



University of Delaware Lab School

In Bloom in Delaware

Promising Practices in Nature-based Early Childhood Education

Saturday, April 26, 2025

University of Delaware Lab School, Newark, Delaware

We conducted two wonderful **In Blooms in Delaware** in 2022 and 2023 that were attended by early childhood educators and administrators from across the mid-Atlantic states. We took a break last year, and now we'll be back at the University of Delaware Lab School as part of their 90th anniversary celebration. And because of the size of the venue this year, we'll also be limiting the number of attendees to 90. Ninety for the 90th. So sign up early if you're interested.

The conference activities will take place at two locations: the UD Lab School and across the street at 15 Innovation Way. There is a convenient walking path connecting the two. Registration, morning refreshments and the morning keynote will be at 15 Innovation Way. Then we'll stroll over to the Lab School for workshops. We'll stroll back to 15 Innovation Way for lunch and the afternoon keynote and then stroll back to the Lab School for afternoon workshops. Always good to have some walking and fresh air inserted into the schedule of the day.

You can choose to park at 15 Innovation Way or the UD Lab School and walk or drive back and forth. There should be ample parking in both lots.

University of Delaware Land Acknowledgement

The University of Delaware occupies lands vital to the web of life for Lenape and Nanticoke, who share their ancestry, history, and future in this region. UD has financially benefited from this regional occupation as well as from Indigenous territories that were expropriated through the United States land grant system. We express our appreciation for ongoing Indigenous stewardship of the ecologies and traditions of this region. While the harms to Indigenous people and their homelands are beyond repair, we commit to building right relationships going forward by collaborating with tribal leadership on actionable institutional steps.

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
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
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

Democracy is Built in the Sandbox: How Play Shapes Our Brains, Our Bodies and Our Communities

*Meghan Talarowski, founder and executive director,
Studio Ludo, Philadelphia, PA*

Riding the wave of the child saving movement of the early 1900s, play and the playground were seen as foundational to children's development. Sand gardens and spaces for play proliferated, alongside the rise of kindergartens and trained playworkers. Play was considered the right of the child, and one of many training grounds for a healthy democracy.

One hundred and twenty five years later, we need a new child saving movement. Play is rarely seen as essential, although it is needed now more than ever. As we look to an increasingly unstable future, play spaces and the adults that support them provide the types of experiences and development that our future needs.



Meghan Talarowski is the founder and executive director of Studio Ludo in Philadelphia. She has degrees in architecture and landscape architecture, is a certified playground safety inspector, and licensed landscape architect. Her research focuses on how the design of play environments impacts physical health and social behavior. To date, she has collected data on over 60,000 people in 100 play spaces. This research informs her play designs, which include over 30 play environments across the US. Her work has been featured by The New York Times, The Atlantic, NPR, Curbed, Dwell, Popular Science, Landscape Architecture Magazine, and World Landscape Architecture Magazine.



Morning Workshops

Take Math Outside!

Rachel Tidd, Author, Wild Learning: Practical Ideas for Bringing Teaching Outdoors and the Wild Math and Wild Reading curricula series, Ithaca, NY

Math comes alive when it's hands-on, engaging, and outdoors! In this hands-on workshop, you'll explore adaptable activities, games, and prompts that build early math concepts and skills. Learn how to leverage what is available and abundant in any outdoor setting, from sidewalks to forest trails, for learning math. We'll also discuss ways to encourage exploration and integration of math during free play.

Creating High Quality Nature Spaces in the Schoolyard

Kerry Wilson, Habitat Outreach Manager, Delaware Nature Society, Hockessin DE

Most schoolyards lack nature infrastructure for teaching, learning, and self-discovery. This session will explore, discuss, and model how developing spaces with native plantings and natural materials can offer authentic immersive experiences. These spaces attract birds and pollinators into your schoolyard. This infrastructure helps to beautify and normalize native plants and wildlife in our environment. After attending this session, you will have a packet of native plants for your schoolyard that will support a Monarch study, resources and ideas to develop more nature-based and enchanting schoolyard spaces, and multiple hands-on activities that you can implement in your nature-based classroom.

What can you do with a wonder? Achieving the Core through Student Interest

Kristen Chandler and Alexis Washofsky, Teachers of Outdoor PreK/K at University of Delaware Lab School, Newark, DE

Promoting student interest can contribute to more engaged, motivated students. But, how can you tailor the interests and passions of your students and ensure that activities directly address specific learning standards outlined for the grade level? How can you encourage students to make connections and apply their knowledge in new situations? This workshop will provide strategies and examples of how to extend, support and enrich children's natural sense of wonder, curiosity, joy and excitement about the natural world while meeting the common core standards.



Morning Workshops

continued

Nature Club in a Primary School

Meg Anderson, Kindergarten Teacher, and Katie Miro, First Grade Teacher, Newark Charter School, Newark, DE

Have you struggled with how to get students out in nature while ensuring you cover all the important curricular objectives you need to teach? Our Nature Club was established by teachers and parents at our school to encourage students' natural interests in the outdoor environment around our school. We believe our nature club has enhanced students' appreciation for nature exploration and preservation. Our nature club allows students to participate in hands on nature-related topics while allowing them to engage in unstructured play in their natural world. In this workshop, we will explain the process to create your own nature club program. In addition, we will create and explore different activities you can do with your own nature enthusiasts. Let's get exploring!

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.



Afternoon Keynote

Roots of Literacy: Getting Ready to Read Outdoors

Rachel Tidd, Author, Wild Learning: Practical Ideas for Bringing Teaching Outdoors and the Wild Math and Wild Reading curricula series, Ithaca, NY

New mandates in the science of reading have left many early childhood educators feeling pressured to ensure their outdoor learning practices align with these new requirements. This keynote highlights how outdoor learning and play can fit within the latest reading research. You'll leave inspired and equipped with the knowledge and language needed to advocate for outdoor learning and play to be recognized as vital partners in building early literacy skills.

Rachel Tidd is passionate about integrating outdoor and place-based learning to enrich literacy and math instruction. She is the author of Wild Learning: Practical Ideas for Bringing Teaching Outdoors and the creator of the Wild Math® and Wild Reading® curricula. Rachel is a former elementary special education teacher with a Master's degree in Elementary and Special Education from Bank Street College of Education. Currently pursuing her doctorate at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, her research explores integrating sustainability and language arts education.



Afternoon Workshops

Designing Outdoor Play Environments for Young Children

Meghan Talarowski, founder and executive director, Studio Ludo, Philadelphia, PA

You cannot pour from an empty cup. This workshop will be hands on, brains on, joy filled experiences of movement, creativity, and exploration. We will talk about favorite play memories, the ones we had as children and the ones we hope to preserve for future generations. We will share ideas about what "play is" and what "play is not," and discuss the role of the play environment, body language, and verbal language in crafting a culture of play.

We will build, and craft, and draw, and glue, and model best practices, dreams, and ideas of what play means to us, and the types of environments that make us and our kids happy. We will explore how our experiences can support and foster better play in all of our communities, as we envision a more playful tomorrow.

Beyond the Bulletin Board: Using Documentation Panels in Nature-based Education

Katie Pollock and Amanda Lala, Co-teachers of Nature Preschool, University of Delaware Lab School, Newark, DE

Break out of your boring bulletin board rut and take a deep dive into documentation panels! Exhibiting more than just student art, documentation panels provide the opportunity to present detailed evidence of the learning process in a diverse group of children via photos, quotes, writing samples, and more. Attendees will learn the WHY, when, and where to use a documentation panel to showcase student learning to the school community. Using materials from recent units of study in a nature-based preschool program, participants will gain hands-on experience with creating dynamic displays. Session attendees will learn strategies to look beyond the basics and practice planning for multiple modes of delivering instruction and representing the learning process.



Afternoon Workshops

Stick Play: The Power of Imagination

Anne M. Stires, Affiliate Faculty at Antioch University, Keene, NH, Consultant, Anne Stires Educational Consulting, Doctoral Student in Public Policy and Educational Leadership at University of Southern Maine, Lincolnville, ME

Sticks are quite possibly the world's oldest toys. In honor of their play value, sticks were inducted into the Toy Hall of Fame in 2008. Children use sticks as tools, utensils, machines, magical people, food, armor, animals, puppets, as building materials, for fire-making, cooking, flying, and creating nature art or music. There are endless uses of sticks in play and yet there are perceived as real risks as well. This workshop will explore the many benefits of stick play, increase our collective comfort in using sticks with young children, and expand understanding of mitigating and managing the risks.

Year-Round Outdoor Play and Learning for Toddlers and Preschoolers: A Tinkergarten Workshop

Emily Hegman, Montessori-Certified Tinkergarten Teacher, Wilmington, DE

Come to Tinkergarten! This workshop will inspire fresh ideas for you and your fellow educators to create joyful, nature-based learning experiences for the toddlers and preschoolers (and their families, if applicable) in your community through all four seasons. During our time together, we will learn how this expert-designed curriculum empowers grown-ups to support children's unique learning processes.



We'll walk through the flow of a typical class, covering elements such as engaging a group through songs and movement, incorporating core values and seasonal themes, staging and introducing the main lesson, ending with connection and gratitude, and offering ideas for extensions at home to continue the learning. 1, 2, 3 – let's play!

This conference is sponsored by:



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Registration Fees

Individual Working Professional	\$125
Group Rate	\$100 (per person; 3 or more from the same school)
AU & UD students or alumni	\$75

Scenes from our 22 & 23 conferences
In Bloom in Delaware



REGISTER HERE

www.antioch.edu/annual-events/in-bloom-conferences

Questions about registration, contact:
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