

Nature Play Area

Rahr Memorial School Forest

Grades: 4K and 5K

Goal: To provide a place where young children can experiment, play, create, connect, and learn while building an appreciation for environment.

Details: The Nature Play Area was created through the work of volunteers, partnerships with local companies and organizations, donations, and a 2009-2010 Wisconsin Environmental Education grant. The grand opening was on September 20, 2009.

The space is designed for 4K and 5K students. It is a place in the forest to play, explore, and create. It is designed for groups of up to 30 students with their teachers.

Teacher Notes:

Preparations done at school:

- Reserve Nature Play Area with SF secretary – reserved in 1 hour blocks for groups up to 30 students
- Read this guide
- E-mail the School Forest Coordinator with any questions
- Pack books if you want

Preparations done at School Forest:

- Get kit (backpack)
- Check that all of the needed supplies are inside the backpack
- Fill jug with water (if you plan to have the kids paint)

Once you arrive in the Nature Play Area:

- Have students sit in gathering area
- Uncover storage boxes and set tarps/ropes behind them
- Move baskets from locked cabinet into the correct areas
- Take items out of the backpack and put into the correct areas

Preparing Your Students:

- Discuss the different zones – what is available for them?
- Make sure they are comfortable with the boundaries
- Talk about safety
- You may want do rotating stations or have free play (recommended)

Use Ideas:

Nature Art Area:

- Painting
- Coloring
- Rubbings
- Drawing
- Tic Tac Toe with shells and seeds
- Read in the teepee
- Tell your own stories in the teepee
- Design patterns with the natural objects
- Color matching game – use cards to find things in nature with the same color

Music and Movement Area:

- Play instruments
- Sing songs
- Dance with scarves

Climbing Area:

- Double balance beam
- Hang out in tunnel “under ground”
- Stump steps
- Rock mound
- Slide

Building Area:

- Build “stuff”
- Use cars
- Build a cantilever off of a bench using natural items
- Design a village with natural materials

Messy Materials Area:

- Dig into the big sand pit
- Build a mountain
- Design a pretend river with rocks from the Building Area

Before you leave the Nature Play Area:

- Gather items that go back into the RED backpack (they have a green backpack symbol on the tag)
- Make sure all items are put back into the correct spot
- Lock cabinet
- Cover storage boxes with tarps and wrap ropes around
- Pick up any garbage
- Bring items back to the building to clean-up



Clean-up:

- Rinse out jug, paints, water cups, and pail
- Rinse paint brushes and put upside down in a cup to dry
- Set wet stuff out on a table/counter to dry

Storage Places:

Materials in Kit Backpack (kept inside):

- Backpack
- Key for cabinet
- Paper for art area
- Water color paints
- Jug
- Plastic cups
- Paint brushes
- Pail with lid (for dirty paint water)
- Clipboards
- Crayons
- Colored pencils
- Rubbing plates – animal tracks/ leaves
- Rubbing crayons (no paper on them)
- Wooden drum

Materials in Music and Movement Area:

- Benches
- Bird houses

Materials in the Climbing Area:

- Slide
- Tunnel
- Stump steps
- Rock mound
- Log balance beams

Materials in the Messy Materials Area

- Sand pit
- Stumps to sit on
- Long sticks

Materials in Locked Cabinet (Messy Materials Area):

- Large and small garden tools
- Building Area Basket
 - o Building blocks
 - o Wood cookie blocks (finished)
 - o Small cars
- Trucks, excavator
- Nature Art Area Stuff
 - o Kaleidoscopes
 - o Nature Tic Tac Toe
 - o Clipboards
- Music and Movement Area Basket
 - o Drum sticks
 - o PVC Xylophone
 - o Musical washers rods
 - o Dancing scarves
 - o Symbol shaker
 - o Rattles

Materials in the Building Area:

- Wood cookies (unfinished, rough ones)
- Rocks
- Fossils
- Benches

Materials in the Art Area:

- Seashells - basket
- Pinecones – basket
- Gourds
- Easels
- Art table
- Stumps
- Teepee