We all care about the well-being of our students and want to provide a positive environment in which students are healthy and motivated and learning content in creative ways. Every educational setting, whether urban or rural, has such a place ... outdoors.
If the question is about providing children with access to nature, schools have an answer. Even short, unstructured time in a schoolyard habitat with the sounds, textures, smells, space, and sensations shows value. Children awaken to the world, expand to their own possibilities and their sensory channels, alive with curiosity and calm.

What a gift that schools can provide for an area of childhood that is vanishing at an alarming rate and at the same time, allow for children to feel the sense of wonder and joy in becoming familiar with the natural world.

Kelly Keena,
K-8 Science Teacher
Denver, CO

Visit the [New Nature Movement](#) blog to read the rest of Kelly's eloquent post and many more by and for teachers and educators.
1. **Nature is everywhere!**
   
   Every school, home and daycare has some kind of outdoor space nearby where teachers can take students for school work or play.


2. **School grounds and nearby nature provide a low- to no-cost setting for effective teaching.**
   
   Field trips do not have to involve buses! A ten-minute walk in the community can be a prompt for writing or art activities, and schoolyard gardens can be used to teach math and science skills.


3. **Nature enhances academic achievement.**
   
   Studies show that students learn more when they participate in authentic, inquiry-based lessons in the natural environment.


4. **Nature-based activities improve student behavior.**
   
   Students who are engaged in authentic learning misbehave less than others. Also, recess in the outdoors gets the “wiggles” out of their systems!


5. **Students are motivated to learn when content is connected to nature.**
   
   When learning takes place in their own environment, students want to find out more, read and research, and truly understand the material.


6. **Outdoor learning promotes communication.**
   
   Students who participate in outdoor project-based or issue-based activities learn to communicate with their peers and community volunteers.

7. Students improve cooperation skills when they spend time outside. They hone their skills as they work out issues on the playground or try to solve problems related to natural learning.

8. Nature helps students focus, including ADHD students. Students are more engaged in learning because nature is real and relevant for them.

9. Students are healthier and happier when they spend time outside. Students get more exercise when they are outside, whether for recess, P.E., or even for student learning.

10. School grounds and nearby nature provide a wonderful setting for curricular integration. Teachers can connect and integrate content in all subjects with themes or issues in the natural world.
10 Innovative Nature-Centric Projects & Programs for Your Students

1. Move Your Classroom Outdoors
Under the leadership of teacher Catherine Padgett, Ford Elementary School has developed an incredible outdoor learning program and site. [+ learn more]

2. Take Your Kindergarten Into the Woods
The kindergarteners from Sangster Elementary School abandon their classroom each morning, rain or shine, for a hike into the woods where sticks and stones replace pencil and paper. [+ learn more]

3. Teach the ABCs of Gardening — Literally
Clinton Street Public School's ABC Learning Garden consists of 26 plants, one for each letter of the alphabet. Students get an education on a wide variety of plant life, from aster to zebragrass, and a chance to reconnect with nature. [+ learn more]

4. Turn Your "Ugly Schoolyard" into a Learning Garden
The "Ugliest School Yard Contest" in Detroit addresses the public space challenges and builds young people’s confidence in their ability to make other changes in their environment. [+ learn more]

5. Help Your At-Risk High School Students Graduate with a Healthy Blend of Nature, Community and Play
The REAL Academy (Redwood Environmental Academy of Leadership) is a school within a school that offers its own special curriculum focused on service and the environment. [+ learn more]

6. Grow the Skills Needed to Succeed in Elementary School
Larry Volpe's students go outside to learn and discover a new motivation to cooperate and be responsible. [+ learn more]

7. Show Your Administration What an Integrated Learning Program Looks Like
Donnan Stoicovy, Principal of Park Forest Elementary in State College, PA, runs an excellent program that spans all grade levels and is viewed as a continuous process. [+ contact for more information]
8. **Create an Outdoor Learning Space**
   Forest View Elementary in Durham, NC, uses a wide variety of Outdoor Learning Spaces (OLS) across all grade levels. These spaces include a bird blind, nature trail and wetlands.  
   [+ learn more]

9. **Turn Your School into a Garden School Inspired by Granny**
   Granny’s Garden School, Loveland, OH, is considered by many to be the largest and most comprehensive school gardening program in the Midwest. And, yes--there is a Granny, Roberta Paolo, founder and driving force behind this tremendous initiative.  
   [+ learn more]

10. **Plant a Global Garden, Grow a Science Curriculum**
   This Tulsa, OK-based nonprofit is dedicated to empowering students and communities through hands-on science education. Global Gardens help students learn about science, health and the environment while challenging them to become caring, forward thinking and confident individuals.  
   [+ learn more]
Natural Teachers Network showcases innovative outdoor learning projects and programs. Please add to the discussion on C&NN Connect. Let us know what you're doing to transform education by connecting children with nature.

http://childrenandnature.ning.com/group/naturalteachers

Children & Nature Network is leading a movement to connect all children, their families and communities to nature through innovative ideas, evidence-based resources and tools, broad-based collaboration and support of grassroots leadership.

Our vision is a world in which all children play, learn and grow with nature in their everyday lives.

For additional information, visit us at: www.childrenandnature.org
Natural Teachers Network
Web Resources to help teachers use the natural world as a classroom

We hope that you find the following list to be a useful reference. This initial list is not comprehensive and will be augmented as new and relevant resources are discovered. Please send us your suggestions for additions by writing to info@childrenandnature.org. We will not be able to include every suggestion, but we will review every recommendation. We are especially interested in resources offered by credible organizations with a capacity to respond to inquiries. We also encourage you to post suggestions for resources on C&NN Connect at www.childrenandnature.NING.com. Thanks for your commitment to reconnecting children with nature!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Affiliation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Arbor Day Foundation                 | This Nature Explore site has information on designing natural outdoor spaces, training for educators, and ways to get children involved with nature. There are several publications available for purchase that encourages nature play.  
  www.natureexplore.org                                                                 |
| National Institute for Play          | A website with information about the value of play and instructional resources for conducting and encouraging play.                                                                                      
  http://www.nifplay.org/                                                            |
| Environmental Education in Kentucky  | A website to find environmental education opportunities in the state. This website allows you to locate organizations and events across the Commonwealth.                                                        
  http://eeinkentucky.org                                                              |
| Let’s Go Outside                     | Information for educators on the benefits of connecting with nature, with an interactive database to find natural areas in your region.                                                                
  http://www.fws.gov/letsgooutside/                                                    |
| **National Park Service** | A list of resources for families to get outside. All resources have links to more information.  
http://www.nps.gov/kidszone/park_fun.html |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **National Wildlife Federation** | Includes nature activities, blog, and information about the importance of getting kids outside in nature.  
http://www.greenhour.org/ |
| **Nature Circles-Hooked on Nature** | Provides a how-to guide to start a nature circle. Its goal is to introduce children to nature with simple activities in a safe, group setting.  
http://www.naturecircles.org/ |
| **Children and Nature Network** | This is the one-stop shop for anyone interested in learning about the movement to reconnect children with nature. See the most current research on why children need unstructured time in nature, as well as a list with links to initiatives across the country. Tips, inspiration, and resources for joining with other teachers to take students outside to learn.  
http://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/families/ |
| **Richard Louv** | Here are helpful resources for parents, teachers, and community leaders to encourage children's enjoyment of the great outdoors. Included are nature activities, suggested books, and useful links.  
http://richardlouv.com |
| **Suite 101.com** | An article that outlines some nature activities appropriate for children living in urban environments.  
http://familytravel.suite101.com/article.cfm/nature_games_for_urban_children |
| **Dunwoody Nature Center** | This is a nature center-led nature club for homeschoolers. Meeting schedule and themes are listed on site.  
http://www.dunwoodynature.org/do/homeschool.html |
| **Active Kids Club-Canada** | Active Kids Club has information about the benefits from being outside. They also provide tips for playing outside in all seasons, and for how to create an outdoor playgroup.  
http://www.activekidsclub.com/index.html |
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<td>New Hampshire Fish and Game Department</td>
<td>Provides information on New Hampshire’s Take a Child Outside week, and describes several hands-on nature-based activities to connect children and families with nature. Links to studies, too.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/ChildrenInNature/index.htm">http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/ChildrenInNature/index.htm</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Equipment, Inc.</td>
<td>REI is known for outdoor gear and apparel for all ages. They also offer adventure packages and are committed to enabling people to have positive experiences in the outdoors. They also sponsor in-store workshops that promote outdoor recreation. A list of local family hikes is easily downloaded from their Web site.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rei.com">www.rei.com</a></td>
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<td>Dawn Publications</td>
<td>Dawn Publications’ mission is to assist parents and educators to open the minds and hearts of children to the transforming influence of nature. They have a wonderful selection of books available for purchase on their Web site.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dawnpublications.com">www.dawnpublications.com</a></td>
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<td>Project Learning Tree</td>
<td>Project Learning Tree has developed an Activity Guide for educators to use in the outdoors.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.learnoutside.org/home.html">http://www.learnoutside.org/home.html</a></td>
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<td>Project WILD</td>
<td>One of the most widely used environmental education programs used by educators. New early learning publication called Growing Up Wild now available.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.projectwild.org/">http://www.projectwild.org/</a></td>
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<td>NAAEE</td>
<td>Education-based organization with many hands-on nature-related early childhood activities to spark the creative imagination.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.naaee.org">http://www.naaee.org</a></td>
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<td>National Environmental Education Foundation</td>
<td>Through a variety of programs for teachers in all disciplines, one of NEEF’s core focus areas is environmental literacy for children.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.neefusa.org/about/index.htm">http://www.neefusa.org/about/index.htm</a></td>
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<td>U.S. Play Coalition</td>
<td>Resources and research on the value of play.</td>
<td><a href="http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/">http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldorf School of Saratoga</td>
<td>A nature-based private pre-school through high school system located throughout the U.S. New outdoor education program in Saratoga called Nature Kindergarten.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.waldorfsaratoga.org">www.waldorfsaratoga.org</a></td>
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<td>Audubon Society</td>
<td>Education and conservation organization with many programs, and a special focus on urban nature places.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.audubon.org/">http://www.audubon.org/</a></td>
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<td>High School for Environmental Studies</td>
<td>New York City public high school with a 97% graduation rate focused on environmental curriculum and a summer intern partnership with The Nature Conservancy.</td>
<td><a href="http://envirostudies.org/">http://envirostudies.org/</a></td>
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<td>LNCI Greater Cincinnati</td>
<td>Very successful after-school program in close collaboration with public schools. There is a tremendous amount of information on the movement to reconnect children and families with nature.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lncigc.org/guide/tips.shtml">http://www.lncigc.org/guide/tips.shtml</a></td>
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<td>Wilderness Awareness School</td>
<td>This group provides training for parents, teachers, and mentors. They also have a book to purchase called “Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature.”</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wildernessawareness.org/coyotesguide.html?gclid=CKGK84XgspcCFQquGgodh32ljg">http://www.wildernessawareness.org/coyotesguide.html?gclid=CKGK84XgspcCFQquGgodh32ljg</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Afterschool Association</td>
<td>Large and diverse group of after-school professionals dedicated to the development, care and education of children and youth during their out of school hours.</td>
<td><a href="http://naaweb.site-ym.com/">http://naaweb.site-ym.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-H National Council</td>
<td>National youth development organization affiliated with land grant universities in every state.</td>
<td><a href="http://4-h.org/4hstory.html">http://4-h.org/4hstory.html</a></td>
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CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION
in the NaturalTeachers Network™
an initiative of the Children & Nature Network

This is to certify that

YOUR NAME HERE

is a member of the NaturalTeachers Network™,
educators and administrators who value and use the natural world as a place for learning,
and who aspire to or insist on taking their students outside to learn, honoring the following pledge:

- I will **Take** my students outdoors to experience nature directly
- I will **Share** my ideas, successes and challenges
- I will **Encourage** teachers & administrators to join the movement to connect children to nature

Richard Louv, Chairman
Children & Nature Network

Sarah Milligan-Toffler, Executive Director
Children & Nature Network

Children's classroom behavior is better if they have recess
School gardens positively impact children's learning and behavior
Natural views from high school positively impact students' academic achievement and behavior

Join us online at: www.childrenandnature.org • www.naturalteachers.org • http://childrenandnature.ning.com/group/naturalteachers