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Today's Agenda

1. Brief overview of Nature-based Pedagogy
2. WHY mitigating risk matters
3. HOW to mitigate risk:
 - Licensing rules
 - Site assessments
 - Benefit-risk assessments
 - Establishing & living the policies & procedures

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an educational approach where experiences learning WITH nature are core to the teaching & learning

Nature-Based Early Childhood Education (NbECE)

Learning WITH Nature

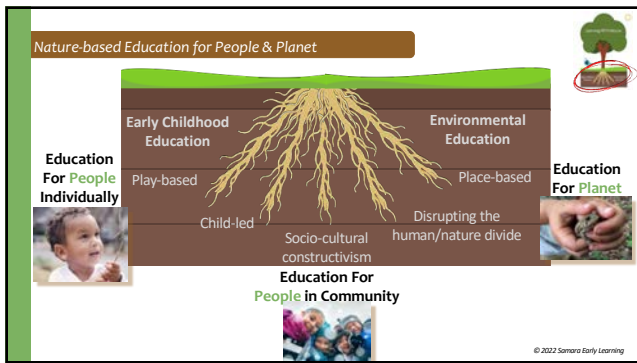
Teaching Practices

Early Childhood Education

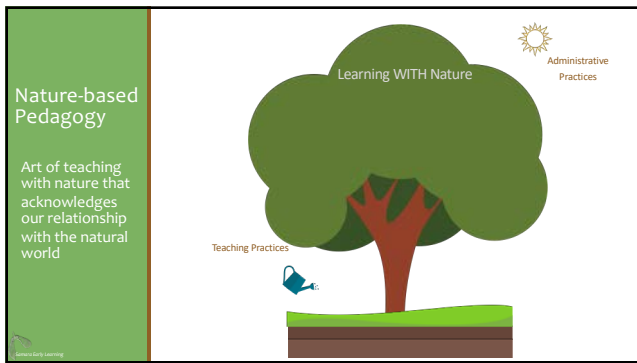
Environmental Education

Administrative Practices

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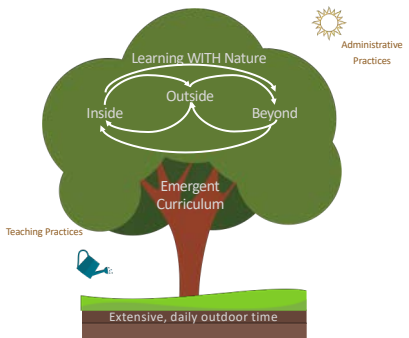
Learning WITH nature

- Starts with an experience with nature
- Sparks children's interest in learning about the world
- Builds over time
- Emphasis is relational (*rather than location or information*)
- Assumes nature provides more than we can plan for—serving as another teacher!

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Nature-based Pedagogy

Art of teaching with nature that acknowledges our relationship with the natural world



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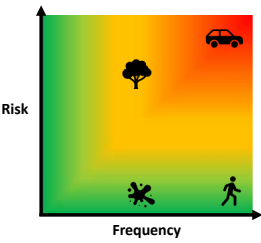
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Risk comes in many forms



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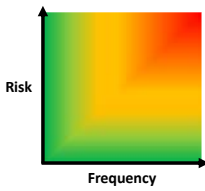
Risk Matrix



- The higher the risk & frequency, the more likely a catastrophic incident
- Can use this matrix for any risky activity, but especially:
 - Site hazards (animals, plants, weather, etc.)
 - Activity hazards (tree climbing, riding in a vehicle, etc.)

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Safe doesn't mean risk-free



- **Hazard**—A source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects *(Things children can't see or control)*
- **Risk**—Probability that someone will be hurt if exposed to a hazard *(Things children decide whether or not to engage in/with)*
- **Fear**—emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous
- **Anxiety**—emotion that results from avoiding core emotions or needs

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Why mitigating risk matters



To protect...

- Children
- Families
- Staff
- School/Organization
- NbECE profession

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Licensing & QRIS: It IS possible

- Know the rules!
- Maintain an attitude of possibility
- Remember the shared goals
- Reflect on the intent of rules/standards
- Have a **dialogue** with regulators
- Look to other states & programs for their experiences

A program can be nature-based, safe, & high-quality—all at once!



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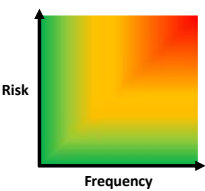
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Site Assessment



- A broad view of potential hazards on a site
- Informs development of policies & procedures
- Includes:
 - Potential hazard
 - People at risk
 - Existing mitigation procedures

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occur in that space (with children) and high-risk activities having occurred within proximity.

Location/Organization:	ABC Preschool	Date:	August 15, 2019
Assessor(s):	Betty White	Scheduled review date:	January 15, 2020

As you're identifying potential hazards, consider non-human (animals, plants, weather, land features, etc.) and human (litter left behind, encounters with dog walkers, intoxicated person, etc.) hazards. People at risk may include children, teachers, support staff, families, and so forth. Existing

Potential Hazard	People at risk	Existing mitigation procedures
Pond at back of schoolyard property	- Children - Teachers - Visitors	- Children never visit alone - Stop before getting to the pond to remind of rules - Mark boundaries at arrival for shoreline exploration - Children must not wade beyond the height of their boots - On the dock, walk in the middle; get on belly to touch/look more closely at the water

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Hazards come in the form of...

Animals

Plants

Terrain

Weather

Humans



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Critter Hazards—Arthropods

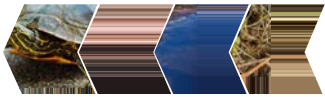


Arthropod is an invertebrate animal having an exoskeleton, a segmented body, and jointed appendages. (insects, spiders, crustaceans)

- Some spiders (e.g., black widow)
- Bees, wasps, hornets
- Ticks
- Mosquitoes
- Scorpions
-

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Critter Hazards—Reptiles & Amphibians



- Venomous snakes
- Alligators
- Snapping turtles
- Poisonous frogs
-

➤ **Venomous** bite or sting to inject toxins

➤ **Poisonous** release toxins when eaten

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Critter Hazards—Mammals



- Bears
- Moose
- Mountain lion
- Domestic dogs & cats
- _____

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Hazards come in the form of...

Animals



Plants



Terrain



Weather



Humans



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Example plant hazards



- Poison ivy
- Poison hemlock
- Wood nettle & stinging nettle
- Wild parsnip
- Hogweed
- _____

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Hazards come in the form of...

Animals

Plants

Terrain

Weather

Humans



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Potential terrain hazards



- Ponds
- Rivers
- Bogs
- Lakes
- Cliffs
- Sharp rocks
- Earthquakes
- _____

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Hazards come in the form of...

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Weather

Humans



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Potential weather hazards

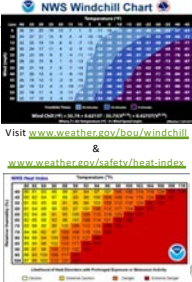


- Thunderstorms
- Hurricanes
- Tornadoes
- Wildfires (& smoke)
- Extreme heat & cold
- Air quality
- _____

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The weather!

- Licensing rules typically say something like:
“Children should be outside every day unless the weather conditions pose a danger”
- Clothing is a key when it comes mitigating weather dangers



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Germ vs. Cold Weather

- Germs make people sick—not the weather!
- If not dressed appropriately a child may be more vulnerable to germs (bacteria & viruses)
- But the cold isn’t what makes us sick!



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Clothing is a vital tool

- **Have it**
 - Purchase class sets
 - Have a stockpile of “extras”
 - Ask families to donate what they’ve outgrown
- **Clean it**
 - Kids & clothes are washable ☺
 - Dry, shake & then wash (for mud)
 - In the meantime, have a place for dirty gear outside of classroom
- **Store it**



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Hazards come in the form of...

Animals 

Plants 

Terrain 

Weather 

Humans 

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Assess the potential terrain hazards



- Waste
- People under the influence
- Custody issues
- Active shooters
- Air quality
- _____

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Hazards come in the form of...

Animals

Plants

Terrain

Weather

Humans

Site assessments help us mitigate the hazards while allowing children opportunities for beneficial risk

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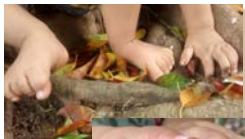
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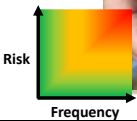
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Consider all the activities in your program





- Handling animals
- Exploring the pond edge
- Playing with sticks
- Running on the trail
- Climbing trees
- Walking barefoot
- _____

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What is risky play?

“Thrilling and exciting forms of **physical** play that involve uncertainty and a risk of physical injury”

Sandseter, 2010

“Play that involves **uncertainty and exploration** – bodily, perceptual or environmental – that could lead to negative consequences.”

Kleppe, Melhuish, Sandseter, 2017



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Types of risky play

- **Great heights** (climbing, jumping, balancing, hanging/swinging)
- **High speed** (sliding, sledding, running, tricycles)
- **Dangerous tools—cutting & strangling** (knives, axes, ropes)
- **Dangerous elements** (cliffs, deep water, fire pits)
- **Rough-and-tumble** (wrestling, play fighting)
- **Disappear/get lost** (exploring alone, unfamiliar environments)
- **Playing with impact*** (making impact with objects for fun)
- **Vicarious risk*** (watching other children take risks)

Sandseter 2011; Kleppe, Melhuish, Sandseter, 2017



*Emerged through research with 1-3 year olds



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Risky play can benefit children...



...Benefit-Risk Assessments determine to what extent



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Initial Benefit-Risk Assessment of Activities in Nature-based Early Childhood Education

This benefit-risk assessment focuses on the specific activities that occur in a space. This tool should be used in tandem with a site assessment which identifies potential hazards in a space—no matter the activity occurring there. Once you've completed this initial benefit-risk assessment it's recommended to generate detailed protocols for medium- and high-risk activities.

Location/Organization:

Date:

Assessor(s):

Scheduled review date:

The three questions driving this assessment: 1) What are the benefits of doing this activity? 2) How might we (or nature) get hurt doing this activity? 3) How can we keep ourselves, each other, and nature safe doing this activity?

Activity	How will young children benefit from this activity?	What are the possible risks of this activity?	Who is at risk?	What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?	Overall risk rating*: L/M/H	Activity Frequency**
Puddle jumping	- It's fun! - Jumping - Balance - Discussion of displacement	- Falling down & hitting head - Slipping on wet surfaces	- Child jumping - Bystanders	- Must wear rainboots - No running & jumping on asphalt or concrete surfaces - If jumping from an elevated surface (e.g., log), jumping on that surface for bystanders before jumping	Low	Weekly

A general guide for risk rating:

Low—comfort care (e.g., band-aids, ice pack)

Medium—minor first aid (e.g., wound cleaning & bandaging)

High—hospital care

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Establish Appropriate Policies & Procedures

- Policies for low- to medium-risk activities
- Protocols for high-risk activities
 - Pre-, During, & Post-activity procedures
 - Materials needed

Check out the *Nature-based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook* for even more guidance on policies!

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Defining the terms

Policy

- Broad, overarching tenets which guide and influence decision making
- Change infrequently
- Describe who, what, when, & why

Procedure (or “protocol”)

- Narrow focus which describe step-by-step actions in specific situations. *(Have a beginning & end; Should be strictly followed to achieve the desired outcome)*
- Continuously change & improve
- Describe who, what, when, & how
- Detailed description of activities

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Sections of policies & protocols to include

- ✓ Personnel
- ✓ Classroom, child care, & curriculum *(e.g., curriculum, assessment, behavior management, daily class schedule)*
- ✓ Family Engagement
- ✓ School safety:
 - ✓ Emergency preparedness
 - ✓ Health & safety
 - ✓ Protocols for medium- to high-risk curricular activities *(e.g., fire making, tree climbing)*
- ✓ Other administrative *(e.g., child record management and storage)*

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Reviewing the policies & procedures: Frequency

- How often? Regularly!
 - Annually (at minimum)
 - After any incident
 - When environment changes
 - When behavior in a space changes
- Policies change infrequently; Procedures will change often



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Reviewing the policies & procedures: Content

- Activities captured on the Benefit-Risk Assessment mentioned in policy manual?
- Do policies & procedures reflect reality?
- As reflect, consider:
 - Activity location
 - Available equipment
 - Adult supervision available
 - Children's skills
 - Varying conditions (e.g., wet or icy surfaces)
 - Family consent



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Detailed Benefit-Risk Assessment Protocol

- ✓ How will young children benefit from this activity? (*physically, cognitively, socially & emotionally*)
- ✓ What are the possible risks of this activity?
- ✓ What actions will be put in place to reduce the risk of injury?
 - ✓ Equipment needed
 - ✓ Pre-activity procedures
 - ✓ Activity procedures
 - ✓ Post-activity procedures
 - ✓ Incident response

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Example of using a handsaw

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Establish Appropriate Policies & Procedures

- Policies for low- to medium-risk activities
- Protocols for high-risk activities
 - Pre-, During, & Post-activity procedures
 - Materials needed
- Live the policies & procedures!



Check out the *Nature-based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook* for even more guidance on policies!

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Living the policies & procedures

- All staff should know the policies
- Any staff involved in an activity should know the procedures
- When training consider:
 - Onboarding
 - Ongoing training
 - Reading, videos, discussion
 - Practical application
- Involve the children!



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Three classroom “rules”



- Three rules to follow...
 1. Keep yourself safe
 2. Keep each other safe
 3. Keep nature (& world around us) safe
- Generally, any concerns fit within these 3 buckets
- But even with those rules, involve the children...

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Support children in weighing benefits & risks



➤ Think out loud

- "I'm concerned you might hit your head on that branch. How will you keep yourself safe?"
- "I'm going to move this log while you all jump to help keep everyone safe."

➤ Conduct Benefit-Risk Assessment:

1. Why do this?
2. What could hurt us?
3. How can we keep ourselves, each other, & nature safe?

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Support children to weigh benefits & risks



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Where we've been...

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Steps to mitigate the risk

✓ Know the licensing rules!

✓ Conduct Site Assessment(s)

✓ Remove hazards when possible (poison ivy, snags, etc.)

✓ Conduct Benefit-Risk Assessments for activities (i.e., Why do this? What could hurt us? How prevent injury?)

✓ Establish policies & procedures

✓ Ensure ongoing implementation & review of policies & procedures



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Keep in mind...

Establishing policies & procedures may seem boring and tedious, but they matter for the health of children, staff, organizations, and the field of early childhood education!

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Thank you!





Scan to take the Nature Journey quiz & get your custom Toolkit!



Helping nature-based education take flight

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