

Early Education Connection to Nature Survey

This survey was created by the San Francisco Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative Educational Environments working group in 2017. The tool was used to measure whether and how early education sites in San Francisco, serving ages zero to five, provide their children access to nature. Specifically, the survey asks principals and site directors questions regarding their perspectives, practices, and needs related to connecting children to nature. Please note that this survey is considered a first draft and will be updated before further use in San Francisco. The survey questions are not validated.

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Principals & Site Directors,

San Francisco's Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) is a cross-sector collaborative whose mission is to equitably improve nature connection for children and youth in San Francisco. This joint effort is supported by National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network (C&NN).

The purpose of this survey is to assess children's access to nature at early care and education centers in San Francisco and to understand what support centers might need in their efforts to connect children to nature. The information collected from this survey will be used to inform strategies that help support and increase equitable access to nature at early care and education programs that serve San Francisco's youngest children. Information from this survey may also be used in the creation of photo journals that may illustrate a portrait of the perspectives and efforts in San Francisco to connect young children with nature.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this survey, you may withdraw at any time. The survey should take 10 minutes to complete. If you need support from other staff at your site to answer the questions, please enlist their help. If you need or would like to discuss any of the questions in the survey, please contact us.

Data from this survey will be analyzed by Education Outside and other members of the San Francisco CCCN collaborative. Results will be shared anonymously and no individual will be identified or linked to the results. Photos of early care and education sites' outdoor play spaces may be used as part of the photo journal project.

We appreciate your time and insight!

Thank you,
The San Francisco Cities Connecting Children & Nature Initiative

GLOSSARY

Cultural Relevancy:

The ability to effectively reach and engage communities and their youth in a manner consistent with the cultural context and values of that community

Natural World (or Nature):

Pertaining to any living and nonliving features or materials from the earth such as trees, other plants, insects, animals, rocks, wood, leaves, etc.

Outdoor Play Space:

The area at an early care and education center that is designated for outdoor play

SURVEY

Electronic Consent

1. Checking "I agree" below indicates that: • you have read the above information • you voluntarily agree to participate • you are at least 18 years of age If you do not agree, please do not fill out this survey.

Perspectives

This section is focused on the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that site directors currently have about connecting children to the natural world. The data gathered in this section will help us understand the level of understanding and support for this type of experience from site leadership. Site leadership support for thoughtful outdoor design and programming is critical for the success of this type of infrastructure and programming.

2. I believe that children's access to nature and the outdoors is important for:
 - a. childhood learning and development
 - b. childhood physical health
 - c. childhood social emotional health(Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
3. I believe that childcare providers have an important role to play in supporting access to nature. (Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
4. What are the benefits of connecting children to the natural world? (Open ended)

Practices

This section is focused on understanding the current practices related to infrastructure and programming that exist at early care and education sites with regards to connecting children to the natural world indoors, outside, or off-site. The below questions have been constructed based on best practices from the Natural Learning Initiative at NC State College of Design in Raleigh, NC and based on research done by Green Schoolyards America. The data gathered in this section will help us understand current opportunities for young children to connect to the natural world while participating in a pre-K program in San Francisco, what infrastructure exists or doesn't exist at early education sites, and how on-site outdoor play spaces (which are living and dynamic) are maintained and sustained.

5. Does your outdoor play space include any of the following features or materials? Please check all that apply:
 - a. Trees, edible fruit trees, shrubs
 - b. Outdoor seating and/or tables
 - c. Digging areas of sand or soil
 - d. Small or large movable objects (blocks, tree disks, branches, bales of straw, stumps)
 - e. Primary, pathway through play space (wide enough for wheeled toys)
 - f. Shade structure
 - g. Vegetable garden, sensory garden (with plants that have smell or are soft to touch, etc.) in pots or planters, or in-ground
 - h. Storage space/shed
 - i. Artwork/murals
 - j. Water play features (water table, hand pumps, watering cans/buckets, pond)
 - k. Mud/outdoor kitchen
 - l. Asphalt or hard surface for sports or other activities (hop scotch, etc.)
 - m. Grassy area or turf
 - n. Cozy niches for solitary play or group activity
 - o. Culturally relevant features/materials -please list in "other" below
 - p. Other
 - q. NA -We don't have an outdoor play space

6. To the best of your ability, please estimate what percent of your outdoor play space ground surface is "natural" (grass, bushes, trees, dirt, etc.). Please mark NA if you do not have an outdoor play space.
 - a. 0-25%
 - b. 25-50%
 - c. 50-75%
 - d. 75-100%
 - e. NA

7. On average, how many minutes per day do children spend outside when in your care?
(Open ended)
8. What types of programming occur in your outdoor play space? Please check all that apply:
 - a. Unstructured play
 - b. Imaginative play/symbolic play
 - c. Sensorial play/early science/exploration
 - d. Stewardship/caring for the environment and nature ("environmental education")
 - e. Science
 - f. Cognition and general knowledge
 - g. Math
 - h. Language and literacy
 - i. Art/craft
 - j. Music
 - k. Mindfulness/meditation
 - l. Movement and Motor Development (including locomotion and traveling skills, balancing and non-locomotor skills, object control skills, and fine motor skills, and strength/coordination skills)
 - m. Physical activity/fitness/rough play
 - n. Culturally relevant programming -please list in "other" below
 - o. Other
 - p. NA -We don't have an outdoor play space
9. Does your early care and education center use any of the following materials indoors?
Please check all that apply:
 - a. Indoor plants/vegetables or fruits
 - b. Seed pots
 - c. Terrariums
 - d. Aquariums
 - e. Live creatures
 - f. Natural materials (sand, wood, soil, shells, rocks)
 - g. Nature photos or artwork on walls
 - h. Books that incorporate the outdoors or other nature themes
 - i. Culturally relevant materials -please list in "other" below
 - j. Other
10. On average, how many minutes per day do children interact with natural materials inside (such as with the items listed in question 9 above) while in your care? (Open ended)
11. What is the focus of the indoor learning that uses natural materials? Please check all that apply:
 - a. Unstructured play
 - b. Imaginative play/symbolic play
 - c. Sensorial play/early science/exploration
 - d. Stewardship/caring for the environment and nature ("environmental education")

- e. Science
- f. Cognition and general knowledge
- g. Math
- h. Language and literacy
- i. Art/craft
- j. Music
- k. Mindfulness/meditation
- l. Movement and Motor Development (including locomotion and traveling skills, balancing and non-locomotor skills, object control skills, and fine motor skills, and strength/coordination skills)
- m. Physical activity/fitness/rough play
- n. Culturally relevant programming -please list in "other" below
- o. Other

12. What resources, if any, do you currently use to support your efforts to connect children to the natural world? Please name specific websites, people, organizations, etc. or mark NA if you do not use any resources at this time.

13. Please comment on the degree to which the resources you have listed in question 12 above are culturally relevant. (*Definition of Cultural Relevancy: the ability to effectively reach and engage communities and their youth in a manner consistent with the cultural context and values of that community*)

Off-Site Experiences

14. How often do the children in your program experience the natural world through:

- a. Visits to local parks?
- b. Visits to playgrounds?
- c. Field trips?
- d. Other

(Likert Scale: Never, Infrequently (a few times a year), Occasionally (a few times a semester), Frequently (a few times a month), Very frequently (weekly))

Needs

This section is focused on gathering information about what barriers exist and what support early care and education centers need in order to connect children to the natural world. Data gathered will inform our efforts to create a plan for the next phase of our work.

15. What barriers, if any, do you face in connecting children to the natural world? Please describe:

16. What types of support might you need to connect children to the natural world? Please check all that apply. If a particular type of support is of more interest than others, please specify in the "comments/other" box below.
- a. Technical support for site enhancements (design ideas, infrastructure/building support)
 - b. Equipment (gardening tools, wheelbarrows)
 - c. Storage space for equipment/materials
 - d. Instructional materials (binoculars, magnifying glasses)
 - e. Professional development for staff/teachers
 - f. Curriculum or programming support
 - g. Increased access to natural elements in the surrounding neighborhood
 - h. Ideas for connecting children to the natural world locally
 - i. Removal of barriers to taking field trips (transportation, supervision, etc.)
 - j. Specialized staffing (outdoor educator)
 - k. Increased community engagement (to help with workdays and other maintenance)
 - l. Culturally relevant resources for connecting children to nature
 - m. Funding
 - n. Other
 - o. NA
17. We are interested in professional development related to: Please check all that apply. If a particular professional development topic is of more interest than others, please specify in the "comments/other" box below.
- a. Outdoor classroom management
 - b. Outdoor early education curriculum that connects children to nature
 - c. Connecting children to nature in culturally relevant ways
 - d. Connecting to education standards/assessments outdoors
 - e. How to encourage and engage in nature play
 - f. Indoor early education curriculum that connects children to nature
 - g. Gardening/Growing food
 - h. Content related to nature, biology, ecology, etc. (creature and plant identification, How does the water cycle work?, etc.)
 - i. Other
 - j. NA

Photos

Help us get a sense of your outdoor play space(s); please upload 4 photos **without children's faces in them**. We suggest taking a photo from each of the corners of your space to provide multiple perspectives. If you do not have access to a camera or a way to provide these to us, please skip this section.

18. Photo 1

19. Photo 2
20. Photo 3
21. Photo 4

Site Information

1. Name/Address/Email/Phone
2. How many children do you serve a year?
3. What age children do you serve?
4. What percentage of the students you serve fall into the following categories? (Whole Day, Half Day, Less than Half Day)
5. What is the free and reduced lunch percentage or socioeconomic status (on average) of the students you serve?
6. What percentage of students receive financial aid (if applicable)?
7. What percent of the children in your program are: African American, White/European, Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/Hispanic, Two or more Races
8. How many years have you had a green schoolyard program, if any?
9. To the best of your ability, what is the approx. square footage of your outdoor play space?
10. How many years have you been director or principal at this early care and education center?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us about your early care and education center or about taking this survey? Please provide any comments below.

Thank you for your time!