

Quick and Easy Ways to Bring Nature to Young Learners
MAEE Conference 2017
Wolf Ridge ELC

Introductions

Why Environmental Education for young learners?

Access to nature in urban spaces

Highlighted activities and materials

STICKS

Stick Sweaters and Mobiles: sticks and yarn

- uses fine motor skills, creativity, and math/physics concepts that can be expanded for many different ages and skill levels.

Extra Yarn by Mac Barnett

Stick Alphabet

- an impromptu activity that my class came up with on their own
- involves breaking sticks and arranging them using both fine and gross motor skills
- expand into stick art, build a stick labyrinth, build an eagle's nest, create something for your classroom

LEAVES

Leaf prints

- Materials: leaves, hammer, paper or light color cloth
- fine and gross motor skills, discuss anatomy of the leaf, explore photosynthesis, observe and paint fall color changing, predict when the last leaves will drop

Press leaves

- Heavy books and newspaper for layering are all you need to press leaves
- Use the pressed leaves for art projects, tree ID journals, observing and comparing characteristics, sorting by shape, size, color, or variety

ROCKS

Painting rocks

- Paint rocks to discuss camouflage, turn into characters for stories, decorate your classroom

Size and shape comparison

- Which rock is your rock? Game
- Rocks for sale, listing and sorting by attributes
- Weight and measurement, rock teeter totter or balancing game

DIRT

Close observation of dirt

- look for insects, observe different materials that make up dirt and sand, how does it change when wet? Use a microscope or hand lens to take a closer look.

Dirt Art

- How many colors of dirt can you find? Paint with it! Glue it to paper! Layer it in a jar!
- Mud play, mud painting on bodies or natural structures, discuss the benefits of mud to wildlife

Small Group Brainstorming

Get outside and try the activities

Follow-up

- What might work for your classroom/age level? What barriers can you see to incorporating more nature materials into your classroom?

Presenters:

Wendy Tremblay w.m.tremblay@gmail.com

Elissa Mallory emallory@gmail.com

Children's Country Day School Mendota Heights, MN

www.childrenscountryday.org

Extra Resources

Nature Explore Program

www.natureexplore.org

Classroom materials, outdoor classrooms and teacher support

Dimensions Foundation Research

www.dimensionsfoundation.org

Research on nature-based learning in children since 1998.

Children & Nature Network

www.childrenandnature.org

Research Library, conference information, community networks

Project Learning Tree

www.plt.org or www.dnr.state.mn.us/plt

Nature-based curriculum, teacher trainings, grants

Minnesota Association for Environmental Education

www.minnesotae.org

Educator scholarships, conference information, networking events, educator awards, affiliate of NAAEE

Natural Start Alliance

www.naturalstart.org

Research summaries and reports, annual conference, support for early childhood EE