



# In Bloom in New Hampshire

*Promising Practices in Nature-based  
Early Childhood Education*

*Saturday, May 17, 2025*

*Symonds Elementary School  
Keene, New Hampshire*

## Introduction

We planted In Bloom in Keene in the spring of 2011 as part and parcel of the inception of the Nature-based Early Childhood program at Antioch University New England. In Bloom has visited many other towns and states, around New England and as far away as North Carolina, but we also want to continue to support our local educators at our home base of Keene. Now named In Bloom in New Hampshire, the conference will be held at Symonds Elementary School—a charming arts-filled Keene neighborhood elementary school with easy access to Wheelock Park.

Symonds has a number of teachers conducting forest days in the early elementary grades and you'll enjoy all the beautiful child-created art work on the walls throughout the school. The school provides great examples of how to incorporate nature-based education into the public school curriculum.

We look forward to hosting you in Keene.

### Land Acknowledgement

*Antioch University New England acknowledges and honors, with gratitude, the lands and waterways, and the alnobak (people) who have stewarded N'dakinna throughout the generations.*

*We pay respects to the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Confederacy Peoples past and present, on whose traditional ancestral lands we reside.*

### Dewdrops

*Watch the dewdrops in the morning,  
Shake their little diamond heads,  
Sparkling, flashing, ever moving,  
From their silent little beds.  
See the grass! Each blade is brightened,  
Roots are strengthened by their stay;  
Like the dewdrops, let us scatter  
Gems of love along the way.*

*by Myra Viola Wilds*

## Schedule for the Day

8:15 am–9:00 am	Registration Opens–Check-In Morning Refreshments Workshop Sign-Ups
9:00 am–9:15 am	Opening Circle
9:15 am–10:15 am	Morning Keynote
10:30 am–Noon	Morning Workshops
Noon– 12:50 pm	Lunch/ Inside–Outside meetup
12:50 pm–2:00 pm	Afternoon Keynote
2:15 pm–3:45 pm	Afternoon Workshops
3:45 pm–4:00 pm	Closing Circle

## Morning Keynote

### Every Tree Has a Story: An Inspiration Towards Inclusive Nature-Based Experiences

**Mariam Murphy**, Community Engagement Manager,  
The Morton Arboretum, Lisle IL

Every individual deserves to connect with nature in authentically meaningful ways. Nevertheless, within diverse natural settings, many diverse learners are not always included. This keynote will outline key principles designed to transform nature-based programs into community-informed, inclusive experiences. Resources and examples are based on the co-development of nature-based programs for students who are Deafblind, integrating sensory-sensitive practices on hikes, and prioritizing mindfulness throughout the seasons. Prepare to be inspired by the stories of trees and of the stories of *all* of the explorers amongst them.

**Mariam Murphy** is the Community Engagement Manager at The Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL. With a background in special education with a love of the outdoors, her focus has become developing accessible and engaging nature-based experiences. Through curiosity, creativity, and collaboration, Mariam has designed programs including *Nature Play for All*, seasonal tactile hikes, and an accessible maple tapping experience. She is a contributing author featured in Dr. Ruth Wilson's book, *Naturally Inclusive: Engaging Children of All Abilities Outdoors*. Mariam hopes to soon pursue her dream of becoming a pastry chef while being inspired by local seasonal ingredients in everything she bakes.



## Morning Workshops

### Nature-Based Integrated Emergent Curriculum for PreK & K

**Katie Baker**, Co-Director, Turn Back Time, Paxton, MA

Exploring outdoors, we come upon a tree stripped of its bark, gnawed so thin that it has cracked in two pieces. Sawdust and woodchips at its base seem fresh. Who has been here? Emergent curriculum—where the interests and experiences of the children inspire learning opportunities in an exciting and interactive way—responds to such moments. Katie will guide you through the excitement of finding a new interest, demonstrate how to integrate an emergent theme into hands-on learning experiences, and relate the learning that has taken place to educational guidelines. Engage in activities with native flora and fauna and experience an integrated emergent curriculum firsthand.

### Inclusive Outdoor Education: Promising Practices for Working with Challenging Behavior

**Laura Eldridge**, Student Support Team Leader and Intensive Behavior Needs Case Manager, Mount Lebanon Elementary School, Mount Lebanon, NH, and Senior Lecturer, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

Behavior is communication 100% of the time. When someone is experiencing a challenge, either inside or outside of their body, they may respond in unexpected ways in order to communicate that there's an issue. This could be because they don't have the experience or vocabulary to tell us what's happening. Sometimes they DO have the experience and the vocabulary, but may feel like no one's listening. In this workshop, Laura will share some strategies and practices that may help keep unexpected behavior from occurring as well as strategies and practices that may help get children back on track when challenges arise.

### Explore the Wonders of Math Outdoors!

**Kristine Kennedy**, Grade Two Teacher, Symonds Elementary School, Keene, NH

Outdoor, hands-on learning fosters a connection with the natural world and helps make abstract concepts more concrete. Discover how to bring classroom math into any outdoor environment in this session. We will explore a variety of activities to build math skill and confidence, and work and play with math and science tools to connect math concepts and science process skills. Through interactive games, learning stations, explorations, guided discovery, and nature-based math challenges, you can teach your grade's math standards and more!

### Supporting Risky Play

**Erin Tanzer**, Teaching Faculty, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

Climb, swing, run, and hide! In this workshop, we will explore various and predictable ways children engage in risky play outdoors. Through our play, construction, and discussion, participants will learn new strategies to support children's risky play. Learn how to implement collaborative decision-making with children and use open-ended materials to create varying levels of challenge.

### Connecting Through Songs, Stories and Movement

**Peter Siegel**, Music Teacher, Symonds Elementary School, Keene, NH, Award-winning Songwriter, Music Producer, and founding member of the folk-funk-world-beat band *The Gaslight Tinkers*. Brattleboro, VT

Simple singing, dancing and movement activities as well as storytelling can bring the natural world to life for every child. Children (and adults) have always connected to community and place through rhythm, sound and tales. We will explore bringing the outdoors and a sense of our place into the classroom through celebration and interactive musical activities. Get ready to have some serious fun!



## Lunch

We enjoy treating you to a tasty and healthy lunch. During the lunch hour, we will update you on Inside-Outside, our network for nature-based educators. Learn how to join or start a chapter. Contact Liza Lowe at [elowe@antioch.edu](mailto:elowe@antioch.edu).



## Afternoon Keynote

### Intentions Matter: The Purpose Behind the Practice

**Katie Baker**, Co-Director, Turn Back Time, Paxton, MA

Join Katie Baker as she highlights the purpose behind her practice as director and teacher at Turn Back Time, a long-standing farm and forest, nature-based program in Paxton, Massachusetts. Turn Back Time is rooted in respect for nature's ability to teach and heal, and offers people of all ages the time, space, and permission to learn, gain new experience, and grow in confidence and love for themselves, others, and this Earth we call home. Katie will share how she creates an inclusive community by building strong relationships. She will explore the consideration behind adopting a "Yes" culture and prioritizing social development in an early childhood setting. She will discuss how a program's mission can guide and support you in being deliberate in your own practice.

**Katie Baker** is an early childhood educator with a passion for emergent curriculum and play-based learning. She takes pride in her understanding of early childhood development and appropriate practice, her ability to guide children in their individual growth, and her knack for designing spaces that encourage engagement in learning. Katie holds a MEd in Foundations of Education and a Certificate in Nature-Based Early Childhood Education from Antioch, a BS in Early Childhood Education from Worcester State University, and an AA in Liberal Arts from Quinsigamond Community College. She is a licensed teacher in the state of Massachusetts, and formerly owned and operated The Neighborhood Playroom, a nature-based daycare program in Leicester, MA.



## Afternoon Workshops

### Nature's Touch: The Sense That Connects Us

**Mariam Murphy**, Community Engagement Manager, The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL

Come explore how adding a touch of nature can make any program more inclusive. Through community collaboration, educators can learn to incorporate evidence-based practices within different programs in order to make them more accessible and inclusive. This session will highlight incorporating tactile components to hikes, storybooks, and seasonal programs as a means to include all nature explorers! Participants will also make a tactile piece to take with them.

### Nature Journaling for Your Students and YOURSELF

**Liza Lowe**, Director, Inside-Outside, Affiliate Faculty, Antioch University New England, and Class Teacher, Gathering Waters Charter School, Keene, NH

What happens when we slow down and focus on one thing? How might investing time in observation and reflection nurture ourselves and our students? Join Liza to learn about a tool for reflection, documentation & mindfulness. Together we will create nature journals, practice some journaling techniques, and stretch our bodies, minds, and comfort zones as we move toward a sense of place and a state of rest. In a time when school days are tightly scheduled, governed by bells and proficiency, this session is an opportunity to get still and quiet, to give to yourself and in turn, give to the K-3rd-grade children with whom you work.

### Insects in the Classroom: Tips and Tools for Utilizing Your Schoolyard Resources

**Staff**, The Caterpillar Lab, Marlborough, NH

Join educators from The Caterpillar Lab for a demonstration showcasing early spring insects and a discussion about the tools and techniques we can use to find, care for, and share these animals with students. Head out on a walk for some practical experience finding engaging insect stories right outside the classroom doors, and learn how to observe and collect with students. Explore digital microscopes as tools to help tell big stories about even the smallest organisms, and practice methods for safe handling and short-term care for insect guests. Bring your questions and leave with resources for continuing to work with insects on your own.

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# Afternoon Workshops

## Natureful Science –NGSS Outdoors in Early Elementary

Eliza Minnuci, Senior Lecturer, Antioch University, Keene, NH, Flexible Pathways Teacher, First Branch Elementary School, Co-Founder, Forest Kinder, Co-Author, *The Forest Days Handbook*, Tunbridge, VT

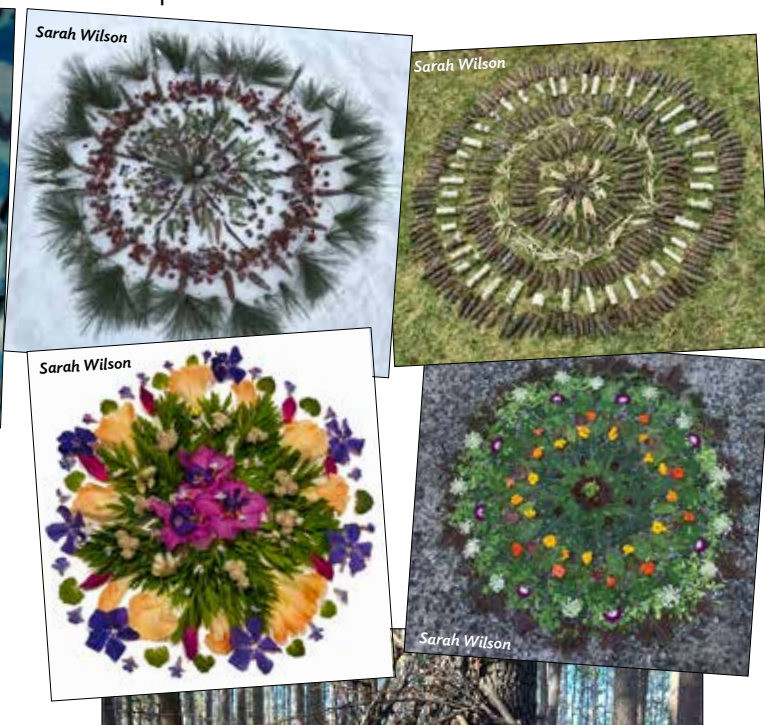
Shut off Youtube, shelve the workbooks and play with science instead! This workshop provides examples of how we can engage authentically with local and national science standards outdoors. From building thoughtful routines to embarking on integrated studies, examples will be shared that address NGSS standards for Kindergarten through Second Grade.



## Nature Mandalas

Sarah Wilson, Environmental Artist, Nelson, NH, Alum and former Admissions Counselor, Antioch University New England, Keene, NH

Making nature mandalas is a relaxing, peaceful, fun way to spend time outdoors. It's also a wonderful way to see nature and all of its beautiful colors, properties, patterns and shapes in a new way. Participants will learn basic tips and techniques for creating mandalas outdoors using only natural materials. We may make one large mandala together as a group, or try small group and individual creations. We'll leave our mandalas for others to enjoy as the wind, sun, rain, and local critters help them dissipate.



This conference is co-sponsored by:



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Symonds Elementary School

**REGISTER HERE**

[www.antioch.edu/annual-events/in-bloom-conferences](http://www.antioch.edu/annual-events/in-bloom-conferences)

Questions about registration, contact:  
Jen Zakrzewski, [jzakrzewski@antioch.edu](mailto:jzakrzewski@antioch.edu)

### Registration Fees

Individual Working Professional. . . . . \$125

Group Rate . . . . . \$100  
(per person; 3 or more from the same school)

AU Students or Alumni. . . . . \$75