

# Teaching in the Neighborhood

November/December 2022

A monthly dose of teaching ideas, updates, and inspiration for teachers across the Neighborhood EBSOC, Ellis Early Learning, Epiphany Early Learning, Horizons for Homeless Children, Nurtury

## Upcoming Workshops and News

- **'New teacher workshops'** have a new name: **Reflective Practice Workshops**. Open to all teachers, this six-part series focuses on core topics in teaching young children, and makes connections to the Pyramid Model social-emotional approach. Our next session will be on Dec 16th from 9-10:30am and will focus on Learning Through Play. Sign up at <https://www.neighborhoodvillages.org/teachingandlearning>
- Our December webinar is coming up soon! December 5th from 7-8pm, free and open to the public. This month's focus is also on Playful Learning! Sign up at the website above.
- As some of you may have heard by now, Megina Baker, our Director of Teaching and Learning for the neighborhood, will be transitioning to a new role with the Boston Public Schools leading the work on the Focus on 3s curriculum come January! In this role, she will still be connected to us, here at NV and the Neighborhood supporting educators as they implement the curriculum.

## Benefits of Nature Play

When it comes to nature-based play, there are countless benefits for children's growth and development. This includes spending time outdoors, as well as using natural materials and observing adults interacting with nature, such as through gardening.

Studies of children playing in natural environments show that they play more cooperatively and engage in more problem solving skills in green spaces. Children who engage in more outdoor play have better academic performance, most notably in science. They are also more likely to eat fruit and vegetables and demonstrate less pickiness while eating if they are involved in growing plants and food. Most importantly perhaps, in a world where childhood is more fast and furious than slow and simple, access to nature reduces stress levels significantly.

## TEACHER TALK!



Want to explore more?

<https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/for-educators/early-educator-resources>

[Healthy eating and nature article](#)

[Mental health benefits of nature play](#)

# Great ideas from great teachers

## Bringing Nature Inside

"We had a late start day and decided to go on a nature walk as we missed our free play and center times. During our walk, we collected leaves, sticks, pine cones, acorns, and small rocks. We observed the outside area and talked about the animal habitats and how animals use resources they find outside to create their habitats. The following week we discussed how we could use our nature collection to create animal habitats. The children decided they wanted homes for birds, tigers, lions, bears, walrus, seals, and many other animals. Throughout the experience, children were building, gluing, painting, and bunching up the nature materials. One child grabbed some blue paper and repeated 'water, water'. We added the water to the habitat for the animals who live in water. Another child wanted snow, so we painted the pine cones. Ideas kept brewing; the class as a whole kept creating. An entire week's worth of conversations and creativity is what resulted in our animal habitats." Educators at Horizons - Focus on 3s Classroom 251



### MORE THAN ONE WAY...

There are many different possibilities for bringing nature into your classroom or bringing children out to nature. Here are a few ideas...

- Put natural materials (leaves (dry and soggy), snow, branches, bark, pine cones, acorns, sticks) into your sensory table and invite children to crunch the leaves (touch and sound), sort the materials by size and texture, or just enjoy the sensory experience of being with nature.
- Invite children to make rubbings of leaves or other natural materials, using paper and crayons
- Play with "nature paintbrushes" - painting with leaves, sticks, or pinecones on paper or at the easel
- Take a walk to a space with trees, bushes, or grass and encourage children to touch the different textures, listen to different sounds, or see what sounds they can make using natural materials.
- Make a temporary nature collage. Put out black felt squares and an array of natural materials, and invite children to make a collage or picture and tell you about it. Write down their words, take a photograph to remember the collage, and create a class book or display of nature collages!
- Fill spray bottles with colored water, place snow on a piece of paper and let children spray away to create a masterpiece!



How do you bring nature into your classroom?

share your ideas with us: [pthompson@neighborhoodvillages.org](mailto:pthompson@neighborhoodvillages.org)