

Sense of Wonder, Sense of Self PLC



Nature-based play and learning is an integral part of every child's childhood. Children develop curiosity and attention, social/emotional skills and creativity, and a sense of place and community when they play in nature and with nature. In their nature-based play, children encounter natural phenomena, ask meaningful questions, work collaboratively, solve problems, communicate, and negotiate risk.

Four Winds' Nature-based Play and Learning professional learning communities (PLCs) are designed for early childhood educators and childcare providers looking to spend more time outdoors with the children with whom they work. In these PLCs we will venture outside and investigate best practices in developing rich outdoor learning opportunities with resulting important social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive benefits. We facilitate these Nature-based Play and Learning PLCs in partnership with schools, early childhood centers and Starting Points networks around the state. The PLCs provide ongoing professional support with groups meeting for either 7 two-hour sessions or for 4 three-hour sessions throughout the different seasons of the year. Each participant, then, has the opportunity to earn 14 hours of PD through the PLC.

Depending on each group's interests, PLC topics may include:

- The language of nature-based play
- The adult role
- Risk and safety
- Nurturing children's curiosity
- Play motifs
- Science in early childhood
- A strengths-based framework for families
- Diversity and inclusion in outdoor education
- Creating spaces and opportunities for nature play
- Documenting the learning
- Loose parts/Stick play
- How nature-based play and learning can be doable and embedded in routines
- Importance of spending time outdoors with young children

Each PLC meeting will include:

- Time to enjoy simple refreshments.
- Welcome and closing circles.
- Extended time outdoors.
- Suggested readings and resources to enhance discussions.
- Commitments of change in practice related to nature-based play and learning.
- Reflection and support for changes in practice resulting in richer outdoor learning opportunities for students.

This project was made possible by generous support from the Canaday Family Charitable Trust.