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NATURE EXPLORERS

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NATURE EXPLORERS

THE BENEFITS OF NATURE SCHOOL

THE PRACTICE OF IMMERSING CHILDREN IN NATURE FROM AN EARLY AGE HAS LONG BEEN POPULAR IN THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES, NOT THE LEAST THROUGH THE TRADITION OF "FOREST SCHOOLING." NOW THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING IN NATURE IS FINALLY STARTING TO CATCH ON IN AUSTRALIA. AND WITH GOOD REASON. FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, THE BENEFITS OF FOREST SCHOOL ARE BOTH PLENTIFUL AND PROFOUND.

THE ORIGINAL SCANDINAVIAN FOREST SCHOOLS ARE PRESCHOOLS AND DAY CARES WHERE CHILDREN SPEND MOST OF THEIR DAY OUTSIDE, EVERY DAY, REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER. THE FOCUS OF THIS TYPE OF EARLY EDUCATION IS NOT TO TEACH ACADEMIC FACTS, BUT TO GIVE KIDS THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY FREELY IN NATURE.

THERE ARE NO BEHAVIOUR CHARTS, WORKSHEETS, LETTER WRITING EXERCISES OR WORD WALLS, AND THE ACTIVITIES ARE CHILD-CENTERED. THE TEACHERS VIEW THEMSELVES AS "CO-DISCOVERERS" AND GUIDES WHO EXPLORE AND EXPERIENCE NATURE ALONGSIDE THE CHILDREN.

SO WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

IF YOU THINK THAT THIS SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF FUN, BUT SECRETLY WONDER IF THE KIDS ACTUALLY LEARN ANYTHING, THEN KEEP READING. NATURE SCHOOLS OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD IMPORTANT PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, COGNITIVE AND LIFE SKILLS THAT PAVE THE WAY FOR ACADEMIC LEARNING LATER ON.

WHILE THE CHILDREN ARE REGULARLY EXPOSED TO TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINES LIKE SCIENCE, MATH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, LITERATURE, AND ART, ALL LEARNING HAPPENS ORGANICALLY THROUGH INQUIRY AND DIRECT EXPERIENCE, RATHER THAN TEACHER-LED LESSON PLANS IN A CLASSROOM. THIS GIVES THE PRESCHOOLERS A CHANCE TO DO WHAT THEY REALLY EXCEL IN – LEARN THROUGH PLAY.

“OUTSIDE, IN REAL LIFE, IS WHERE HUMANS LEARN BEST,” WRITES ANDERS SZCZEPANSKI, A SWEDISH OUTDOOR LEARNING EXPERT. “THAT’S WHERE WE MAKE USE OF ALL OF OUR SENSES BY SEEING, LISTENING, FEELING, SMELLING, TASTING AND DISCERNING. IT FOSTERS CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND COOPERATION, ENGAGES OUR EMOTIONS AND MAKES US CARE ABOUT OUR ENVIRONMENT, AS WELL AS OUR NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY.”

LETTING CHILDREN LEARN PRIMARILY IN NATURE ALSO MAKES PERFECT SENSE WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE MANY BENEFITS OF OUTSIDE PLAY THAT ARE BACKED BY SCIENCE. SPECIFICALLY, STUDIES HAVE FOUND THAT CHILDREN WHO ARE ENROLLED IN FOREST SCHOOLS:

– ARE LESS LIKELY TO COME DOWN WITH COMMON INFECTIONS, SINCE THEY SPEND LITTLE TIME INSIDE, WHERE VIRUSES AND BACTERIA THRIVE (GRAHN, 1997)

- HAVE BETTER MOTOR SKILLS, SUCH AS AGILITY, BALANCE AND COORDINATION (FJORTOFT, 2014)

-ENGAGE IN MORE IMAGINATIVE AND DYNAMIC FORMS OF PLAY (MÅRTENSSON, 2004)

-ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE (BOLDEMANN ET AL, 2005)

-SEE IMPROVEMENTS IN CONFIDENCE, SOCIAL SKILLS, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION, MOTIVATION AND CONCENTRATION (O’BRIEN, 2007)
-BECOME MORE RESILIENT (BLACKWELL, 2015)

ARE LESS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE ADHD SYMPTOMS (ISTED, 2013)

Armchair Explorer

Swiss Army Knife Whittling Book

Learn how to carve useful and whimsical objects with nothing more than an original Swiss Army Knife and a few minutes of time. Features dozens of step-by-step projects.

Useful App

Coastal Marine Life

Coastal Life of South East Queensland is designed for those who love exploring the rocky shores, and muddy sand flats and mangroves, or simply enjoy strolling along the beach. We hope that it will provide some insight into the wonderful, but often little known creatures, with which we share our planet.

DUNE CARE

Pottsville Community Dune Care

Would you like to learn about the local coastal vegetation, do some light exercise, have some fun and meet like minded people from your community?

Are you available 7am to 8:30am Monday mornings to plant trees, remove weeds and pick up rubbish from the dunes at Pottsville?

Come and join the current group of dedicated volunteers who are working in conjunction with the Tweed Shire Council to help maintain the health and biodiversity of our local coastal environment.

For more information please contact Bill Hoskins.

Email: bhoskins@live.com.au

6 OF THE BEST THINGS TO DO ON THE GOLD COAST

1. MOUNT TAMBORINE

More country than coast, a drive to this mountain village is a great day outing for families. You have your choice of hinterland hikes here, from the all-abilities-access Cedar Creek Falls track to the more advanced Witches Falls and Sandy Creek Circuits.
But, if you're looking for less scenery and more shopping, hit the village where you'll find antiques, artwork, cafes and boutique shopping amongst other offerings.

2. TALLEBUDGERA CREEK

This is the quintessential calm water spot on the Gold Coast. Although Tallebudgera Creek feeds out to the Coral Sea, the clear blue water of the creek is calm and inviting – perfect for small children to splash around to their heart's content.
With a small beach and lots of shade, you can swim, SUP, kayak, picnic and more in this little paradise. You can access the other shore of Tallebudgera Creek from the Burleigh Heads National Park for even more privacy from other creek-goers.

3. BURLEIGH HEADS NATIONAL PARK

Speaking of Burleigh Heads National Park, this lush green outcrop on the Gold Coast makes the list because of its accessibility and ease of the trails. Send the kids on a scavenger hunt and see who can spot the most critters.
From water dragons and other scaly lizards to kites and eagles and other feathered friends, it's no wonder the wildlife likes to take refuge in this beachside national park.

4. NATURAL BRIDGE AT SPRINGBROOK + GLOW WORMS

Just a few hours inland from the shoreline of the Gold Coast, Springbrook National Park is home to one of the most fantastic natural wonders in Queensland.
Surprise your mini waterfall-chasers when you show them a waterfall that goes underground to a glow-worm cave! Does nature get any more interesting than that?
It's not suitable for prams, but the trail is easy enough that most two- and three-year-olds would be able to manage. And trust us, it's worth it.

5. GOLD COAST REGIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

The Gold Coast Regional Botanic Gardens in Benowa has experiences for all nature and garden lovers.
Stop and smell the roses in the rose garden, then let the kids go wild touching the plants in the sensory garden. There's even a butterfly garden, a playground and an off-leash area for the four-legged members of the family.

6. CURRUMBIN ROCK POOLS

If you're keen to get away from the beach, but still want a spot to cool off and let the kids splash around, you might want to try out the Currumbin Rock Pools.
What used to be a secret locals' spot is now a happening hinterland waterhole. Bring a picnic, nap (yeah right!) in the shade, or just let the kids wear themselves out.

Community Engagement

A community is more than just a location, or a collection of individuals who happen to live or work in the same place. When we talk about a ‘sense of community’ we usually mean the quality of the relationships and connections that bind people together, rather than just the fact that they see each other regularly.

Children learn about themselves and construct their own identity within the context of their families and communities’

For children, a sense of community plays an important role in the development of their feelings of belonging and security. Children thrive in an environment of mutually supportive and caring relationships. For this reason developing a sense of community within the Nature Explorers Program is essential

It is also valuable for children to feel part of a wider community that extends beyond the learning environment. As children grow and develop, connections to the outside world help them to find their place in the world, to develop understandings of how society works, and to recognise and understand the shared values that underpin our society.

Strong links with the local community also provide educators with invaluable information and resources. By drawing on community knowledge and expertise, educators are better able to understand the children and families with whom they work, and better able to provide children with learning experiences that are meaningful and relevant to their lives.
For all of these reasons Nature explorers has developed strong partnership with local community groups such as, Clean Up Australia, Dune Care, Feather Map Project.