## **Explore and Discover: Nature-Based Spaces and Activities at your Library**

**Learner Guide**

**Event Description:** When children have regular contact with nature, they learn and grow better. Children who play, build, climb, grow, splash and read are developing their observation, visual-spatial, social, and literacy skills. [Nature Explorium](http://www.natureexplorium.org/), a nature-based program at Middle Country Public Library (NY), encourages children to explore, discover and connect with nature. Learn about best practices and resources that you can use at your library to create outdoor spaces, along with indoor and outdoor nature activities. It's a unique way to connect literacy, learning and appreciation for nature as a regular part of the library visit.

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| **What are your goals for viewing this webinar?** | |
| **Personal Goals** |  |
| **Team Goals** |  |
| **Activity** | | |
| Explore the [Growing Nature Literacy in Libraries Resource Book](http://www.natureexplorium.org/pdfs/Growing%20Nature%20Literacy%20in%20Libraries%20Resource%20Book.pdf) (pdf) and review bibliographies and program ideas to identify a few topic areas you’d like to start with for future nature-based programs. | | |
| **Flipping Programming** | | |
| Make lists of programs you already offer indoors that you may be able to move *outdoors* or those that would allow you to bring the outdoors *inside*.  **Indoors > Outdoors:**  1.  2.  3.  **Outdoors > Indoors:**  1.  2.  3. | | |
| **Questions to consider on developing an outdoor education space:** | | |
| Do your patrons and staff value their time outdoors? Conducting library programs outdoors and assessing the response of staff and patrons can help you to answer this question.  Are you familiar with the community organizations around you that support outdoor education? Consider the creation of an advisory committee or design team with local experts in education and the environmental field.  Do you have an outdoor space in mind? What do you and your team envision for this place? Invest in a concept design to help create a timeline of construction and further your possible fundraising efforts.  Think about going to visit outdoor classrooms or educational gardens. What do these places find to be the most successful and least successful in their environments?  What policies does your library have in place that you need to consider when developing policies for the outdoors? Do you want visitors always wearing shoes? Do you allow eating outdoors in your education space?  What funding or fundraising strategies may you use to build this space and maintain it each year? | | |
| **Keep these additional things in mind:** | | |
| Overcome your own fears – hold a bug or worm!  Let children explore freely and get dirty.  Engage and prepare parents and caregivers.  Embrace the weather!  Get involved!  Bring the outside in! | | |
| **Action Plan:** (include next steps, who, when, etc.) | | | |
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