

Outdoor Adventures with Infants & Toddlers



Vanessa Gilliam & Nessa's Young'uns Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

"Anyone who doubts that the outdoor world of play is of value to children perhaps needs to take a bit of time to go back into that world themselves.

Take your shoes off in the grass, climb a tree, turn over a rock to see what is there; let yourself bask in the unknown delights that you were more familiar with as a child.

It is in those reminders that you will see the countless possibilities. And it is in those reminders that we become better teachers, parents, and advocates of children."

Lorayne Carbon

Just as all children need positive adult contact, they also need positive contact with nature and the sense of wonder that nature offers.

While natural outdoor settings hold endless possibilities for learning in all curricular domains, early childhood educators may not recognize the potential opportunities for learning in natural outdoor settings nor the alignment between early childhood pedagogy and the opportunities offered by nature experiences – especially with infants & toddlers.



Aligns with

- Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- NAEYC Standards
- NC Foundations
- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R)
- CLASS
-



The Outdoor Learning Environment has a great deal more to offer infants & toddlers than you might think...

Concerns & Barriers

- Safety and liability issues
- Parent's fears
- Time and cost to implement and maintenance
- Adult unwillingness





Safety & Implementing

Safety is our first and foremost priority.

1. Have constant supervision
2. Know each child's personality and abilities
3. Know how the children act in a group
4. Have to know the meaning of "developmentally and age appropriate"
5. Be willing to get involved
6. Be willing to let children learn, explore, and engage on their own
7. Educate ourselves, parents and others

SUPERVISION, SUPERVISION, SUPERVISION

Why do we want to provide such risky environments for infants & toddlers?



Important to their mental & physical health
Benefits are endless

There's no APP for that



NO APP FOR THAT



Benefits of Nature

- Not only do babies experience their world through movement & sensation- they must work hard to develop these sensory systems to "tune-in" and combine them with each other.
- The outdoor world is full of smells, sounds, sights, textures, air, and temperatures
 - Wind on the skin - moving hair
 - Light under a tree
 - Rain on arms or face
 - Colors in the environment and smells

Benefits of Nature

- Playing in nature offers children a chance to be exposed to real objects that foster open-ended play and fosters all developmental skills
- FREE MATERIAL
- Provides possibilities to teach across all academic domains
- Provides opportunities for inclusion
- Green plants and fresh air reduce stress among children and adults - Less stress is very important to children with disabilities.

The more green the area and the more children have access to these types of environments, the more you will see less stressed, engaged, happy, and social children meeting all developmental goals.

While free play better meets the developmental needs of all children, opportunities for free play are especially important for children with disabilities.

There is a greater need for play for children with disabilities because their limited situations sometimes keeps them from exploring for themselves. Most children with disabilities spend a massive part of their time in an environment where play tends to be structured, organized, as well as restricted or confined to equipment.

By allowing all children plenty of free play opportunities to play together in nature, it sets a different atmosphere which permits children's disposition to change. This change could lead children with disabilities to take risks and to believe that they are competent, capable learners along with their peers.

Infant & Toddler Development

Children under three have an especially great need of sensory stimulation and a desire for movement.

The first three years of life are the most important to learning because of brain development.

These early years are pertinent in establishing a foundation of language, motor and cognitive development and *most importantly emotional-social development.*

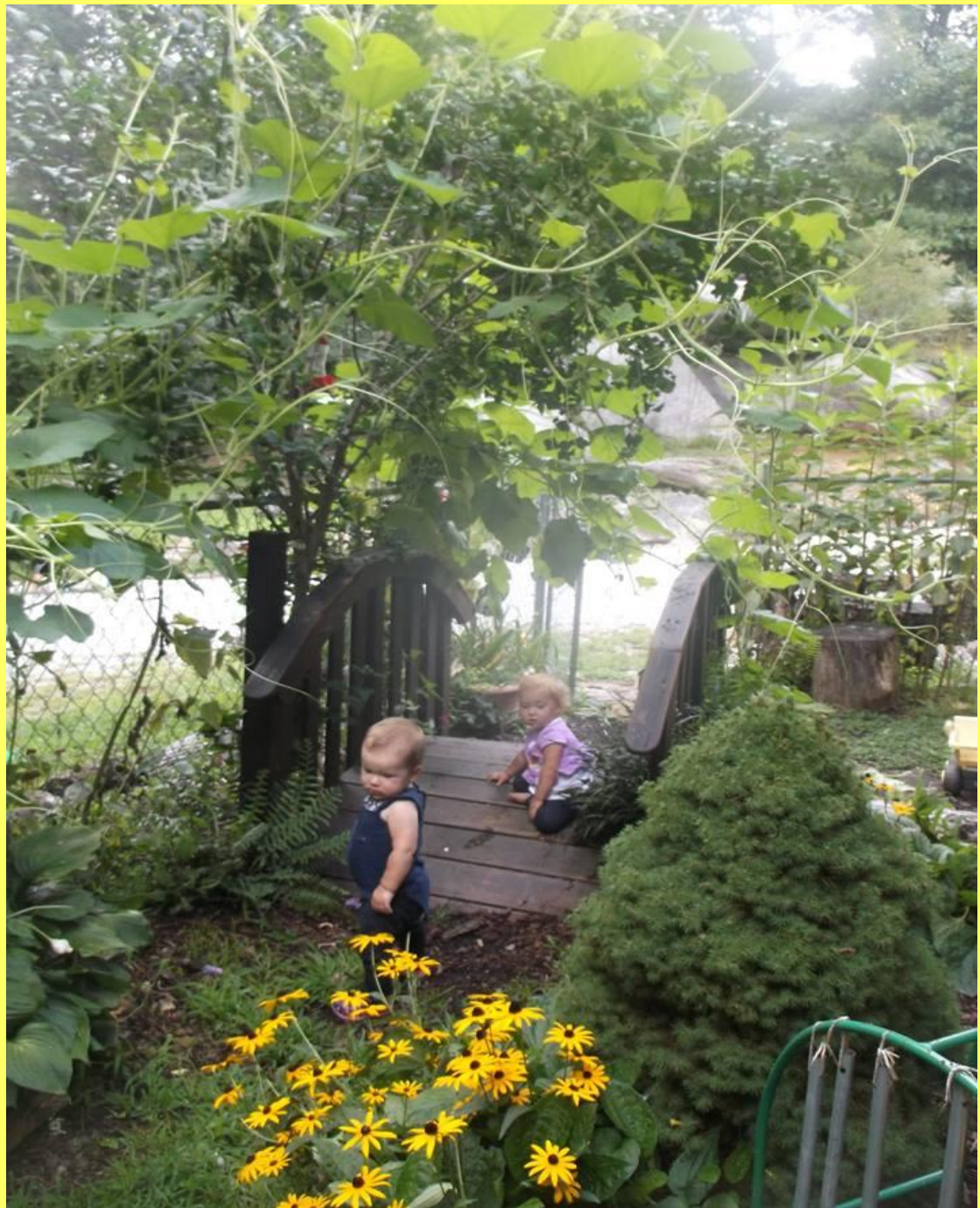


NAEYC Standard 1: c) Using developmental knowledge to **create** healthy, respectful, supportive, (*inspiring*), and challenging learning environments

Adults do not create natural environments, but it is the atmosphere nature offers that attract children's interest.

Children learn from every day experiences that they encounter in the environment that is provided for them

Young children are only curious and take the initiative to explore **only if** adults provide **multi-sensory** and **movement-rich environments** for them to be inspired as individuals...they can't create them on their own...So we must create them.





Inspiring, lovely environments stir physical skills



ITERS-R: Active Physical Play

- 7.1 Outdoor space has 2 or more types of surfaces...at least 1 firm and 1 soft play daily outdoors...
- 7.2 Outdoor areas has some protection from the elements...
- 7.3 Materials used daily stimulate a variety of large muscle skills... 7-9 different skills that are obviously encouraged by the equipment/materials children can use



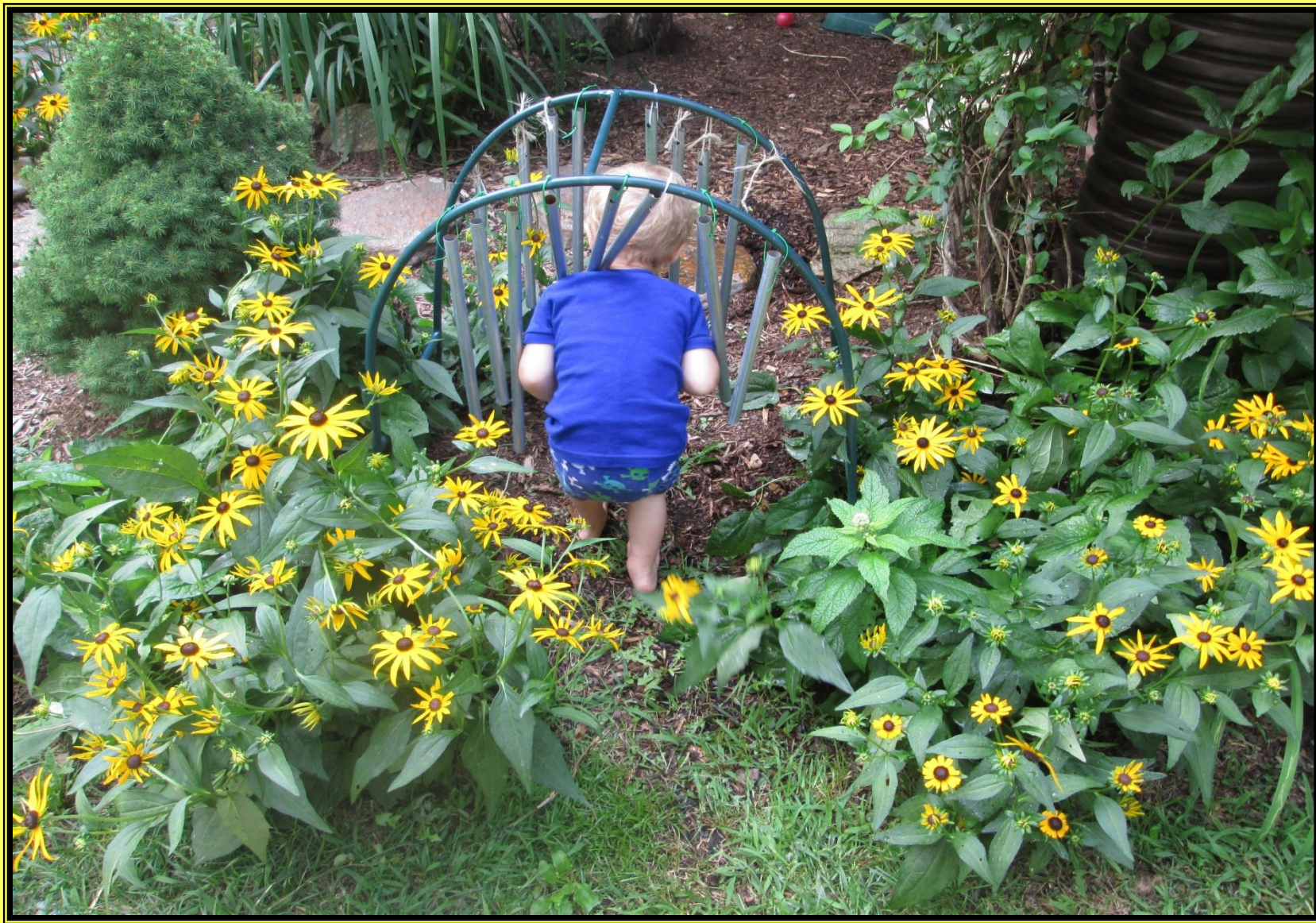
The diversity of nature in NC is simply just a bunch of mixed blessings that we are fortunate to...



Fall Frolic & Giggle In



Snow Scoot In



Spring Jingle In



Summer Splash & Laugh In

- NAEYC Standard 3c: Understanding and practicing responsible assessment to promote positive outcomes for each child, ...



Because of nature's diverse landscapes and materials that we can bring in their environment, children are inspired to motivate more than inside a classroom or on a typical plastic induced playground.

NC Foundations -
Infants:HPD-2a
Engage in
physically active
movements
(spending time on
their tummy,
repeating actions,
kicking, waving
arms, rolling over).





















Curiosity causes crawling stimulation



Critters are good motivators too!

To pull up





Getting Vertical





NC Foundation
Toddlers-HPD-2g
Develop strength
and stamina as
they use large
muscles and
participate in
physical activity
for longer periods
of time.



















HPD-5 Uses hands to manipulate objects Imagination, Creativity & Wonder























WE...

- **Educate** each other: ECE professionals, parents, and community in the importance
- **Advocate** about the benefits **and it's** ALL children's rights to play outside
- **Motivate** each other and our children to enjoy, learn, and grow in nature





THE END