

# In Bloom in Western Mass

Saturday, May 16, 2020

The Hitchcock Center  
for the Environment

Amherst, Massachusetts

Juniper Hill School

## The Big Picture: An In Bloom Overview

Looking through a school-calendar lens, our first **In Bloom** conference this year unfolded in Santa Barbara in early November. The keynote address, given by Gopal Krishnamurthy was titled “*Re-Wilding Learning*.” That theme also applies to the content of our upcoming New England conferences this spring.

In the beginning, **In Bloom** conferences catered to teachers of children between the ages of 3 and 6, but children grow up, so we’re catching up! There’s been an interesting upward migration in New England schools as the result of successful nature-based early childhood initiatives. Children continue to want outdoor learning as they move up through the grades. First-, second- and third-grade students look out the window at kindergarteners learning outside and long for the sunshine on their faces and sticks in their hands. Preschool teachers now help their upper grade colleagues learn how to teach math in the woods and how to encourage learning outdoors. And so the doors open up and the school gets turned inside out. Our **In Bloom** workshops will be geared to preschool through third grade, so please invite your elementary teacher colleagues. We’ve got exciting new keynote speakers this year from around the country and a host of new workshop presenters from each region, along with some old favorites. We’ll also continue to spotlight the work of Antioch New England faculty members who teach in the Nature-based Early Childhood Certificate program.

Relative to big pictures, we have a new movie to show! In July 2016, 23 acres of land adjacent to Chesterfield School in Southwestern NH came up for sale. **Turning School Inside Out** is the story of what happened next.

We look forward to seeing you at one of this year’s spring **In Blooms**. Bring mud boots, rain gear, sun protection, your indomitable spirits . . . and perhaps some backyard flowers!

*This event is sponsored by:*



There is  
nothing left  
to worry about  
the sun and her flowers are here

*by rupi kaur*

## Spring 2020 In Bloom Conferences

### In Bloom in Maine

18 April 2020  
Eyes of the World Discovery Center  
120 Rogers Road, Kittery, Maine.

### In Bloom in Western Mass

16 May 2020  
Hitchcock Center for the Environment  
845 West Street  
Amherst, Massachusetts.

### In Bloom in Vermont

13 June 2020  
hosted by North Branch Nature Center  
at Moretown Elementary School  
Moretown, Vermont.



# Structure for the Day

8:00am–9:00am	Registration Opens Workshop signups Morning refreshments
9:00am–9:15am	Opening Circle
9:15am–10:15am	Morning Keynote
10:30–Noon	Morning Workshops
Noon–1:00pm	Lunch & Movie Inside-Outside network
1:00pm–2:00pm	Afternoon Keynote
2:15pm–3:45pm	Afternoon Workshops
3:50pm–4:00pm	Closing Circle

## Morning Keynote

**Cultivating Connection:  
Using the Community-as-Campus to Build Immersive  
Learning Experiences for Young Children**

**Ayana Verdi**, Founder & Director, Verdi Ecoschool,  
Melbourne, FL

The **Verdi EcoSchool** is the first Urban Farm School in the southeastern United States and the only school of its kind in the state of Florida. Serving children from 3–15 years of age, EcoSchool students learn to view themselves as the single most powerful resource within their community. Ayana, founder and director of the school, will lead you on an exciting exploration of a day in the life of a student at this place- and project-based community school.

In 2016, **Ayana Verdi** established Verdi EcoSchool to provide hands-on educational experiences for children in the historic Eau Gallie Arts District in Melbourne, Fla. It is the first K–8 urban farm school in the southeastern United States. As part of the educational program, the classroom extends to unique settings: exploring the waters of the local Indian River Lagoon, learning about restorative agriculture on a community garden and creating replicas of ancient First Nations tools in ceramics classes at the Foosaner Art Museum and Education Center. Ayana was awarded the prestigious Drexel Fund Fellowship in 2019 and is extending the successful K–8 program by founding a new high school model which incorporates hands-on, immersive learning through practical, real-world internships.

Ayana's educational and professional journey has included studies in both the United States and New Zealand as she pursued a degree in Veterinary Medicine while operating a canine wellness spa in New York City. Inspired by the nature-based school her son attended while she lived and studied in New Zealand, Ayana is committed to cultivating community-based and environmentally aware educational options for children.



## Morning Workshops

**We Dig Nature: Learning through Exploring Underground**

**Cindi Rapoza**, Director, Little Peeps Montessori Naturskola,  
Little Compton, RI

Follow us on one of our yearlong provocations inspired by the children's play. As we watched the children dig with bare hands and then with sticks and stones, we started to question why and what they were doing? As we recorded their conversations, a natural curiosity of what lies beneath came alive. We asked the questions, "What are you finding?" "Who else digs?" "What is under there?" These questions led us on an exciting provocation through the seasons learning the relationships plants, animals, and humans have with soil. We will share this journey and then head outdoors for hands-on activities that involve digging.



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**Programming through the Grades—  
Building a School-wide Scope and Sequence**

**Eliza Minnucci**, ForestKinder, Tunbridge, VT  
Adjunct Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

**Meg Teachout**, ForestKinder, Tunbridge, VT

Sharon Elementary School's long history of place-based education is evolving to include a Forest Day for every classroom pre-K–6th grade. Now in their third year of focus on developing the Forest Day for everyone, the staff is working to describe the scope and sequence of their nature-based play and learning. Join us to peek inside this work-in-progress. With hands-on examples of the play and work through the grades, Meg and Eliza will share a framework for guiding school-wide nature-based education.



Lauren Skilling

**The Wander as a Pedagogical Tool**

**Neill Bovaird**, Director/Founder El, Wolf Tree Programs,  
Montague, MA

Gain the tools needed to intentionally plan unstructured time into your pedagogy. Sometimes it is best to set aside the curriculum and let nature dictate what the day has to offer. If done mindfully, we see what is available and are better able to ignite curiosity, support nature connection, and deepen the learning journey. We will learn what is needed to skillfully adapt to whatever nature presents while practicing how to string along curiosity and passion with the art of questioning. "Invisible teaching" is an excellent way to facilitate effortless learning and a life-long love of nature.

# Morning Workshops

## Becoming Beavers: What We Can Learn from Nature's Greatest Engineer and Community Builder

**Ruthie Ireland**, *Preschool Teacher & Director, Arcadia Nature Preschool, Easthampton, MA*

Calling all those who love to tinker, build, create, hug trees, and explore with friends: let's see what North America's largest rodent can teach us about working & playing together—and by doing so make the world an even better place. In this workshop, we will have the opportunity to become beavers, use our handy tool kit/adaptations to investigate, construct, chew, and care for each other. Participants will come away with natural history knowledge and curriculum ideas for implementation that cover social/emotional learning, collaboration, sensory learning, and working together on micro and macro building structures. We will sing songs, make snacks, and play games that invite curiosity and love of this industrious big-toothed mammal.



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## Equipping Teachers & Students for Outdoor Learning

**Julie Bisson**, *Elementary Classroom Teacher, Sant Bani School, Sanbornton, NH*

Immerse yourself in strategies for bridging indoor and outdoor learning while experimenting with practical outdoor curricular tools that minimize transition time and encourage student independence. Explore ways to create and organize outdoor teaching materials and props that target different environments and curricular paths. Come prepared to put these materials to use while participating in a variety of fun outdoor learning activities that will fill your mind with ideas and principals for adapting materials and turning outdoor learning into a deep, integrated daily routine for you and your students.

## Wheat Your Appetite For Food Justice: The Little Red Hen Re-imagined

**Kate Holdsworth**, *Director, Rainbow Garden Preschool at Gan Keshet Preschool, Northampton, MA*

Wheat is a staple crop for many cultures and a key ingredient for many breads. Sometimes referred to as the “staff of life,” bread, in some form, has been eaten by peoples all over the world dating back to the Neolithic Age. In this workshop, we will explore the life cycle of wheat, considering how it can be grown in a school garden or farm. Like the Little Red Hen, we will thresh, winnow, and grind the grains we collect into flour to make a simple flat-bread baked over a campfire. We'll also look at children's books

that introduce the concept of food justice and how this idea can be integrated into a preschool curriculum.

*Folks with an allergy to wheat should likely make a different selection.*



Lauren Miller

# Lunch

We enjoy treating you to a tasty and healthy lunch. During the lunch hour, Liza Lowe and other regional coordinators will update you on *Inside-Outside: Nature-based Educators of New England*, our growing professional network. There are now a dozen *Inside-Outside* chapters throughout New England. Interested in joining or starting a chapter? Contact Liza Lowe at [elowe@antioch.edu](mailto:elowe@antioch.edu).



## Afternoon Panel Discussion

### Principals' Panel: Turning School Inside Out

**Sarah Madden**, *Principal, RK Finn Ryan Road School, Northampton, MA*

**William Knittle**, *Principal, Rowe Elementary, Rowe, MA*

**Conor Driscoll**, *Principal, Gill Elementary School, Gill, MA*

**David Sobel**, *Professor Emeritus, Antioch New England, Panel Facilitator*

Three Western Massachusetts principals will discuss their experiences with implementing innovative outdoors practices in their preschool, kindergarten and early elementary grades in their schools. They'll describe some of their programs, and discuss how they've supported and encouraged teachers to move some of the curriculum into the natural world. We'll also discuss benefits to children and the response of parents and community members to these innovations.

## Afternoon Workshops

### Developing a Discovery Yard

**Colleen Kelley**, *Education Director, Hitchcock Center, Amherst, MA*

Come play in the NEW discovery yard at the Hitchcock Center!

Create a recipe for the mud kitchen, hide in the willow hut, count with the wooden abacus, walk and read the story walk and so much more. The discovery yard has been designed for children and families to play in. It is a demonstration site for teachers and parents to experience the

value behind different types of play. Participants will learn how these play elements encourage STEM learning and will take away creative ideas and resources to implement at their own sites.



Hitchcock Center for the Environment

### Life Cycles Throughout the School Year

**Janice Henderson**, *Smith College Campus School, Northampton, MA*

Young children bring keen observational skills to their play when exploring the natural world. On the playground, in the garden, and on field trips, children are full of questions about what they are seeing and noticing. We can harness this curiosity and use it to develop scientific thinking and observational drawing in the classroom. From caterpillars to dragonflies and worms, pumpkins, bean plants and narcissus bulbs, children look forward to the changes that unfold each week. The study of life cycles is an adventure!



# Afternoon Workshops

## The Magic of Story Stones

**Mary Glabach**, *Preschool Teacher, Erving Elementary School, Erving, MA*

Participants will learn how the Erving Elementary School Pre-school program has been using Story Stones in the Forest and in the classroom with preschoolers. Story Stones can be open-ended and used as a multi-sensory way to enhance language, math skills, literacy, imagination, listening skills, and critical thinking. Story stones can be created for a nature book, nursery rhymes, a short book, or telling the weather. Learn how we have used decorated rocks to enhance outdoor play and to use in our mud kitchen during our Forest Friday program. Participants will be able to choose and make their own painted story stones or picture stones to take home.

## What Do You Do at Nature Play Afterschool?

**Katie Koerten**, *Educator, Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Amherst MA*

A nature play afterschool teacher has to strike a fine balance between giving kids space to be themselves while also providing safety and assurance in an unstructured environment. What are the “rules”? What do you do when it rains? What if a child doesn’t want to get muddy? Kate will share how to make nature play afterschool successful for everyone, whether it’s in the sunshine or pouring rain. We’ll learn tools for building strong group dynamics and overcoming obstacles to nature play. We’ll trek into the woods at the Hitchcock Center and experience Stump City, Fern Town, and the Forest Garden, and play some great afterschool games like Beckon, Four Corners, and What’s Your Trade, Lemonade.

## Storytelling and Puppetry in the Forest Kindergarten

**Rachel Kennedy**, *Forest Kindergarten Teacher, The Hartsbrook School, Hadley, MA*

Come explore the Forest Kindergarten at the Hartsbrook School and the magical world of storytelling and puppetry in the Forest! Puppetry allows us to work in the realm of wonder, imagination, and beauty, and storytelling allows us to continue the oral tradition of passing wisdom from heart to heart. As we do, we create important living pictures for children to take into their inner lives. We will work with an inclusive adaptation of The Queen Bee, a fairy tale with care for the insect world at its heart. We will craft simple bee and ant puppets and use them to tell this delightful story to each other.

## Joy and Wonder through Nature Immersion

**Ayana Verdi**, *Founder/Director, Verdi EcoSchool, Melbourne, FL*

Nature Immersion early childhood programs incorporate hands-on experiential learning and authentic play to invite children to experience the joy and wonder of independent exploration and building meaningful relationships with the natural world. Treasure hunting or searching for natural loose parts holds many benefits for children: collecting and categorizing, identifying plants and animal species and safe foraging skills. Using all of their senses, participants will take a unique outdoors sensory journey to experience the natural environment through the eyes of a child and create an interactive sensory box to take home.



### Registration Fees:

Working Professional . . . . .	\$125
Group Rate: . . . . .	\$100
per person for 3 or more from same organization	
Antioch University Alumni/Co-sponsors: . . .	\$75
AUNE/College Ed or ES students: . . . . .	\$50

For more information, contact Peg Smeltz at  
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