

Nature Based Education Institute

May 19, 2018

Sponsored by University of Maine at Farmington

[Back to Conference Homepage](#)

Session Title: Nature Inspired for the Public School: Journeys to the Woods

Session F 12:30 - 1:45

Location: The Landing

Presenters

- Cara Furman (cara.furman@maine.edu)
- Catherine Hickey

Who will benefit most from this session?

- Primary grade educators (Pk-Grade 3)

Who else may benefit?

- Early educators (B-5 age students)
- Early education directors/administrators
- Upper elementary educators (Grade 4-6)
- Any age/grade Educator

Session Description: The goal of the session is to highlight how carefully planned time in a natural environment can innovate the learning in a traditional school setting. The work is based off of a curriculum initially developed in an urban public elementary school that was then adapted for pre-service college students. Presenters are the professor who developed this curriculum with children as well as a pre-service college student who took the course. Participants will go on a journey with us to Abbot Park (or some similar space as appropriate). We will begin our trip by attending to the sounds. We will then lead participants on a scavenger hunt. Participants will then zoom in on one of the scavenger hunts found (determined by the group) to study the particular item. Participants will then write their own fictional or realistic stories of the event. We will conclude with some resources for children and adults that we have found particularly helpful in this work.

The session will show how educators who work in more traditional settings can build in regular nature exploration that enhance learning. The presenters will highlight how these experiences in nature were not only valuable and enriching on their own but greatly enhanced more traditional areas of academic development. Though the connections cut across disciplines, we will focus specifically on literacy and science – our respective specialties.

How will participants engage in nature during your session? The majority of our will be conducted outdoors in a wooded area. Participants will do activities that hone in on sound, sight, and touch to become more deeply aware of the environment. Participants will then spend some time writing their own creative work outside. The only part of our session that we envision being indoors is a brief overview of how this curriculum was used first with elementary students and then pre-service college students.

Presenter Biographies

- Cara Furman is a professor of early childhood education and a former elementary school teacher. Her research focuses on inquiry, asset based inclusive practices, and the support of both teachers and children. She integrates qualitative research on classroom practice, teacher research, and philosophy in both her teaching and research. While new to the official study of nature based education, she found the work deeply

resonant with her own teaching in an urban public school. This background informs her commitment to bring nature based education to places where it is more rarely considered.

- Catherine Hickey is a student at the University of Maine at Farmington. She is majoring in early childhood special education with certifications in birth to five years as well as grades kindergarten through third. Catherine has experience working in toddler and preschool classrooms and hopes to become a first and second-grade teacher within a public school district. She considers herself a nature-based educator inspired by Reggio Emilia and strives to create meaningful experiences for young children.