

Brrrrring It On!

Embracing Snow and Rain Outdoors with Young Children

Kirsten Haugen, MA

Web: natureexplore.org - Natural outdoor classroom research, design services and professional development

Email: kirstenh@dimensionsfoundation.org or info@natureexplore.org

Webinar Resources

Please use these helpful resources to extend this topic:

- ***Flourishing in Winter: Guidance for Cold Weather Play, by and for early childhood practitioners***, by Emily K. Johnson and Julie Ernst. Natural Start Alliance, June 2025. Retrieved from naturalstart.org January 2026.
- ***Joys of a Winter Wonderland***, by Sara Reichstadt and Lisa Swan, Exchange Press, January 2020 (Issue 251). Retrieved from exchangepress.com January 2026.
- ***Playing Outside in Winter: Tips to Keep Kids Warm & Safe***. American Academy of Pediatrics, January 2024. Retrieved from healthychildren.org January 2026
- ***Rain, Snow, or Shine: The Importance of Outdoor Time for Babies***. New Horizon Academy. Retrieved from newhorizonacademy.net January 2026.
- ***Snow Much to Learn: Teachers' Experiences Embracing Child-Led Snow Play***, by Ann Rossmiller, Rachel Konerman and Mickaela Dean, Exchange Community Voices, January 2026. Retrieved from exchangepress.com January 2026.
- ***Winter Play in China***, by Huajun Li, Exchange Press, January 2020 (Issue 251). Retrieved from exchangepress.com January 2026.
- ***5 Benefits of Outdoor Play in the Winter***, Learning Resources, December 2023. Retrieved from learningresources.com January 2026.

Kirsten's ECI Webinars

earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presenters/haugen-kirsten

- **[Brrrrring It On! Embracing Cold, Snow and Rain Outdoors with Young Children](#)**
- **[Considering the Climate of Your Outdoor Spaces: How heat and shade impact health and play, and what you can do about it](#)**,
- **[Growing Natural Outdoor Preschool Classrooms to Scale: LA Unified School District's Bold Approach](#)**, with Dean Tagawa and Ranae Amezcuita and Kirsten Haugen
- **[Engineering With Nature: Learning and Communicating through Construction Play](#)**, with Tina Reeble



Brrring It On!
*Embracing Snow
and Rain Outdoors
with Young Children*

Kirsten Haugen, MA
Nature Explore
natureexplore.org

1



Kirsten Haugen
Research Director,
Child Development Specialist

kirstenh@natureexplore.org



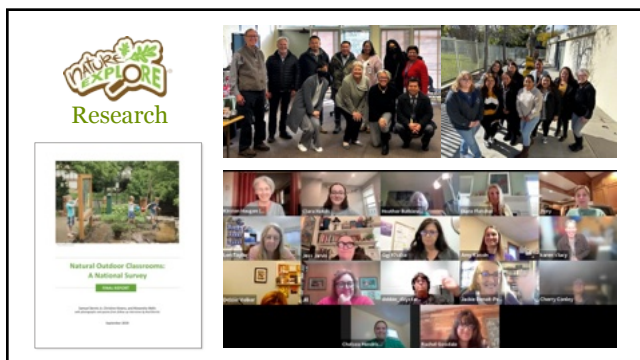
2



3



4



5



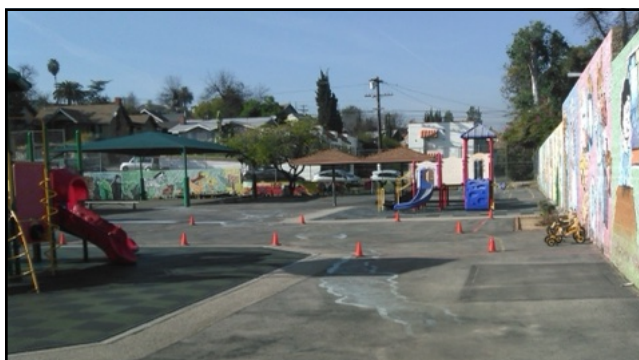
6



7



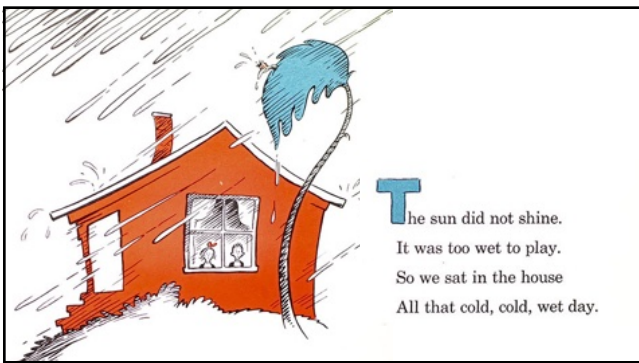
8



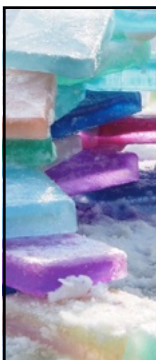
9



10



11



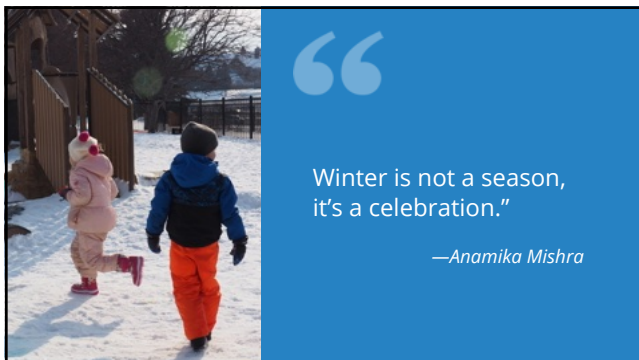
Our Focus

- Benefits & possibilities
- The attitude shift
- Awareness and preparation
- Clothes *are* the curriculum
- Cold weather comforts
- Take care of the adults, too!

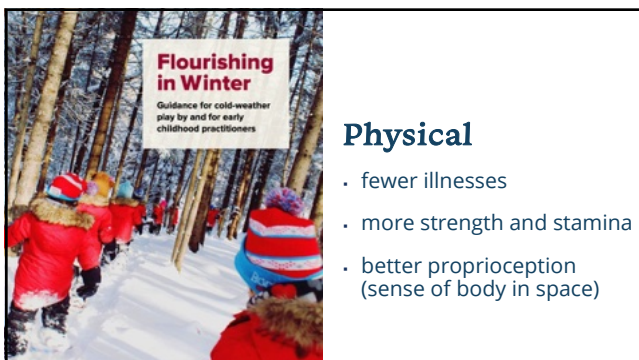
12



13



14



15



Mental & Emotional

- better mood
- calm focus from heavy work
- curiosity
- persistence and confidence
- self-awareness

16



Learning

- science concepts including phases of matter
- science processes including prediction, experimentation & problem-solving
- science tools, including thermometers, shovels, sleds and more

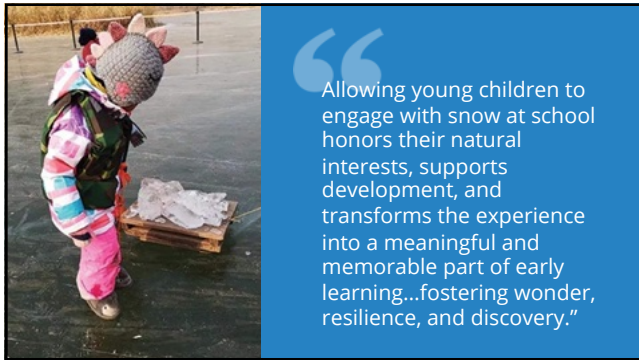
17



Connections with Nature

- awareness of seasonal and daily transformations
- engages the senses
- empathy for living things

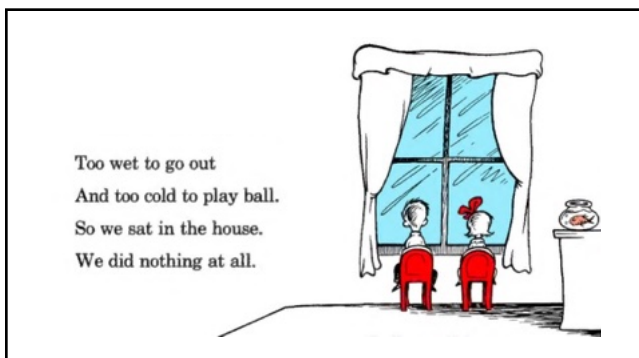
18



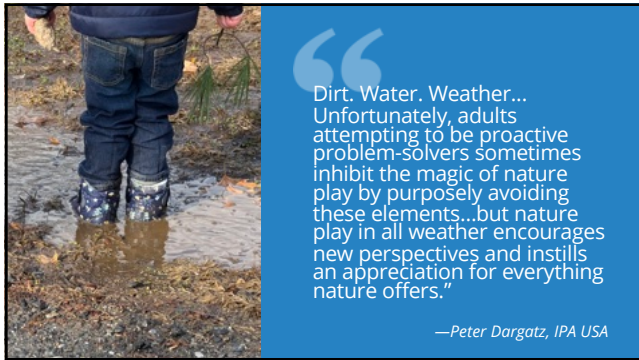
19



20



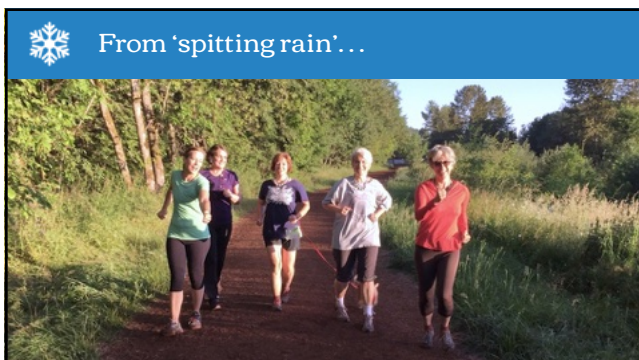
21



22



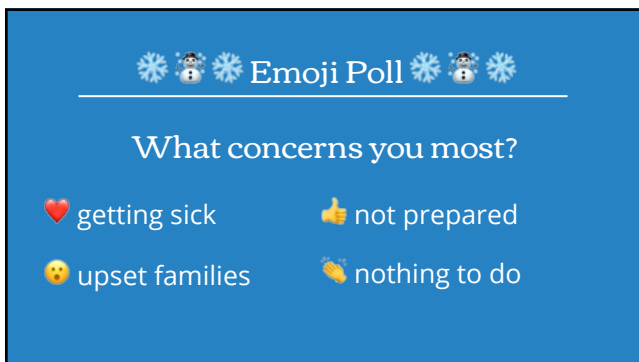
23



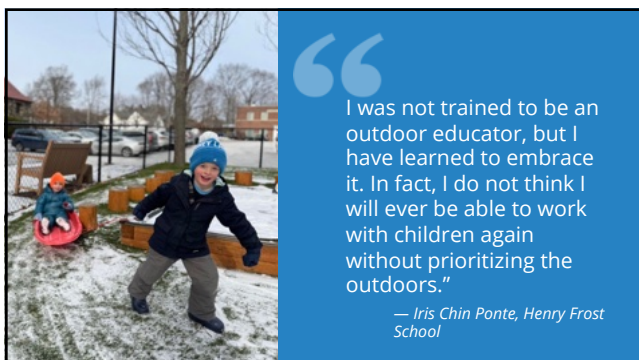
24



25



26



27

“

The children have adapted and adjusted in ways we could never have imagined. They cheer when we have ice rain, and they cannot wait to see how the snow transforms our play spaces.”

—Iris Chin Ponte



28



Safety & Comfort


29

Is it Safe to Go Out?


- Know the conditions and risks
- Prolonged time in below zero temps can cause hypothermia or frostbite
- Follow NOAA wind chill guidelines
- Be prepared




30





Emoji Poll




How cold is too cold?

 55° F

 10° F

 32° F

 -15° F

31



More than Temperature


- Clouds and wind
- Deep ice and snow that limit movement
- Humidity and wet clothing

...all increase the impact of cold weather


32

What to do?

- Dress in layers
- Have backup gear
- Encourage active play
- Move to the sun
- Move out of the wind
- Adjust your schedule
- Check in with children



33



“
I used to think 30 degrees was cold. Not anymore. Our school has opened in 17 degrees, multiple times. We have learned to layer, eat warm foods in Thermoses, and keep moving.”
— Iris Chin Ponte,
Henry Frost School

34



Cold Weather Comforts

35

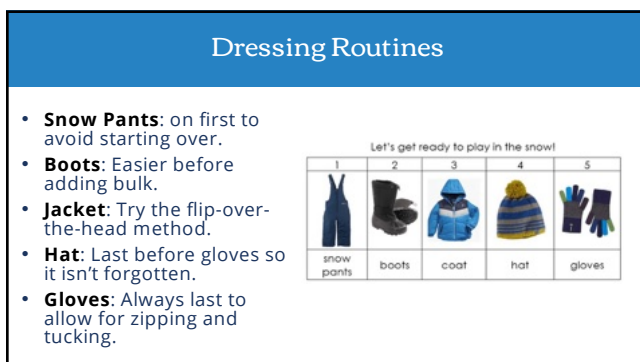
“
To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stand out in the cold.”
—Aristotle



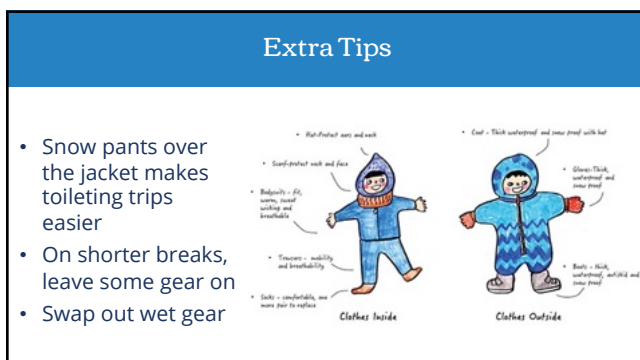
36



37



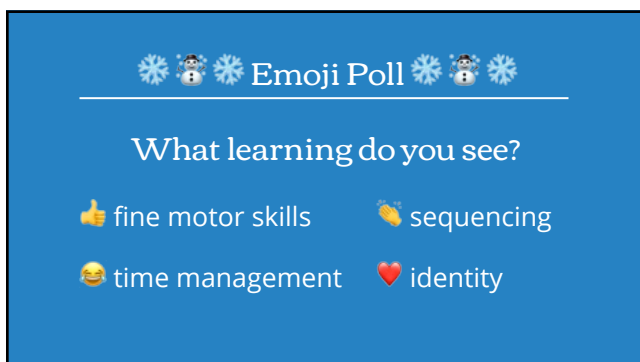
38



39



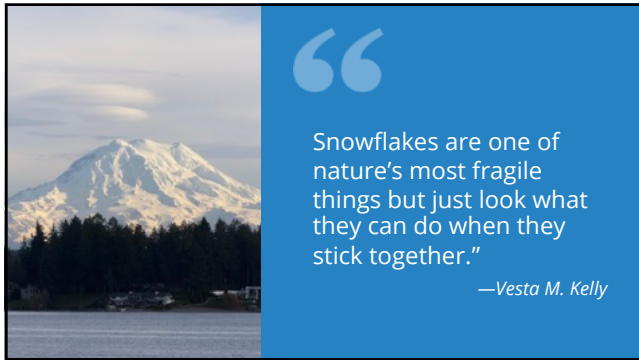
40



41



42



43



44



45



46



47



48



49



50



51



52



53




54



55




56



Children in natural outdoor settings are...

"...more relaxed, happier,
less impulsive, more
focused, more creative
and better able to
self-regulate."

— Dr. Sam Dennis et al,
2014 Post-occupancy Study of
Nature-based Outdoor Classrooms



57




“

When we grow healthy children, we're building their resilience and their adaptability to changes that they will inevitably see.”

—Joan Lombardi
The Road to COP:
Elevating Early Childhood Development

58

What is your next step into cold weather?



59

❄️🧑‍❄️❄️ Emoji Poll ❄️🧑‍❄️❄️

Your next step into cold weather?

❤️ explore attitudes 🧥 focus on gear

👍 adjust schedule 👨‍👩‍👧‍👦 talk with families

60



Don't be
afraid to
turn old
attitudes
on their head!

61



62



63



Our mission is to inspire joy and wonder in children, educators, and communities with a heart-centered approach to early education.





501(c)3 Nonprofit Organization

64




Register Now!

Engaging Exchange
NATURE FOR CHILDREN
EVERY DAY
ONLINE CONFERENCE
In Collaboration with Nature Explore

December 11, 2026 | 12-4 PM EST

exchangepress.com/nature-everyday 

65




Thank You!

66
