

The Children and Nature Movement: Ways You Can Get Involved

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1. Provide opportunities for children to engage the natural world in meaningful ways.
2. Encourage campers to be good stewards of the environment. Stress the importance of not taking resources for grant. Teach Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and environmental ethics. Foster environmentally friendly behaviors (not littering, the 3 R's--reduce, reuse, recycle; etc.)
3. Join NatureRocks- a national campaign created to inspire and empower parents to take their families to play, explore and enjoy quality time in nature for happier, healthier and smarter children.
www.naturerocks.org
4. Take the ACA "Green Spoken Here!" pledge. Incorporate this pledge into your camp operations/programming. Challenge campers and staff to incorporate the pledge at home.
www.acacamps.org/members/nature/green_spoken_here.php
5. Talk to parents and families about how they can get access to camp property and facilities for out-of-session nature experiences (bird walks, snow-shoe track hikes, picnics, day-hikes, etc.).
6. *BE INTENTIONAL, since intentional programming is more likely to lead to positive youth outcomes.* Evaluate your mission and overall goals. Do you emphasize learning, feeling, or both? How many nature-related classes do you have? What are you teaching in those classes? Are staff trained to make nature experiences come alive? (show a picture of a stream-bed vs. standing in a stream bed)
7. Join the National "No Child Left Inside" Coalition. www.cbf.org/Page.aspx?pid=687
8. Follow what's happening with the No Child Left Inside legislation (amendment to No Child Left Behind). Urge your Congressional representatives to support the legislation.
9. Teach your staff to take advantage of "teachable moments" with children. Explore and focus on natural elements (rabbit, bug, tree, plant). Look at the stars, the clouds. Facilitate in children a sense of wonder and awe. Incorporate nature-based stories, art projects, and appropriate collecting. Provide opportunities for reflection in nature (journaling, processing). Take camp classes outdoors as much as possible.
10. Make nature a setting for camp rituals, awards ceremonies, and recognition activities. Such approaches associated nature with positive experiences.
11. Make nature about "here" rather than "there." Focus on local natural areas. Remember that nature can be a garden, park, greenway, or backyard.
12. Partner with parents!!! Teach parents how they can support back-yard/at-home efforts. Teach campers how they can get involved in nature-based activities when they get home (plant a garden, create a composting area, identify all of the trees in their yard, draw pictures of things in nature that live around their house/community).

The Children and Nature Movement: Leaders, Initiatives, Resources, and Legislation

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Resources

- **American Camp Association (ACA) Nature Education Resources-** www.acacamps.org/nature/
- **Children and Nature Network (C&NN)-** created to encourage and support the people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. C&NN is a national leader in the children-nature movement and many resources can be found on their web site. www.childrenandnature.org/
- **Camping Magazine articles related to Children and Nature-** a variety of articles in this ACA publication provide ideas for incorporating nature into your programs and operations. www.acacamps.org/members/nature/aca_resources.php
- **Research reports** on the importance of nature for children (C&NN) [Vol 1- www.childrenandnature.org/research/volumes/C16/16; Vol 2- www.childrenandnature.org/research/volumes/C42/42; Vol 3- www.childrenandnature.org/research/volumes/C55/55]
- **Green Spoken Here-** ACA program through which camps pledge to be active in environmental protection, serving as a model for children who make the same pledge with their families after camp. www.acacamps.org/members/nature/green_spoken_here.php.
- **iCARE-** YMCA curriculum that provides nature-based activities structured around environmental awareness, appreciation, and action.
- **Affinity for Nature Scale-** ACA tool for measuring whether or not camp (or other program) experiences helped youth develop a greater emotional attraction to nature. www.acacamps.org/members/outcomes/index.php
- **Nature Circle Cards-** A "take it with you resource"—developed by Hooked on Nature—that makes it easy for anyone, anywhere to create a circle experience for friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. www.hookedonnature.org/toolsforchange.html
- **Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights** www.calroundtable.org/files/COBR_Edit.pdf Other states/organizations can adopt their own version of this popular document.
- **Research on Camp Directors’ attitudes and specific practices of camps** in the areas of nature-based missions and program. www.acacamps.org/research/understand/nature.php

Initiatives

- **Camp2Grow-** a national environmental leadership and stewardship program developed by ACA through funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The program teaches middle and high-school aged youth fundamental leadership knowledge and skills in a nature-based setting and challenges them to complete environmental stewardship projects in their homes and communities. www.acacamps.org/camp2grow/
- **NatureRocks-** a national campaign created to inspire and empower parents to take their families to play, explore and enjoy quality time in nature for happier, healthier and smarter children. The Nature Rocks website has more than 100 activity recommendations, as well as a user-friendly nature finder and social networking tools. www.naturerocks.org
- **Children and Nature Awareness Month** (April) www.childrenandnature.org/newsletter/news0420.html
- **Nature Clubs for Families-** The Children and Nature Network’s focus on family-based experiences in nature. Tips, inspiration, and resources are available. www.childrenandnature.org/natureclubs
- **National Forum on Children and Nature** (launched by The Conservation Fund)- Dedicated to connecting kids with nature and improving children’s health and overall well-being. In 2008, the Forum endorsed 30 national demonstration projects that creatively reconnect kids with nature. www.conservationfund.org/node/865

Legislation

- **ACA’s Public Policy statement in support of re-connecting children and nature-** indicates ACA’s commitment and leadership in this effort. www.acacamps.org/publicpolicy/documents/ChildrenandNature08Approved.pdf
- **“No Child Left Inside” Act-** This legislation proposes four amendments to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to address an increasing environmental literacy gap. www.cbf.org/Page.aspx?pid=948