and manufacturing plants. Even our preschool's walls were butted up against parking lots and concrete warehouse walls. We were excited to bring a natural environment into an industrial area.

The initial process involved Lakeshore Learning Materials and a Dimensions team conducting a detailed survey of the available space; drawing up detailed plans for the classroom, and presenting the plan to all the parents (all Lakeshore employees) of the children in our preschool. When everyone saw

the plans and pictures of similar Nature Explore Classrooms, they became very enthusiastic about the transformation of our school! Even the employees that don't have children in the center got on board, many volunteering manpower or materials to enhance the Nature Explore experience for the children.

On August 22, 2008, we had an informal ribbon-cutting ceremony and planting party to celebrate the kickoff of the Nature Explore Classroom. Dozens of excited children, moms and dads brought organic soil and flowers to plant in new planters that represent the first step of this great enterprise.

The initial building phase involved the complete redesign and reconstruction of the sandbox area—which is now a

cool, shaded spot where children can play even on the sunniest days. The next phase was the completion in late fall of the outdoor Messy Materials Area. This area has been a wonderfully eye opening experience for many of the children. They have discovered that pumpkins come in many sizes and are "heavy;" tree branches break and you can't fix them; and pinecones exist. The children created inclines from wood planks and tree stumps (donated by a local tree service company), and then tested their physical abilities by skillfully walking up the wood plank, onto the tree stump, and then jumping onto another tree stump. The children have been extremely fascinated with the tree branches. Using them as arm exten-

sions, the children hold the tree branches high above their heads, into the wooden overhang. Until this experience, it seems that the world only existed from their head down, rarely ever looking up into the blue sky.

The biggest role for teachers has been to trust children in their play! They are, after all, playing with larger than life tree branches; picking up bricks and heavy stone; and jumping from tree stump to tree stump! The teachers are now taking children on nature walks to collect materials for the messy area, helping children build their vocabulary (pine cones, tree bark, gourds, pumpkins, branches), teaching children to respect the space around them when using heaving materials and long branches, and learning to solve problems (if the item is too heavy, maybe try rolling it or asking a friend to help). We couldn't be more pleased with the opportunity to have this area for children to play!

We are still in the process of completing the project, but are already seeing the benefits to our children. Parental and non-parental involvement continues to be strong as each phase of this project moves forward. We even had some of our sales force, who were here in January for a National Sales Meeting, stop in to put up a bamboo fence around the perimeter of the outdoor area.

We hope other schools will see its many benefits and use it as a model for their own curricula.

For current pictures, check out the Lakeshore Nature Explore Classroom Web Page, under our "Lakeshore In the Community Page" at www.lakeshorelearning.com, so you can follow our progress, and watch us grow. □

Erin Caldwell works with Lakeshore Learning Materials in Carson, California.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

□ THE 2009 WORLD FORUM ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Join us in Belfast, Northern Ireland, from June 16-19, 2009 – the NACC meeting will only be a part of the fun as early childhood educators from around the world gather for the 10th Anniversary of the World Forum Foundation. The World Forum in Belfast will be a memorable experience which will not only expose you to international perspectives on a wide range of early childhood issues, but will also provide you with first hand look at the history of the "troubles" and how early childhood education is now bringing communities together.

□ SCOTLAND STUDY TOUR FOR WORLD FORUM '09 ATTENDEES

Hosted by Mindstretchers UK, this is a wonderful opportunity for 60 people to come together in this stunning rural area in mountainous Scotland. The two days have been created to share European perspectives on outdoor play with a focus on Nature Kindergartens and Forest schools.

□ REGGIO ITALY STUDY TOUR FOR WORLD FORUM '09 ATTENDEES

Reggio Children is offering World Forum 2009 participants a three-day Study Tour in Reggio Emilia, Italy, to experience first-hand the Reggio Children approach to early care and education.

To learn more about these events, or to register for the 2009 World Forum on Early Care and Education, or to register for one of the optional study tours, email: info@worldforumfoundation.org

Puerto Rico education declaration takes shape

UPDATE

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, Early Childhood Education officials are working to finalize an English-language version of a declaration supporting outdoor education.

The draft declaration is based off an existing and finalized version in Spanish. It is a joint project between government agencies, leadership and students at a Puerto Rico school of architecture, UNICEF, and local officials, says Dulce Del Rio-Pineda, Project Manager for the Puerto Rico State-Based Training and Technical Assistance Office.

Everyone involved is excited to get the word out that the English-language declaration is underway, and to solicit feedback, she said.

A few pieces from the draft Declaration:

“This declaration describes best practices for the design of playgrounds that respond to the interests of early childhood. It is directed

to the adults that make decisions regarding the care and education of young children: preschool centers, kindergarten, private or public schools, daycare centers and the community in general..”

“Puerto Rico distinguishes itself by its greenness, its climate, its mountains, its people, and its culture. The responsibility to preserve the enchantment that makes us so unique lies in our hands. What is our responsibility with the environment and with the children who will have our future, our quality of life in their hands?”

The Declaration goes on to call for the following points as Puerto Rico moves forward in providing outdoor education:

a) Design areas that stimulate observation, creativity, exploration, manipulation and mobility in children.

b) Conduct art activities, experiences with sand and water, mud, music and movement, stories, etc.

c) Create areas designed for passive play and design paths and lanes.

d) Maintain children in close contact with nature and an environment of light and fresh air providing shade (trees, gazebos, or roofed platforms with water, etc.)

e) Choose long-lasting elements that are simple to maintain.

f) Divide the space in areas that are clearly defined and identified so that all children can recognize them.

g) Personalize the design with materials of our island guided by the ideas of children, their families and the staff.

h) Adequately supervise.

i) Assure that the space meets all of the standards.”

For more information on the Declaration Regarding Outdoor Learning Environments and Playgrounds in Puerto Rico, or to see the full declaration, email Dulce Del Rio-Pineda at del_rio-pineda_dulce@bah.com.

Early Education Center reaching out with nature in Michigan



UPDATE: FROM SHELLEY FISHER

[Aldersgate Center for Child Development] is a small, non-profit child care center/preschool housed in a United Methodist Church. We have parents and church volunteers and are working with Boy Scout volunteers, some of whom are working toward an Eagle Scout Badge.

This past spring, we took down all old equipment that no longer met the national

USPC code and ordered a few big pieces to install first. We have two toddler “climbers”, a larger climber, swings and a playhouse now installed. We will be adding a completed block area, with “tree blocks,” a music and movement area with natural materials (wind chimes, drums and a xylophone), a messy materials area, that will consist of sorting tables, a woodworking bench, and a sand pit.

We are also in process of designing a butterfly garden and other landscaping

features for the play area. Girl Scouts have helped by planting bulbs along our trail through the woods. We are fortunate that the church congregation here is focused on “green living” and are very supportive of our efforts. The children love being outdoors and are helping us to be creative in this process.

Shelley Fisher is the director of Aldersgate Child Development Center in Michigan. We welcome everyone's updates -- what are you doing right now?

...together, we can change their world.

JOIN THE NACC TODAY

VISIT OUR WEB SITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AT:

www.worldforumfoundation.org/nature

...and become a part of this growing community, working for children.

