



Outdoor Learning at the Library: It's Only Natural

Presented by Trina Evans
Assistant Branch Manager

How the idea came about



You can see from their faces that learning happens inside and out, BUT
a study showed outdoor education improves kids' grades in **72%**
of assessments from math and science to attendance
compared to indoor learning.

Source: bachelorsdegreeonline.com



KOKOMO-HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Why NEOC?



We wanted the classroom design and activities based on research.

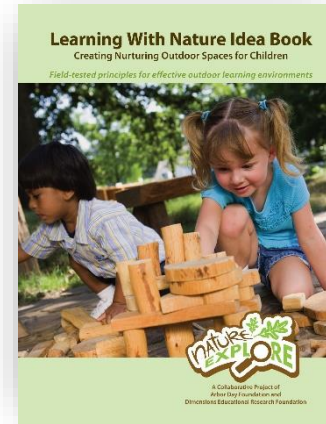
- ☑ All Nature Explore programs and resources are based on research and field-testing NEOC by Dimensions Foundation.

Dimensions Foundation explores how children (ages 3-6) develop visual-spatial skills, and how early childhood educators could best support that development.

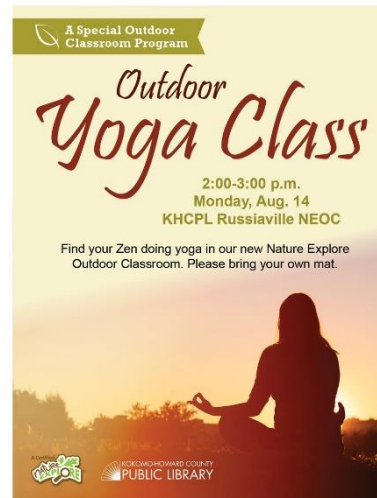
ONE KEY FINDING: Spending time outdoors (including in unstructured, self-directed play) benefits children intellectually, physically, socially, and interpersonally, because nature provides a powerful context for learning.

NEOC Certification Requirements

- 1) Well-designed outdoor space — Provide evidence that principles from the *Learning with Nature Idea Book* were used in the design.
- 2) Staff development — Provide evidence that staff attended a full-length Nature Explore Workshop
- 3) Family involvement — Provide evidence that activities or materials designed to increase family awareness and involvement in nature education for young children are provided regularly.



TIP: Make time to plan well, consider insurance, zoning, neighbors, funding, future expansion, etc.



Fill a need for your patrons and community

TIP: For board buy-in,
make sure it dovetails with
your long-range plan. Do
the same for community
buy-in.



Community response



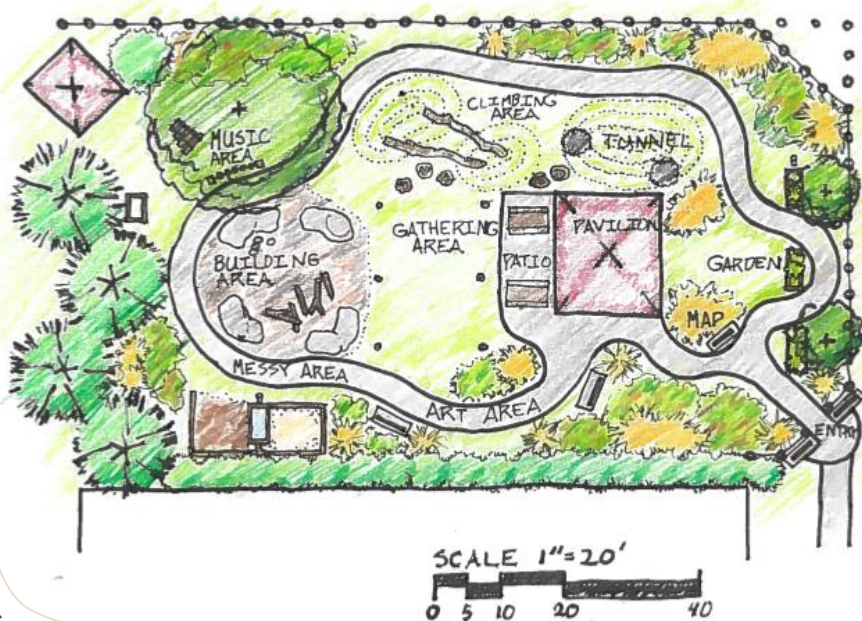
“We love it!”
“It adds value to the library!”
“I can’t believe a library has this!”

TIP: Seek out and document patron feedback for marketing and for future fundraising for upkeep or expansion

We have a parent who regularly drives 9 miles to it, passing parks and other venues along the way, because she and her daughter love it so much.



What was the process?



Children spend more time watching TV and playing video games than being active outside, which has negative developmental effects.

Source: *The Last Child in the Woods*
by Richard Louv

TIP: Create a presentation of what you want to do and why

Community partnerships are essential

TIP: Set out donation jars around town, especially near the designated location



Howard County Master Gardeners

Community partnerships are essential

TIP: Network!

Unexpected bonus:
Howard County Master Gardeners and Lowe's now have a partnership that the two hadn't been able to work out until they met while working on NEOC.



Lowe's Heroes and Howard County Master Gardeners

Community partnerships are essential



Dr. Doug Eglen asked if he could create an analemmatic sundial

TIP: Be open to additional ideas as community takes ownership

Community partnerships are essential

TIP: You can get a lot more done if you schedule work days and provide pizza!



GM Cares and staff volunteers

Community partnerships are essential

TIP: Don't be afraid to ask!

Background story:

We'd asked and received a yes – and then two tornadoes touched down. We sat back and waited to remind them for the check.

Howard County Commissioners gave \$10,000

Community partnerships are essential

TIP: Go for the grants. You just might get them!

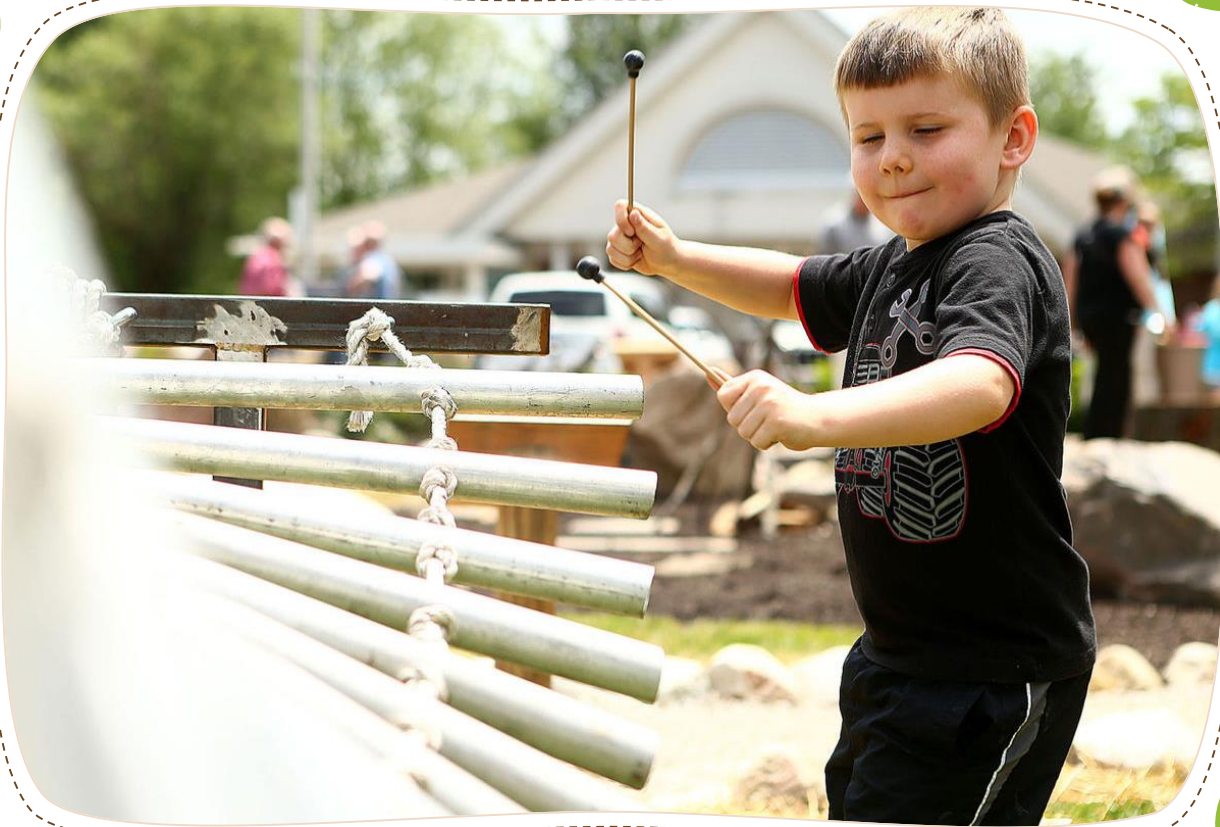


Duke Energy's grant provided almost \$10,000



BEWARE:
Stumbling blocks
- **but** –
don't let 'em
stop you.
It's worth it.

TIP: Garage sales are great
places to find outdoor
supplies



BEWARE:
Stumbling blocks
- **but** –
don't let 'em
stop you.
It's worth it.

TIP: Ask staff to donate
items, such as sand pails

Photo © Kokomo Tribune



BEWARE:
Stumbling blocks
- **but** –
don't let 'em
stop you.
It's worth it.

TIP: Remember to get
photos of it in use

Photo © Kokomo Tribune



BEWARE:
Stumbling blocks
- **but** –
don't let 'em
stop you.
It's worth it.

TIP: Keep it open even
when you're closed



Celebrate the end result!

TIP: Send out invites to board, staff, media, donors, and volunteers and have an official ribbon-cutting



Celebrate the end result!

TIP: Give tours



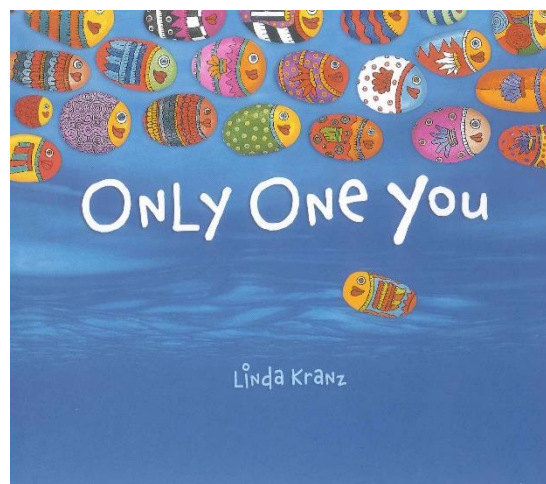
Celebrate the end result!

TIP: Use items, such as wood cookies and sand pails, to serve snacks and then reuse them for the classroom



Celebrate the end result!

TIP: Honor special givers and send copies of media coverage to them to show the difference they've made



Update it!

TIP: Add to it. Change out items seasonally. Keep 'em coming back.

Background story:

We had patrons decorate rocks (part of the Kindness Rock craze) during the Summer Reading Program to create the rock river at NEOC.



Programs

TIP: Participate in local garden walks and festivals to showcase your classroom



Programs



TIP: Remember
programs for adults.
They love it, too!



KOKOMO-HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY



Programs

TIP: Use it
year 'round



Programs



TIP: To increase traffic and circ, have items for checkout for passive programs



Programs Go live!

TIP: Host performances
and concerts

Ron Bowers

Top 5 stories of 2017: Education

By Caele Pemberton Kokomo Tribune Dec 28, 2017



From left: Jack Hyman, 5, Basil Fowle, 6, and Oliver Redding, 4, play in the sand during the grand opening of the Nature Explore Classroom at the Russiaville branch of the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library on Tuesday, May 23, 2017. Kelly Lafferty Gerber | Kokomo Tribune
Kelly Lafferty Gerber

Library programming brings opportunities for children

The Kokomo-Howard County Public Library made headlines multiple times this year by bringing unique educational programming to Howard County.

Recognition

Resources

KHCPL.org

dimensionsfoundation.org



natureexplore.org



Outdoor Learning at the Library: It's Only Natural

Presented by Trina Evans
Assistant Branch Manager

