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Children, Youth and Environments (CYE) Announces a Special Issue on Greening Early Childhood Education

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A special issue of *Children, Youth and Environments (CYE)* on Greening Early Childhood Education has just recently been published. The special issue can be accessed at www.jstor.org/page/journal/chilyoutenvi/about.html.

Overview of the Issue

The collection of papers contained in this special issue was elicited by a worldwide call for papers to explore settings that provided nature experiences for young children, with attention given to the effects that these initiatives have on the holistic development and environmental awareness of the children, as well as impacts on the teachers and staff involved. More than two dozen abstracts were received, of which eleven articles were chosen. These included seven research articles, three reports from the field, and one personal voice essay. These papers reflected diverse methods of connecting children with nature and the articles fell into several categories including a literature review on the benefits of children's engagement with nature; natural outdoor play spaces; nature preschools and forest kindergartens; and the connection between nature and children's holistic development. In addition, five books reviews, one movie review, and a mention of other publications of note completed the issue.

Literature review

The issue begins with a piece by researcher Tim Gill, providing a systematic literature review of much that has been written about the ways children benefit

when engaged with nature.

Natural outdoor play spaces

A pilot post-occupancy study by landscape architecture professor Samuel Dennis and his colleagues examined the extent to which the design of natural outdoor classrooms produced their intended outcomes, and what characteristics of design were most important in bringing about positive results.

Kimberly Drown and Keith Christensen provided an investigation of the contrasts in play affordances offered by natural and manufactured materials in outdoor settings.

Leslie Kochanowski and Victoria Carr explored the relationship between the affordances of natural learning environments and the development of self-determination in children.

A system-wide health promotion strategy, *Preventing Obesity by Design*, that incorporates a naturalization approach to improve the quality of outdoor learning environments at North Carolina childcare settings, is described by Robin Moore and Nilda Cosco.

Nature preschools and forest kindergartens

Nature preschools and forest kindergartens have much in common. However, there are distinct differences between these two approaches. Using a taxonomic metaphor, David Sobel's thoughtful essay distinguishes between the two approaches, suggesting that nature preschools and forest kindergartens are in the same "genus," but two different "species." His piece exemplifies the need for both and provides descriptions of particular programs in the Northeastern United States.

A quickly growing approach to connecting children with nature is forest kindergartens in public schools. Enid Elliot and colleagues provide a look at an innovative nature kindergarten program at a public school in British Columbia where children spend at least half their day outside in all types of weather.

Forest kindergartens that are modeled after programs started in Europe are an approach that is gaining traction in many areas around the world. Children spend 80-90% of their time outside in natural habitats. Transferring this approach from Europe to North America has its challenges. Regina Wolf Fritz and her teachers at the Natick Community Gardens Forest Kindergarten in Massachusetts provide a

keen look at difficulties and opportunities in bringing the Waldkindergarten approach to North America.

Connection between nature and children's holistic development

One of the benefits of connecting children to the natural world is the impact nature has on the whole child. Nature provides the vehicle for an integrated approach to child development. In this issue three articles provide different ways that this can be accomplished.

Nature's role in the spiritual development of children is brought to the forefront with a grounded theory developed by Deborah Schein.

Ellen Hall and her co-authors provide a look at how infants and toddlers connect with nature.

Iris Duhn and Jenny Ritchie connect education sustainability practices in Aotearoa, New Zealand with early childhood programs.

It is encouraging to see the multiple and diverse ways that are emerging for connecting young children with nature. This special issue provides a glimpse of the benefits nature provides for children and society and how even very young children can develop appreciation and care for the natural world.

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