

# Nature Based Education Institute

May 19, 2018

Sponsored by University of Maine at Farmington

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**Session Title:** Educating Families About the Benefits of Risk-Taking in Nature-Based Play

**Session H** 12:30 - 1:45

**Location:** North Dining Hall B

## Presenter

- Julie Farmer (julie.farmer@maine.edu)
- Emily Nutt (emily.nutt@maine.edu)
- Kathy Marshall (kathleen.marshall1@maine.edu)
- Valerie Pinkham (valerie.pinkham@maine.edu)

## Who will benefit most from this session?

- Early educators (B-5 age students)

## Who else may benefit:

- Early education directors/administrators

**Session Description:** The session goal is for participants to gain knowledge in how to respond to family members who question the safety of nature-based play and the risks inherent in this approach. Learning outcomes include: The benefits of risk taking for children, understanding the difference between taking an appropriate risk in a natural playground and a hazard that can be dangerous, and how to incorporate natural elements into an existing playground on a minimal budget. Staff from Sweatt-Winter Child Care & Early Education Center, UMF's campus lab school, will share their experience communicating with families about the importance of nature-based play and risk taking. Natural elements imbedded throughout the playground provide opportunities for imagination, collaboration, teamwork, problem solving, and both small and gross motor play to name a few. Curriculum content areas that connect to the nature-inspired playground include - but are not limited to - science, math, creative arts, language/literacy, social/emotional, and cognitive. This session will engage participants in discussion about how to integrate natural elements and risk taking onto the playground, while still maintaining licensing regulations, and communicating with families on their safety concerns.

**How will participants engage in nature during your session?** Participants will have the opportunity to explore the nature-inspired playgrounds at Sweatt-Winter. While doing so, they will be looking for areas/items that allow children to take risks safely, and what curriculum content areas could be met using materials within the playgrounds. Participants will be asked to develop talking points that they can use to educate families on the benefits of risk taking in nature-based play.

## Presenter Biographies

- Julie Farmer is the Director at Sweatt-Winter Child Care & Early Education Center, having been employed there since 1992. She is currently working on her Master's Degree in Early Childhood.
- Emily Nutt has been a Preschool Teacher at Sweatt-Winter Child Care for the past 18 years. She holds an Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education.
- Kathleen Marshall has been teaching for 21 year, the past 3 as a Preschool Teacher at Sweatt-Winter Child Care. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education.
- Valerie Pinkham is a Preschool/School-age Teacher at Sweatt-Winter Child Care. She holds a Master's Degree in Early Intervention.