

Little Hands, Big Work: Sustainable Development Goals in Early Childhood Education

27th Annual Vermont Kindergarten Conference

Hilton Hotel, Burlington, Vermont

Thursday, March 28, 2019



Have you been wondering about the “Sustainable Development Goals”? Sharon Davison and Susan Koch will introduce the SDG’s and explore ways in which Vermont’s early educators can create opportunities for learners to: become advocates, explore the “big concept” of sustainability, and make global connections. Sharon is an ambassador for the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and Susan is a current NEA Foundation Global Teaching Fellow. Sharon and Susan are passionate Vermont educators who have been sharing local and global experiences to ignite learning. Discover ways to embed global competencies into your curriculum while helping to foster curiosity and wonder in young learners.

2019 Kindergarten Conference Workshop Options

Morning Workshops:

Empowering Learners to Make the World a Better Place: Using the National Geographic Learning Framework to Guide Exploration and Storytelling

Susan Koch, Union Elementary School

The world needs global citizens. Discover how to encourage curiosity and wonder with young learners. Investigate the [National Geographic Learning Framework](#) which emphasizes the development of an explorer mindset. Learn how attitudes, skills and knowledge combine to empower learners to make the world a better place.

Building Strong, Curious Bodies and Minds: Teaching in an Outdoor Classroom

Julie Ste. Marie and Lara Starr Belisle, Jay-Westfield Elementary School

Are you curious about bringing your students outdoors for extended times for learning? If so, come join in a discussion and slideshow presentation about the pros and cons, the logistics, and the planning involved in making it happen in your program. Participants will build resource lists and brainstorm ideas that could work in a variety of settings and situations, as well as learn about all the benefits of getting children outside and connecting with nature.

A Global Goal Framework for Learning

Sharon Davison, Allen Brook School and Shannon Baird, Shelburne Community School

Please join Shannon and Sharon as they share a year-long framework of how they weave and explore the global goals for sustainability into kindergarten life. They will highlight some of their projects and share how this important work ties into service-learning opportunities in the communities they teach. Shannon is a kindergarten teacher in Shelburne and Sharon is a kindergarten teacher in Williston.

Preschool to Kindergarten Transitions: Getting on the Same Page

Rachel Hunter, Springfield School District and Ellen Taetzsch, Building Bright Futures

For collaboration to occur among preschool and kindergarten teachers, an environment must be created that fosters creativity, understanding and brings together multi-talented individuals to work closely by exchanging ideas, offering feedback and making adjustments to their education approaches. Workshop participants will explore the Same Page approaches and challenge traditional beliefs through innovative thinking, ideas and reframing "myths." Participants will discuss a range of opportunities, name potential partners, strategize engagement techniques and identify action steps. This is easier said than done! It requires critical analysis of education, setting and norms, and misconceptions as well as a common agreement between teachers, programs, and supervisory union philosophies on kindergarten success.

ECHO Self-Guided Tour

Visit ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center to tour the museum at your own pace. You will find exhibits that focus on the Ecology, Culture, History and Opportunities for Stewardship in the Lake Champlain Basin. There are many hands-on exhibits, over 70 species of live animals, a theater featuring 3-D National Geographic films (\$3/ticket) and don't miss the current temporary exhibit, Age of Dinosaurs! Go to [ECHO's website](#) to learn more about the schedule of events on the day of your visit.

Admission is free for conference attendees with your Kindergarten Conference badge.

Trash Talkin' with Recycle Rhonda: Teaching the 3 R's with Hands-on Lessons

Rhonda Mace, Chittenden Solid Waste District

Learn where all the unwanted stuff goes when we are done using it and why teaching Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle is important to the sustainability of all life forms. You will learn how Chittenden Solid Waste District (CSWD) tries to find resourceful uses for different materials through composting and recycling. Then you will test drive 3 lessons meant to introduce children to understanding which materials go into which bin, why it is important that we sort out unwanted stuff, and how THEY can be the leaders of sustainability at school, home, and throughout the community.

Trees and Children in Relationship: Listening and Learning Together

Jeanne Goldhaber, UVM Professor Emerita and Rini Lovshin-Smith, Wren's Nest Forest Preschool

Under the canopy of the trees, daily dramas and moving love stories are played out. Here is the last remaining piece of Nature, right on our doorstep, where adventures are to be experienced and secrets discovered. And who knows, perhaps one day the language of trees will eventually be deciphered, giving us the raw material for further amazing stories. Until then, when you take your next walk in the forest, give free rein to your imagination—in many cases, what you imagine is not so far removed from reality, after all! (Wohlleben, 2016, p. 245)

Who are trees? Many of us have childhood memories that include trees: trees with just-reachable limbs that invited us to climb, perch, swing; trees with mysterious nooks and crannies that housed miniature worlds; trees with broad trunks where games like ring-around-the-rosy and hide-and-seek always happened. As early childhood educators, many of us also have observations of children interacting with trees: stroking their bark, hugging their trunks, and yes, climbing, perching, swinging, pretending, and playing familiar childhood games. While we probably assigned fairly passive roles to the trees of our memories and observations, recent research portrays them as social beings that communicate with each other through olfactory and visual signals as well as through a subterranean network. (Wohlleben, 2016) We wonder: might this research influence how we think about and respond to observations of children and trees together? During this session, we will present current research findings that reveal the active, social life of trees. We will share observations, images and video clips of children interacting with trees for discussion and reflection. Finally, we will consider possible pedagogical decisions designed to promote children's experiences in the natural world, specifically in the company of trees.

Afternoon workshops:

Early STEM Matters: Providing a Strong Foundation for our Future World Problem Solvers

Elizabeth Nuckols, ECHO

Building a STEM literate workforce able to tackle complex real world problems is more important than ever as we work towards a better and more sustainable future for all. STEM learning starts early and STEM attitudes form early. This workshop will help early educators think about ways to support STEM learning in their classroom using strategies that naturally connect to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and offers new ideas to take back to the classroom. **NOTE: This workshop will take place at ECHO in Lakeside Hall.**

Conservation Kids

Deanna Bailey and Laura MacLachlan, Vermont Energy Education Program

Help our youngest learners understand that their choices make a difference to our earth. This workshop will help you provide students an embodied experience of energy and how energy plays a role in all that we do here on earth. Learn how to connect place-based education with energy conservation. Explore hands-on, minds-on activities that help students understand why turning off lights, closing the front and refrigerator door, reducing screen time and reusing materials (e.g. water bottles) help our earth. Learn techniques that help students gather and analyze data on student actions and adjust those actions. Plan ways to share and celebrate that students can make a difference.

Teachers as Protagonists: The Ripple Effects of Recent Experiences in Kenya

Dawn St. Amour, Jennifer Olson, and Morgan DeVarney, UVM Campus Children's Center

This workshop will share the experiences of three Vermont preschool teachers who recently observed and participated in a community preschool in Kenya over a period of 4 days. We received an invitation from Go Global, a Vermont non-profit organization, to participate in a semester-long UVM course designed to develop sustainable community projects in rural Kenya. Our focus was to exchange ideas and information about teaching practices and approaches in Early Childhood Education that support the role of play-based learning in curriculum building. We are eager to explore questions and issues that emerged in reflecting on our experiences in Kenya such as: Who are teachers and what is their role in their communities? Is it possible for teachers to engage their communities in the development of a shared sense of civic responsibility and agency? What are the curricular implications for teachers who assume the role of protagonist? We look forward to sharing our stories with other Early Childhood Educators and thinking together about the teacher's role as protagonist in the classroom and school, the local community, and beyond.

Exploring the Story of Food

Jed Norris and Jorge Yagual, Shelburne Farms

This hands-on session will introduce and discuss the story of food while addressing related math, literacy, and science standards. We will be looking at the transformation of matter by making butter, exploring the wonders of seeds, and using feely bags to develop descriptive language. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss how we can strengthen our agricultural connections by using the story of food in the classroom and simultaneously deepening the connections children have with practices of positive health, well-being and value of place.

Yoga and Mindfulness in Early Childhood Settings

Melissa Nutting, Evolution Prenatal and Family Yoga Center

This workshop will provide opportunities for Early Childhood Educators to explore yoga poses, breathing techniques, creative movement, and mindfulness activities to support children's social emotional well-being. We will help participants describe times of the day when a child or children in their classrooms have difficulty self-regulating their emotions and when emotions are calm. Participants will learn yoga poses, breathing and relaxation techniques, and mindfulness activities. Participants will also create a movement-based curricula activity incorporating mindfulness, yoga, and/or breathing technique into a specific part of their day.

Promoting Physical Activity in Preschoolers: Introducing *Kiddie CATs on the Move*

Marissa Dennis and Allison Krasner, UVM

Kiddie Children and Teachers (CATs) on the Move is a school-based, physical activity curriculum designed specifically for 3- to 5-year-olds. The core goal of *Kiddie CATs on the Move* is to assist children in completing 20 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per session. The program also gives children an opportunity to learn and practice important gross motor skills, safety and cooperation during play, and to experience the cognitive and social-emotional benefits of regularly engaging in physical activity. The goal of this workshop is to introduce the *Kiddie CATs on the Move* program, discuss how it aligns with the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) and present preliminary research findings. Information about opportunities to participate in our free comprehensive *Kiddie CATs on the Move* curriculum training will be provided to attendees.

Building Resilience and Fostering Joy: Trauma Informed Practice in the Kindergarten Classroom

Allegra Carignan and Brin Tucker, Green Street School

Increasing numbers of students enter our schools having faced adverse childhood experiences. How do we create systems and structures to meet the emotional and academic needs of ALL learners? How do we embed routines, transitions, and supports that are trauma-informed? This workshop provides different strategies to build resilience and foster joy while teaching essential academic, social and emotional skills. Come hear the story of how one Vermont elementary school is learning to address the needs of some of our most vulnerable learners. Leave with examples of school-wide and classroom trauma-informed supports. You'll have time to reflect, share ideas, and gather some tools you can use with your students and colleagues tomorrow.

Companions in Nature: The Teacher's Role in Resurrecting Free Play in and with Nature

Lindsey Sterrett, Sara Holbrook and Sage Ryan, UVM

The focus of this presentation is the benefit and importance of nature in early development and education. Humanity, throughout history has had a close relationship with nature. Some believe that the issue of our disconnection to nature is at the core of our present environmental crisis. Various empirical evidence illustrates how modern-day children spend significantly less time in free unstructured play outside, than in previous generations. Free-play has shifted from spontaneous unstructured exploring, to time spent in directed activities, or focused on screens. This presentation will provide participants the opportunity to identify the role of nature in their current practices, as well as obstacles. Participants will describe their own memories of playing outside when they were children, and speak to the role of play in their own development as teachers. Participants will generate ideas of how to bring children to nature or nature to children in their environments and contexts. We will specifically delve into natural materials, loose parts in the classroom and on the playground, and the benefit of plants on health. Participants will identify actionable goals to make adaptations to their environments or practices with children and nature. Participants will also analyze and explore the use of documentation to support curricular development, to serve as authentic assessment, and to deepen children's and teacher's thinking and learning.