

Starting Out Wild



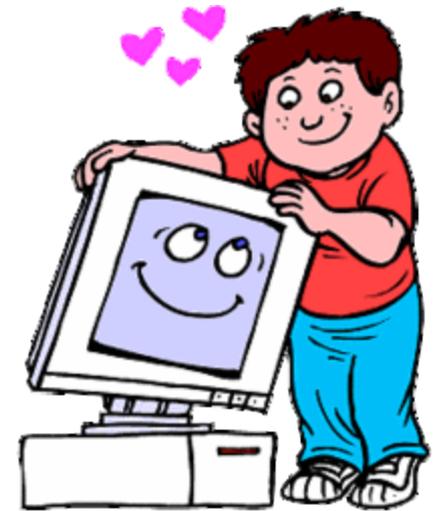
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Nature Deficit Disorder

- Screen time and virtual....



Yes, young children can enjoy nature!



G UW and SOW

Growing Up WILD

- Nature as a means of linking to many curricular areas
- More product centered

The process of moving from G UW to SOW

Adapting G UW

Trying it out with one team of teachers in one location

Developing a framework

Writing original materials

Multiple teams teaching multiple populations

Incorporating materials from many sources

Multiple revisions

A work in progress

Starting Out Wild differs--

- Nature as an end in itself
- More process centered

- **The love of nature needs to accompany growing up from the earliest age.**
- **Teaching must engage both children and parents.**
- **Learning will spiral, moving from tolerating and participating, to acquiring nature concepts and vocabulary over the 3 year span.**
- **Activities should facilitate children's experiences through movement and using all the senses.**
- **Familiar analogs of unfamiliar concepts and vocabulary are provided.**
- **Providing an emotionally comfortable environment is the starting point.**
- **All activities will be process oriented and developmentally appropriate.**
- **The sole focus is nature learning.**

Books and Beaks

Examples of books



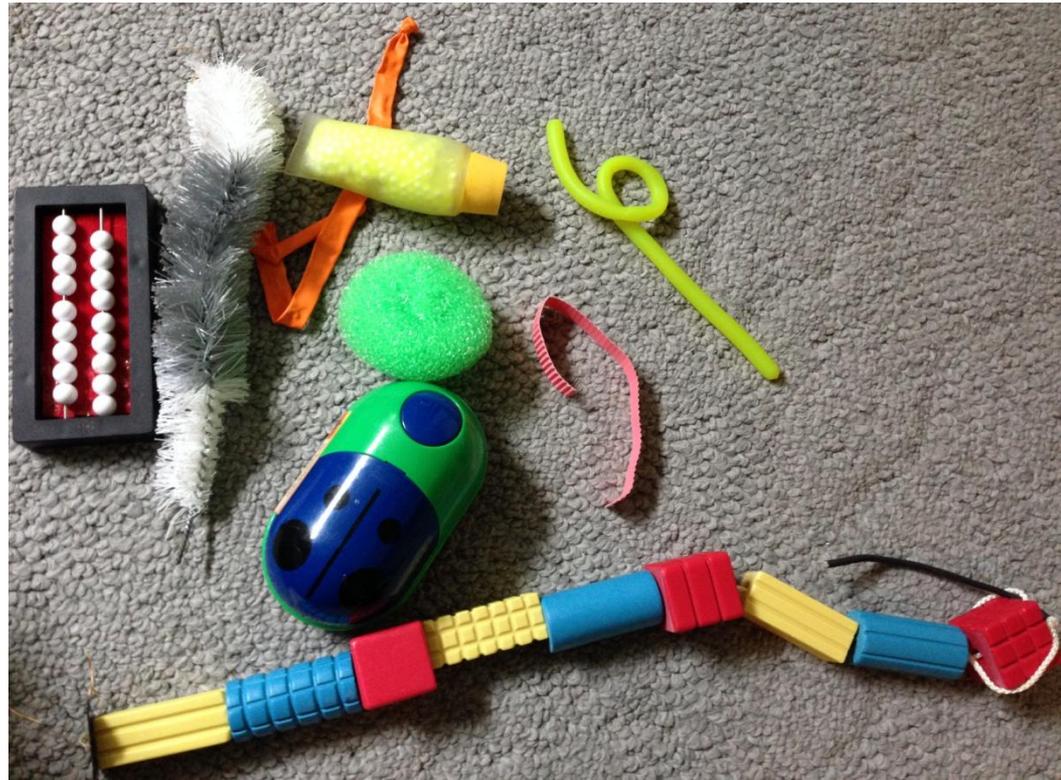
Beak analogs



Books for older learners....



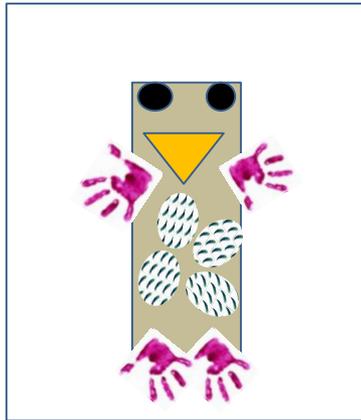
Examples of analogs



Hide and Seek



Art projects and snacks can be (adult) products, or



More process—materials don't need to be perfect!



Nature learnings examples

A Bear's Lunch—animals eat different things

Batty Bats—the mammal that flies

Bloomin' Blossoms—native wildflowers nearby

Breakfast For a Bird—adaptation for feeding and flight

Busy As a Bee—roles in an insect society

Clever Spiders—arachnids and webs

Deer, Oh Deer—what animals need

Green Grows the Grass—grasses we eat

Grow, grow, Grow--metamorphosis

Hide and Seek—the role of color

How Do I Feel?—friendly and scary animals

How's the Weather—wind, sun, rain and sources of energy

Leapin' Lizards—kinds of reptiles

Living In a Tree—there's more to trees than leaves

Mighty Ants—insect communication

More and Less—recycling and conservation

Pokies and Pricklies—adaptation to heat

Rockin' and Rollin—rocks and soil relationships

Seeds We Need—seed dispersal

Turkeys Are Terrific—anatomy of birds

Water, Water Everywhere—cycles and forms

We Love Leaves—function of tree structure

Where's the Energy?—food webs

Wild things—domestic and wild

Worm Tracks—worm anatomy and composting

How to Use Starting Out Wild

- First 15 minutes—
- Gathering—The children experience real and model specimens, looking at books, and other activities introducing the lesson, while the group is arriving.
- Focus—The teacher sings the *Hello Children* to create a consistent clear start, and the name song to engage children individually. The fingerplay and songs introduce the concepts and vocabulary.
- Learning—Leader teaches the content (concepts and vocabulary) with things the children can feel, manipulate or act out. The transition uses a song or movement related to the lesson to move to the walk.
- Second 15 minutes—The walk connects the content with nature.
- Third 15 minutes— The make and take uses craft projects or experiments to further elaborate the lesson content. We want them to be able to do the activity themselves, by generally having a single step to complete, and we incorporate natural material when possible
- Fourth 15 minutes— The snack also reinforces the lesson content and is process oriented. The children transition with music and movement and a group activity to reinforce the learning. A review of the learning with songs and a story closes the lesson. Singing the good-bye songs, along with the introductory songs at the beginning, brackets the class to provide a “safe harbor” for such young children
- **Remember—keep things simple—e.g. crafts and snacks process focused with few steps, everything pre-packed!**
- **The books, songs, fingerplays in the curriculum are meant as examples. A resource document with an informal compilation of materials is available upon request.**
- **Components of the class can be used separately to adapt for different settings and time constraints.**

Thinking about outcomes: General/child

<p>Learn vocabulary linked to familiar words Learn stressed critical features</p>	<p>Learn concepts, structures, functions linked to familiar objects and actions</p>	<p>Act out structures and functions Explore materials to highlight critical features</p>
<p>Music and Story Demonstrate reinforcement of concepts and vocabulary Demonstrate engagement in the activity Have fun! Move Attend to classic children's literature</p>	<p>Art/Snack Demonstrate reinforcement of concepts and vocabulary Practice skills of pouring, stirring, tearing, crumbling, banging, scooping, spearing</p>	<p>Walk/Explore Engage in activities to relate to the real world of nature Observe the natural world</p>

Thinking about outcomes: General/adults

Vocabulary Demonstrate learning of toddler terms paired with scientific vocabulary	Concepts Demonstrate learning of toddler analogs paired with scientific concepts, structures and functions	Skills After class relate class learning to learning in the home environment Engage in continuing to bring nature into the lives of their children
Music and Story Facilitate participation in music activities and attention to the story	Art/Snack Facilitate participation and engagement in art and snack	Walk/Explore Facilitate participation and observation in the walk and hands-on exploration

Lesson

Focus—Central concept

Hello and Name Songs

Finger play:

Introducing the lesson
content

- **First 15 minutes—**
Gathering: Orienting activities while the children arrive
- Choose a book and songs as well as other activities to introduce the lesson.

Learning

This is the core when the concepts and vocabulary are taught, generally introduced with fingerplays and songs, and closed with a story and transitional movement activity.

Second 15 minutes—Walk

The walk allows the children to engage the learning in nature.

Third 15 minutes—Make and take

The make and take reinforces the learning in a craft , experiment or exploration activity.

Fourth 15 minutes—Snack

The snack reinforces the learning in a developmentally process oriented “cooking” activity.

Closing—

A transition using movement and music related to the learning is provided. Some kind of group project is available while the class gathers. The lesson content is reprised with songs, story, or fingerplay. The Good-bye songs and name songs ar sung , and handouts distributed. The teacher previews the next class.

Songs

Resources

Minibook

Outcomes

Targets

Extensions

Thinking about outcomes

Vocabulary	Concepts	Skills
Music and Story	Art/Snack	Walk/Explore

Assumptions

- Starting Out Wild is a toddler/parent program—why? Toddlers have only emerging representation=memory, so **we are as much engaged in teaching parents as in teaching children**—why? So that the parents invest in the enterprise of nature learning and will continue to facilitate their children’s adventures in the natural world.
- Our goals are that the **children will experience the natural world in the ways toddlers learn—through movement, touch and acting on and in it**, and that children will **enjoy, and therefore return to**, learning about nature.
- We do this, knowing that repeated experience will be required as children develop more representation, language and reasoning skills, to acquire the vocabulary and concepts we introduce.
- Since the toddler stage is one of high attachment and stranger/separation anxiety, **we will be sensitive, in our approach, so that both children and parents are emotionally comfortable in our program.**

Understanding Toddlers—language and cognition

- Between the ages of 1 and 3 children change from babies, acting on the world with simple physical schemas, to preschoolers with language, social, motor and cognitive skills, so we are teaching to a range of abilities.
- Language ranges from some simple receptive understanding, to having symbolic behavior (indexes) to communicate, to combining words, to a variety of speech acts. . In general, the children will respond by choosing , participating in the activity physically, or imitating actions.
- Imitating language does not teach vocabulary; **rich experience paired with simple language makes words meaningful.**
- Cognitively, children are in the sensory motor stage, that is, they learn by using their senses and acting on real things. **Toddlers need to be allowed to approach new experiences as they feel comfortable, generally through successive approximations or gradual phasing.**

Understanding Toddlers—fine motor

- Motor skills will also range in this age group. By one, children will probably have a pincer grasp and be able to remove and replace objects in containers. Between one and two they will be scribbling, in most cases using a palmer grasp. Nonetheless they enjoy scribbling as well as using clay-like materials, with adult supervision, since some will still be mouthing. Between two and three scribbling becomes more systematic with some delineation of form and line.
- **In general, toddlers enjoy media such as dot markers or stamps—banging motion, and ones using their fingers such as finger-painting or patting, but are not ready for structured pasting.** So adhesive materials like stickers work best.
- In craft and snack projects **we balance 4 considerations:** ability for the child to **be independent** in the activity, **natural materials** if appropriate, reinforcement of the earlier **learning component**, and **safety**. Activities in general should have **one simple step** the child completes so the child experiences satisfaction in creation.

Understanding Toddlers—gross motor

- At one children are just getting their ambulation skills. **They love to move, but tire easily on long walks**, so hikes need to be planned with these considerations in mind. Toddlers also like to stop and examine what interests them. They do not yet have a concept of group activity.
- What does this mean for our hikes? Getting the children out into the park is a core value, so we need to do this toddler-wise. It is more important to **proceed leisurely so the children can discover their own interests**—we want them to develop curiosity about the natural world, and that value trumps imposing our learning agenda.
- We also want to be **sensitive to the motoric attention span** as well as the limits of the one hour format. In general, around 15 minutes will be optimal for a walk, but leaders can adjust for the particular children and weather conditions of any given session. When possible, have a motoric transition that reinforces the learning, e.g. make an ant line to go to the patio.

General Teaching Suggestions

- Pacing is key— **go active, dramatic and rapid**.
- **Don't feel that every child has to do each part** of the learning—so long as each child gets to do some parts, the children will remain engaged, and you will lose them if you try to let each child do every experience.
- When doing crafts and snacks, don't wait to present the directions until the entire group is ready; **as soon as a child has completed the last activity, move that child onto the next** — remember this is not an age of group awareness.
- Have **real objects** to teach any concepts, e.g. to teach “gizzard” a box of stones and sand and a (taped up) food processor—you want to relate to things the children may see at home.
- It's important to relate the session both forward to nature learning, and to familiar materials they will meet at library story hours and in preschool. Use classic children's books such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear and The Very Hungry Caterpillar, with props to make them more concrete—use fingerplays and songs and movement games to teach and reinforce concepts. We want the children **to acquire rich relationships not only to the world of nature, but also to their future world of learning in school**.
- And remember, we have two **audiences**—our toddlers and their parents—so have some materials that parents can take away to reinforce their learning as well!

Applying Teaching Suggestions to Starting Out wild

- A template with explanation for Starting Out Wild classes:
- First 15 minutes—
- **Gathering—Experiencing real and model specimen** (this allows for a better flow than trying to pass them in a circle), looking at books, read* a book, or have music with actions, on the mat to start collecting the children in one place; helpers sign them in, get releases and give out name labels.
- **Focus**—Singing the *Hello Friends* song to create a consistent clear start and the name song to **engage** children individually; jump right into the songs and fingerplays to get engagement
- Learning—Leader gives the content (concepts and vocabulary) with things the children can feel, manipulate or act out; transition> something active; note> toddlers learn concepts and language through **move-touch-do**—repeating just teaches echoing.
- Second 15 minutes—**Walk, to connect the content with nature** in the outdoors; note> always have back-up activities for inclement weather.*
- Third 15 minutes—**make and take—craft** projects or experiments—make sure they can do the action themselves, generally have only a single step to complete, incorporate natural material when possible
- Fourth 15 minutes—**snack**, photos with a teaching material, good-bye songs to provide a clear ending—you want the “brackets” of a beginning and ending to provide a “safe harbor” for such young children.
- *Reading hints for **toddlers—plunge right into the text with fast pace, drama=vary pace, loudness, frequency, emphasize rhythm and rhyme**—rather than having them find things in pictures, pair each set of pages with an action for them to do and in general “ham” it up!
- **Remember—keep things simple—e.g. crafts and snacks with one step, everything pre-packed!**
- *A ‘hike’ may be a short experience around the classroom grounds, a hike on the trails (which will take longer) or a manipulation of natural materials in the classroom area (like the worm and compost on the tarp).

We are as much engaged in teaching **parents** as in teaching children.

We want our children to **experience the natural world** in the ways toddlers learn—through **moving, touching, and acting** on and in it, so that the children will enjoy, and therefore return to, learning about nature.

In general, the children will respond by **choosing, participating** in the activity physically, or imitating **actions**.

We will be sensitive, in our approach, so that both children and parents are **emotionally comfortable** in our program.

Rich experience paired with simple language makes words meaningful.

Toddlers enjoy media such as dot markers or stamps—banging motion, and ones using their fingers such as finger-painting or patting, but are not ready for structured pasting—adhesives such as stickers will work better.

Our concerns are: **PROCESS AND FUN** =independence that is being able to do parts themselves and have ownership of the activity, natural materials, reinforcement of the earlier learning component, and safety. Activities in general should have one simple step so the children experience the satisfaction of completion.

They love to move, but tire easily on long walks.

We want to proceed leisurely so the children can **discover** their own interests, and to be sensitive to the motoric attention span of this age.

As soon as a child has completed the last activity, move that child on to the next to maintain attention and **minimize frustration**.

At this age children learn from **familiar and real** objects.

We want to help our children acquire rich relationships not only to the world of nature, but also to their future world of learning in school.

We have **two audiences**—our children and their families.

The structure of the hour consists of:

Gathering—Experiencing real and model specimens

Focus—Singing the *Hello Friends* song to create a consistent clear start and a name song to recognize and engage each child individually

Learning—songs, fingerplays, stories, music, and analogs linking new content to familiar objects and actions

Walk, to connect the content with nature

Make-and-take to reinforce criterial features from the learning

Snack, to link the learning to always motivating food

Closing, activities with a poster or large cutout to reinforce the learning, good-bye songs to provide a clear ending that “brackets”, with the beginning and ending, and provides a “safe harbor” for such young children

Note: when reading to toddlers—plunge right into the text with fast pace, drama=vary pace, loudness, frequency, emphasize rhythm and rhyme, and if appropriate have them find details in pictures or act out the story.