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# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

## “LET'S GO OUTSIDE” TAKES OFF



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At the Lab School camp, directors and educators had the opportunity to see outdoor learning in action, reflect on child engagement, and think about how to add meaningful outdoor learning experiences to their own programs.

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Did you know that the average child spends up to 44 hours a week on a screen and less than ten minutes a day playing outdoors?!

DIEEC's Learning Environments team and the University of Delaware Lab School are partnering with early childhood programs through the "Let's Go Outside" initiative. Together, they are determined to reverse this trend.



The initiative is underway with 22 program leaders and educators engaging in professional learning experiences to power and promote nature-based outdoor play and learning. And when asked about their experience, participants responded with one word. These included: "exploratory," "adventurous," "curious," and "stoked!"

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Part of the professional development offered with the "Let's Go Outside" initiative includes providing participants with the opportunity to connect with each other to explore play and emergent curricula.

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"We are passionate about outdoor learning because of the documented mental health benefits of spending time outdoors and connecting with nature," said Christine Skrobot, DIEEC associate director of early childhood: learning environments. "Mentally healthy children are ready to tackle whatever life throws at them and have a more positive quality of life."





The Delaware Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (Project Learning Tree Curriculum) and Delaware State Parks (Growing Up WILD) share a supplemental outdoor curricula.

"We are spreading the health, wellness, and cognitive benefits of outdoor learning environments to approximately 2,000 children (and the educators they work with) across the state!"

DIEEC has received applications for round two of the Let's Go Outside initiative and is currently in the middle of randomly selecting the next group of ECE professionals who will participate in these professional learning experiences and receive grants for materials and supplies for outdoor classrooms.

Penny Whitehouse, founder of Mother Natured, said it best: "Restore balance. Most children have the technology, school, and extracurriculars covered. It's time to add a pinch of adventure, a sprinkle of sunshine, and a big handful of outdoor play."

