



# Planting Seeds in Early Childhood

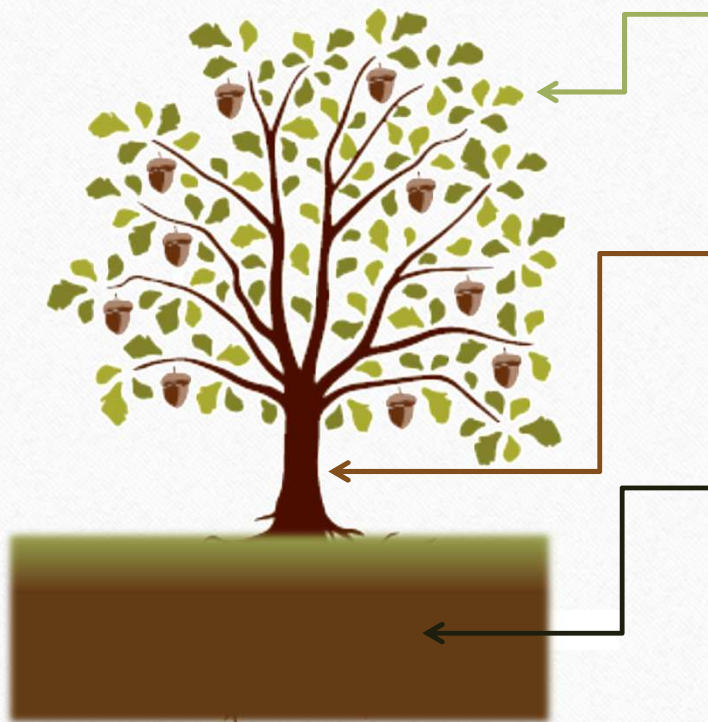
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PROMOTING NATURE EXPLORATION IN  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION





# MBG CENTER FOR NATURE-INSPIRED LEARNING

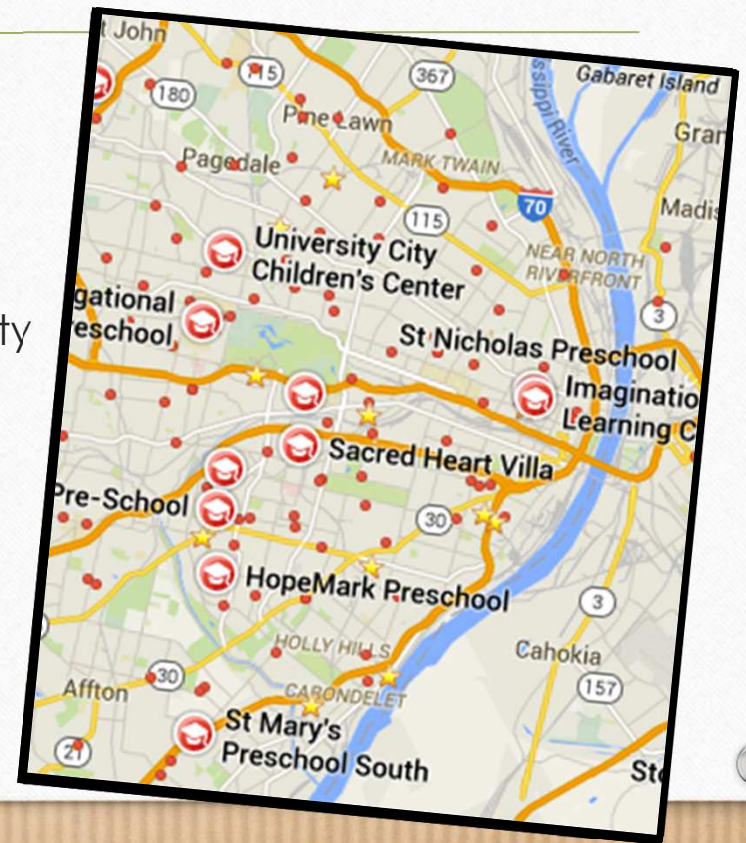


- Students
  - Onsite programs
  - Outreach programs
  - Grant-funded initiatives
- Teachers and Schools
  - Outreach professional development
  - Summer workshops
  - Pick-Your-Own-PD program
- School Communities
  - Family Science Nights
  - "Dig In" Planting Events
  - Garden Club connections



# Early Childhood in St. Louis City

- Head Starts (Federally funded)
  - Grace Hill (4 centers, ~550 students)
  - Urban League (4 centers, ~500 students)
  - Youth in Need (9 centers, ~450 students)
  - YWCA (28 centers, ~2600 students across city and county)
- Public preschools (State funded)
  - Saint Louis Public Schools (44 sites, ~5,000 students)
- Private EC/Child Development Centers
  - Parochial preschools
  - Private Schools





# Field Trips for Early Childhood?



**A Trip to the Zoo: Children's Words and Photographs**  
Darlene DeMarie  
University of South Florida,  
Early Childhood Research and Practice  
2001 v3,n1

## 9-12 yrs

- MIP - Peers
- 86% of photos depicted animals.
- Reported information that included conservation messages about the animals.

## 6-8 yrs

- MIP- A leader
- 85% of photos depicted animals. Most animals had unusual features.
- Reported information about the animals.

## 3-5 yrs

- MIP- Teacher
- **56% of photos depicted animals, but fewer were exotic. Motion and activity was prevalent. Many showed feet, the ground, and familiar animals.**
- **Reported the rules and identified subject.**



# MBG By-request ECE Programs

## Outreach Programs

- Honeybees Abuzz
  - Introduction to honeybees
  - Early ecology
- Garden Sensory Adventure
  - Five senses
  - Early ethnobotany



## Curiosity Collectors

- Gardenland Express Holiday Show







PNC

Grow Up Great®



SAINT LOUIS  
ART MUSEUM



MISSOURI  
BOTANICAL  
GARDEN



SAINT LOUIS  
science center

STL SYMPHONY  
LIVE AT POWELL HALL



GRACE HILL

- 5-year support program for Grace Hill Settlement House Head Start Centers
- Partnership effort joining three other local cultural institutions and Maryville University.
- 2009-2014, later extended through 2016





# SPROUTING SCIENCE IN STL

Digging Deep with Urban Youth

Science



- 2-year partnership with Saint Louis Public Schools to provide outdoor education support to the preschool classes at four SLPS sites:
  - Hodgen Elementary
  - Dunbar Elementary
  - Adams Elementary
  - **Wilkinson Early Childhood Center\***
- Core Elements:
  - **Outreach programs for students** led by MBG instructors.
  - **Field Trip scholarships** for those classes who wished/could come.
  - **Professional development day** at the Garden for 300 ECE teachers.
  - **Dig-In Tree Planting events** at each center (250 trees across 5 sites).
  - **Planting activities** provided for school-based family events.
  - **Garden-based family night** in May (2,200 RSVPs)





Urban League of  
**Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc.**

*Empowering Communities.  
Changing Lives.*

- Institution-prompted partnership around outdoor and botanical education.
- Core Elements:
  - **Nine classrooms** identified (by ULHS) across four sites for instructional support.
  - **Four outreaches** per classroom during the spring semester.
  - **Four professional development** sessions for all ULHS teachers throughout the spring semester.





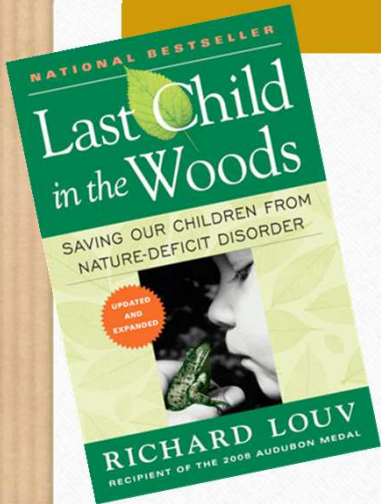
# Outdoor Education Priorities for ECE

Exposure

**Familiarity**

Inquiry

Enjoyment



## Challenges

- Buy-in from parents, teachers and administrators
- Safety concerns in the city
- Bureaucratic roadblocks
- Fear of nature



honeybee



yellow jacket



# Student Outdoor Ed. Strategies

- Create opportunities for free exploration
- Respect students' self-centered mindset
  - Sit-Upons
  - Rope circles or hula hoops
  - Display space for collected finds.
- Introduce and encourage 'exploring' behaviors.
- Bring nature indoors





# Programming Considerations for EC Informal Education

- Time is limited.
- Standards for early childhood are behavior-based rather than content-based.
- Reinforce familiarity.
  - **Emphasis on educating and supporting teachers, institutions and families.**
  - Prioritize familiar settings, plants and animals.
  - Put nature in their hands whenever possible.





# Working with ECE Teachers

**2014 Early Childhood Nature Summit**  
Community Summit for the Greater St. Louis Region

**PLANTING the future**  
create. connect. grow.

**June 30–July 2**

**Missouri Botanical Garden**  
Monsanto Center  
4500 Shaw Blvd., St. Louis

**WHO:** Early childhood educators, preschool center directors and staff, district leaders, parents, and community partners. Teams of two to five individuals per school, center, or district are encouraged.

**WHY:** To convene early childhood educators, district leaders, parents, and other community partners around the topic of ensuring positive, frequent experiences with nature and the great outdoors during the early learning years. Also, to facilitate dialogue, encourage breakthrough thinking, celebrate shared vision for new opportunities, and spark change.

**WHAT:** A three-day summit where everyone will be able to share successes and struggles, take in case studies from local early childhood educators, connect evidence-based research to practice, enjoy short-form films that focus on the role of nature in early childhood, experience a day out at Shaw Nature Reserve together, and think big about nature-inspired ways our shared community can help our youngest citizens sprout, grow, and thrive.

**Learn more and register at**  
[www.mobot.org/schoolprograms](http://www.mobot.org/schoolprograms)  
You can also call Jennifer Hartley at (314) 577-0819 or email [teachertraining@mobot.org](mailto:teachertraining@mobot.org)

**DON'T MISS IT!**  
Registration Deadline  
**June 26, 2014**





# Partnering with School Communities







# Thank You!

**Missouri Botanical Garden Education  
School Programs**

314-577-5185

[www.mobot.org/schoolprograms](http://www.mobot.org/schoolprograms)

