

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE DEFICIT

Nearly all adults surveyed indicate natural outdoor areas were the most significant environments of their childhood, while less than half of children currently ages 8 to 11 share this view.

“Outdoor play may also be beneficial for motor development, vision, cognition, vitamin D levels, and mental health. In spite of these manifold benefits, U.S. children today likely spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation.”
JAMA Pediatrics August 2012, Vol 166, No. 8

What our parents say:

“The learning environment has facilitated big thinkers in little bodies.”

“We have seen our kids learn in ways that no other kids in our community do.”

“The staff has been wonderful. The 4K teacher and naturalist have done outstanding jobs. We have been impressed with the director of the Wildlife Sanctuary’s commitment to the program as he is always on hand to greet parents, students.”

How our students are reacting:

“We were learning and we didn’t even know it!”

“I’m outside so much I’m getting stronger than a beaver!”



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The OAK (Outdoor Adventures for Kids) Learning Center

is a nature-based four-year-old kindergarten at the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Mission Statement

The OAK Learning Center provides an experience that nurtures physical, social, emotional and early academic skills by fostering appreciation for the outdoors through nature-based discovery and purposeful play.

Partners

The OAK Learning Center is a partnership with the City of Green Bay, Green Bay Area Public School District, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). This innovative public school choice program, open to all 4K students from every school in the Green Bay metro area, is tuition free.

University educators, public school educators, WLS staff and dedicated community members have actively partnered to plan and implement this unique educational opportunity. This partnership is a true collaboration for the betterment of the local community and future generations.

Our Location

The Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary is a beautiful 560-acre urban wildlife refuge featuring live animal exhibits, educational displays, miles of hiking/skiing trails and various wildlife viewing opportunities. It is the largest park in the Green Bay park system.



It is the emotional connections and attitudinal development of environmental education, along with the sensory and play-based learning of early childhood, that come together to form a powerful educational experience in a nature-based preschool.



COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The most significant benefit of early childhood education in nature is that it allows and encourages children to use all of their senses to explore the world around them, gather information and seek answers.

Walking and running over uneven terrain, through a thick brushy understory, or around a squishy wetland all provide different opportunities for physical development, from sheer muscle strength to body control and balance.



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Nature provides endless team building and social interaction opportunities.



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nature provides endless opportunities for children to find wonder and in turn ask questions about the world around them. This helps build intellectual capacity, and also helps develop their confidence and sense of place in the world.