



THE SOUTH SHORE NATURAL SCIENCE CENTER



Nature Center Preschool News

April is a special time for Nature Center Preschool. All the signs of spring emerge at once and we can dream of the garden that each classroom will create in the raised beds of our children's garden. Spending additional time in outdoor nature exploration creates unique learning opportunities. Critical thinking and problem solving have a real world context as children discover the local environment through the Science Center grounds. Searching for micro habitats under logs, watching the vernal pools come alive, and wondering how the trees know it's time to grow their leaves are just some of the ways children experience the joy of learning and discovery.

Don't forget to bring a backpack with a full change of seasonal clothing each day. We go outside in many kinds of weather including rain! Please remember raincoats and boots (and extra socks)!

Swim

The swim playgroups continue throughout the school year. Please remember to take advantage of this great opportunity!

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April 2019

Earth Day is April 22nd! For NCP it will be 'slash the trash' week as we talk about ways we can reduce the amount of trash we create on a daily basis. On Monday April 22nd, and Tuesday April 23rd we will collect the trash generated by NCP and compare it to the trash collected at the end of the week and see if we can reduce our trash by bringing awareness of our impact.

Did you know?



A SOUTH SHORE
YMCA Organization
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Family Advisory Council News!

Upcoming events:

April

23rd : Family Advisory Council Meeting 6:30-7:30pm

24th : Homeschool workshop 6:30-8pm

27th: Calle's Run, Norwell High School (meet at SSNSC)

MAY

1st : NCP Art Show Opening Reception 5:30pm

8th/9th : Savers Fundraiser



Nature Notes

Mourning Cloak Butterfly

I saw my first mourning Cloak butterfly a few years ago in March on some snow and I wondered how a butterfly could have emerged so soon and how it could be healthy in such cold conditions. Then I found out the special story of this butterfly that made it possible—the adults overwinter! Overwintered adults mate in the spring, the males perching in sunny openings during the afternoon to wait for receptive females. Eggs are laid in groups circling twigs of the host plant. Caterpillars live in a communal web and feed together on young leaves, then pupate and emerge as adults in June or July. After feeding briefly, the adults estivate until fall, when they re-emerge to feed and store energy for hibernation. Some adults migrate south in the fall.



<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/species/Nymphalis-antiopa>

April Areas of Interdisciplinary Learning!

- **Social/Emotional:** Being safe, managing emotions, taking turns speaking, collaborative play
- **Creative Expression:** *Music:* practicing for the end of year performance; *Drama:* acting out literature; *Art:* easel painting; *Creative play:* farm/stable; firefighters
- **Physical (Gross and Fine motor):** Exploring nature trails, balance and coordination; pincer grasp control (seed planting); building grasp strength through use of garden tools
- **Cognitive:** environmental exploration and curiosity, noticing environmental changes, predicting outcomes
- **Language, Early Literacy, Math:** *Sheep in a Jeep* by Nancy Shaw, *This is Your Garden* by Maggie Smith and *A Seed Grows* by Pamela Hickman counting, measuring

South Shore Natural Science Center Happenings

Tickets/registration required:

April 15th Southwick Zoo Shows 11a/1p

Drop-in:

April 20th : Spring Discovery Day 11a-2p

Save the Date!

Wildflower plant sale—May 11th

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The Nature Center Preschool Approach



Last year we created a series that discussed the Nature Center Preschool approach to teaching and learning. We explored what inquiry-based emergent teaching and learning looks like in the various age groupings, and how teachers differentiate based on the needs of the children. Each group of children at NCP has different interests and different developmental characteristics. The 2-day morning preschool programs (Crickets and Chickadees) are generally children's first experience in a group setting away from their families. They are learning the basics of what it means to be at school, follow routines, and balance their needs along with the needs of others in the room. The 3 day morning PreK programs (Foxes and Tree Frogs) are usually returning from being in the 2 day program the year before. They have great confidence in their capabilities at school, have an understanding of the expectations, and are continuing to practice and develop skills that they started the previous year. The mixed-age afternoon programs (Mice and Squirrels) have about half the children in the preschool stage and half in the PreK stage of development. Though teachers in all NCP classes promote children helping their classmates, the PM program is more explicit in its expectation that older children assist their younger peers with certain developmental tasks such as zipping a jacket or putting on boots, as well as modeling social/emotional skills. Now that you know the diverse composition of each class group, let's take a look at how the NCP approach to teaching and learning is implemented across the Preschool.

Having children in charge of the conversation is an important part of the process of an inquiry-based model of facilitating a circle dialogue. This means letting the children self-regulate the discussion. Since the idea is to get them talking to each other—and not just the teacher—they don't have to raise their hand, but rather, can speak directly to each other without the teacher as conductor. When one child is speaking others

listen—when that child finishes others can share their idea—the way discourse occurs naturally. As you can imagine, this does not always look like a smooth conversation and to the untrained eye, can appear to be a bit messy. This is an important part of the process! Out of this messiness emerge beautiful moments of clarity, epiphany, and students learning from each other in ways that would not be as effective or meaningful if delivered solely by the teacher. It takes great skill and patience to allow children this kind of autonomy. Children often give clues to each other that develop their thinking—they use prior knowledge to construct new meanings and understandings. In the Tree Frog and Fox classes, children are able to utilize their additional year of knowledge-building to inform their thinking, the Squirrels and Mice have an exuberant mix of budding awareness and developing expertise, and the Crickets and Chickadees need to be given time to practice critical thinking individually, during teachable moments, while they develop a strong foundation of social norms in the classroom. Essential to all of this, is the development of curricula that support the conversations that children are having. This is one of the emergent pieces and it makes teacher planning a constantly developing process. One example from last year was the Tree Frog's exploration of Trees. Teachers had planned activities to support this learning, provided resources to explore and read, and connected the naturalist visit about Maple trees to the learning experience. Then the conversation shifted to seeds—and not just a side conversation—but a full blown interest in the various roles of seeds. Teachers then respond with a different set of activities and exploration opportunities, and on it goes...More on inquiry based teaching and learning [here](#) and more on emergent curriculum [here](#).



This is a paraphrased from an article in the monthly news one year ago.