

Saturday, May 4 PM Breakout Session Descriptions

Saturday Breakout Session 2: 12:30-2:00

Death, Decay, and Decomposition: Finding Life and Renewal in Natural Life Cycles

Carla Gull, Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College.

Death, decay, and decomposition are normal parts of life cycles in the natural world, such as when leaves wither and drop, flower petals wilt, or we find a dead insect on a walk. What lessons are to be learned about, in, with, and for nature when we learn into death, decay, and decomposition in a natural context? Understanding death in a natural context can help build social and emotional skills and resilience as we get to know the natural rhythms of life in our settings.

Math and Math Games in Early Childhood

Michael Eldridge, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

Participants will learn more about math games that can be used to explicitly teach and reinforce new concepts to young children. In addition to learning the math games, participants will have a chance to play and explore materials.

Project Approach and Nature: Nurturing Social-Emotional Growth as we Learn and Play

Melissa Walter & Kendra Nenia, Northern Illinois University.

Join this interactive workshop to discover the power of nature and the Project Approach. Discover how these practices can foster social-emotional growth and leave with a plan to implement them.

Earthly Wonders

Alex Pafilis-Silverstein & Jola Dohrmann, Chicago Children's Museum.

The session aims to empower educators to foster a rich learning environment by crafting a nature-oriented classroom despite constraints like limited natural light, outdoor areas, and a modest budget. (Also offered during the Friday PM session.)

The Impact of Constructive Play on Social-Emotional Development in Early Childhood

Crystal Foles, Greenville University, School of Education.

Explore the vital connection between constructive play and social-emotional growth in early childhood, revealing its role in fostering empathy, problem-solving, and positive relationships for holistic development.

Shifting Forms of Land & Sky

Kristi Cameron, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

Join this interactive workshop to discover the power of nature and the Project Approach. Discover how these practices can foster social-emotional growth and leave with a plan to implement them.

Ensuring physical, emotional, and psychological safety in your outdoor program. A practical approach to risk-benefit assessment

Angela Rekers, St. Ambrose University. Participants will engage in both site and activity risk-benefit assessment activities in order to develop competence and confidence leading outdoor sessions, whether on-site, e.g., school grounds, or off-site, e.g., local woodland/parks.