




First 5 Inyo County
 a division of
 Health & Human Services
 568 W. Line Street
 Bishop, CA 93514
 760-873-6453—office
 jveenker@inyocounty.us

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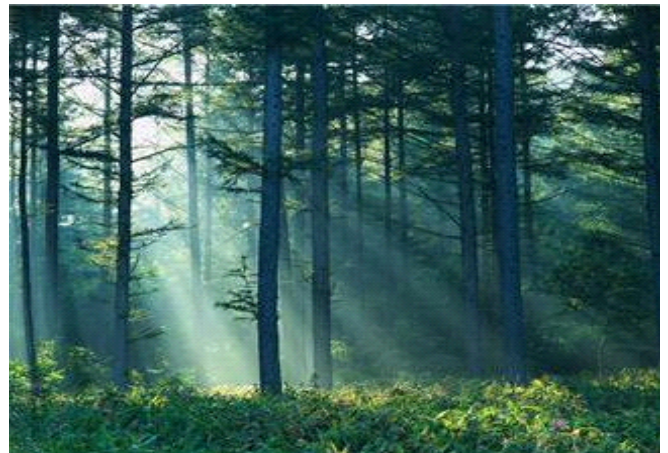
Outdoor Education: Children Learn More in Woods than Classroom?

“Nature teaches more than she preaches. There are no sermons in stones. It is easier to get a spark out of a stone than a moral.” -John Burroughs

All adults who have settled into a quiet moment in the mountains, enjoying a view and the instructive beat of their blood through their veins, can say with Wordsworth, “Come forth into the light of things and let nature be your teacher.”

But few parents have ever arisen from that contemplative moment and said, “That was great, so I’m going to send my preschooler out into the woods to learn straight from nature everyday!”

But there is a strong European tradition of doing just that – Walderkindergartens in Germany, Skogsmulles in Sweden, and Forest Schools in Scotland all are making a huge come back from the times they were originally founded in the early to mid 1900s.



Lots of urban institutions are beginning to value the types of lessons that a natural setting promotes, ranging from greater agility, manual dexterity, coordination, & depth perception, to significant improvement in reading, writing, and math scores when compared to indoor preschool student scores upon elementary school entry in Germany and Denmark. Also many children who are schooled outdoors show increased immune system strength, and skill specific knowledge about safety and the outdoors. (Walderkinders require high adult to child ratios to make activities like climbing trees, wading in ponds, gathering and counting pinecones, and cooking over open fires safe enough for daily engagement.)



EVERYBODY SWIMS

Free lessons for children 5 and under sponsored by First 5 Inyo commence Tuesday, May 17th, so contact Bishop Parks & Rec. to sign up for Tiny Tot or Beginning Swim right away! Forms available at City Hall or call 873-5863.

Urban Forest Schools in London have been created specifically to introduce inner city preschoolers to the “mystery, freedom, and curiosity” that come along with playing and exploring in the woods. Measures from the 4 inner city forest schools closest London from the past 5 years indicate that boys especially are learning more academically in an outdoor setting, while girls are testing higher in self-regulation and discipline than their indoor counterparts.

Cedarsong Nature School on Vashon Island in Seattle is one the West coast’s most in-demand early childhood learning centers. Besides their traditional preschool woodland program where children make their own toys from natural items, Cedarsong sponsors nature camps where therapies and programs for children with autism and ADHD are integrated with mainline outdoor preschool lessons. By immersing children in a new world of binoculars & bug boxes, and helping them confront the tactile variety of tree bark to fluorescent moss, instructors are finding many special needs children are highly stimulated by their new sensory perceptions, and freed to express themselves in ways that are discouraged indoors – like running while making loud noises, or banging sticks on logs to create a percussion back beat.

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GREAT GAME!

Objective:

STEAL THE SHAPE

This creative take on Steal the Bacon will make it fun for groups of children to recognize shapes. Divide children evenly into teams and select as many shapes as members on a team (2 teams of 3 kids each, select 3 shapes.) Assign one child from each team a shape and then put those shapes in the middle of the yard or room. Call out a shape, and the members of each opposite team will race to be the first to "steal" the shape out of the center. After a few rounds the team with the most shapes wins. Then play again!

Quick Picks

*Easy to Prepare Meals
That Are Good For You!*

**This month's selections,
available at our website,
www.inyocounty.us/first5 are:**

Tortellini Chicken Soup



Pulled Pork Sandwiches

Corn Quesadillas

*Green Beans with Almond
Slivers & Bacon*



(CONTINUED FROM COVER)

While there currently is not a outdoor preschool for children in Inyo, parents should be encouraged that the wilderness is literally at many of our doorsteps.

"I recommend that families enjoy all the outdoor activities this area has to offer," say Pediatrician Charlotte Helvie, who is working on a family field guide to engage kids with local natural attractions. "One of the greatest advantages children growing up in Inyo have is the exposure to the desert, mountains, and rivers that are only a quick walk away."

"It is important to teach children in ways that engage their curiosity," says early childhood specialist and therapist Karen Byrd. "One of the reasons many experts believe outdoor preschools are turning out higher scores is because of the infinite variety of things there are to do and observe in nature. You aren't carefully controlling the stimuli kids are exposed to, but instead are letting host of sensory experiences lambaste them at once and it seems to be turning out there is something for everybody when you turn up the dial."

Byrd urges parents to spend time on outdoor activities even if their children are engaged in more traditional preschool. "We don't stop learning just because we aren't sitting at a desk with a pencil — what we actually are trying to instill in kids is a desire to be a lifelong learners excited about what they observe in other people, nature, work, home, on the weekend...everything"

She says getting started can be as simple as a half-day project like gathering pine cones, and showing children how to harvest and roast the pine nuts, or a five-minute break where you take a "tactile walk" through a field and gather items with different textures to touch and feel and talk about once you get back home.

So get take your little one outside, and see what kind of sparks a little time in the wild will light in your child's eyes and imagination!



Upcoming Family Events

FIRST 5 INYO GRAND OLE PLAYDAYS!

All grandparents & caregivers with children 3 or younger are welcome to join us at Millpond, Fridays - April 8, 15, 22, & 29 from 10 to 11 AM

FIRST 5 INYO NEW & EXPECTANT PARENT CLASS

\$100 Vons gift card for parents who complete all 4 sessions of this class is offered, so call Jody at 873-6453 to register for May Sessions.

EGG HUNT FOR BOOKS & OTHER PRIZES—Sunday April 17th

Bishop City Park will host eggs hunts for children 0 to 10 starting at 1 PM! Early childhood play area and lots of free prizes from local businesses!

FUEL FOR FUN JAMBOREE—Saturday May 7th

From 10 AM to 2 PM at the Fairgrounds between the Choo Choo Swap Meet and the Home Show, this free carnival offers dental screenings for kids, games, books, music, stories, and more! Bring your used childrens books in exchange for free tickets to play games!

IS YOUR 2 to 5 YR OLD READY FOR PRE-K?

ICSOS is offering Bishop & Lone Pine classes May through June so kids who haven't attended preschool can get ready for the social and school routine.

Call 873-5123 to register for 6-week classes that start May 24 & 25!

