

Natural Connections Academy, Inc.

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We are on the Web!
www.naturalconnectionsacademy.net



Natural Connections Academy, Inc. (NCA) is a private, non-profit outdoor school. We provide a nature-based educational experience for students in 3rd through 5th grades in Kootenai, Benewah, and Spokane Counties.

In order to learn about their world, students are immersed in the natural environment through their own inquiries and wonder. Students solve real-world problems through hands-on learning opportunities. The goal is to reconnect students with nature so that they can be good stewards of their local environment.

Natural Connections Academy, Inc. (NCA) mission is to connect children's learning to the environment. Building connections between nature and academics, we want students to learn responsibility, accountability, and ownership of their education. Through these connections, they will solidify their role in their local communities and become environmentally focused leaders.

Volunteer Opportunities

As our school grows, we will be looking for volunteers to assist us in various areas.

If you are interested in helping, please call 208-428-6224

- Trail Preparation
- Social Media Manager
- Grant Writing
- Marketing Associate

Other ways to help:

We are searching for:

- Bird bath, bird feeders
- Square patio stones (100)
- Picnic Table
- Science Equipment
- Hand Warmers
- Binoculars
- Forestry Measurement Equip.



Nov. / Dec. 2022

Volume 1, Issue 8

Our Educational Partners:

- Birds of Prey Northwest
- Stimson Lumber
- Idaho Forest Products Commission
- Project Learning Tree Idaho
- Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission
- Kootenai Shoshone Soil & Water Conservation District
- Coeur D'Alene Tribe Dept. of Education
- Project WET
- IDAH₂O
- Kootenai County Noxious Weed Dept.

Current fundraising total:



Amount needed to provide the education to students as envisioned:



Natural Connections Academy, Inc.



Updates and News:

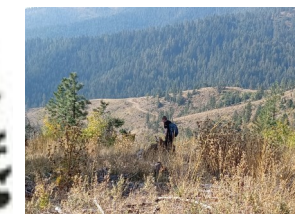
Time flies when you're having fun, right? Well, we must be having lots of fun because October flew by and we are almost to Thanksgiving! So busy in fact, that this newsletter will stand as our November/December edition.

The winterlike weather sure moved forward the testing out of the vinyl sides and heaters in the Pavilion. Usually snow and cold doesn't truly hit and stick

around until the end of November or beginning of December. However, this year, we went from sitting outside with sweatshirts at

our outdoor desks at the beginning of October to snow the beginning of November! But, of course, that didn't stop us!

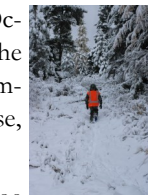
We hiked the bridge on Trail of the Coeur D'Alene's, explored Stimson land, trekked around on Cedar Loop, drugged through the rain/snow mix on Schoeffler's Loop, tried out the Fireplace Trail at Mary McCroskey State



Park, and more. The views we saw were many and most have been spectacular! We have loved discussing how the Larch, Larix Occidentalis, have changed color and how their stark orange/yellow really stands out within the stands of trees. Before the change, you would barely know that they were there.



We got up close and personal with some porcupine damage that we found on a young Ponderosa Pine. Checked out Scout Out Loop now that the Deer Ked (Deer Fly or Deer Louse) were not "bugging" the heck out of us. Headed out on Gandy Dancer Trail and found that you should stick to the plan and not decide at the last minute to explore more... but it was still beautiful and helped us learn about grit and not giving up.



We had a lot of practice with our measuring and following directions when we baked 7 dozen donuts, 6 loaves of bread, and 5 dozen fudgy zucchini cookies! Whew, that was a lot of baking! We also tested our patience by cooking 10 pints of apple butter. All of the apples and zucchini came from the trees or garden where our main learning cen-

ter is located.

We have done multiple STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematic) projects including creating a catapult, a bridge, and a boat. The catapult test was how far it could send a candy corn pumpkin. The bridge was tested by how many spiders (counting cubes) it could hold and the boat was tested to see how many Pilgrims (pennies) it could hold before sinking. A lot of fun and loved learning about engineering.

So far in November, we have looked at leaves under a microscope, fed apples to horses, checked out animal tracks, and have been wild about birds!

We will be participating in Giving Tuesday again this year and we are currently selling Christmas Cookies—both to raise funds for the school. Please consider donating so that we can continue to offer students this alternative type of education.



Shout Out and Thank You to everyone who donated!

Fall Fundraiser Donors:

Christine Marcellus
Doris Cunningham
Eric Olson
Gail and Steve Kozlowski
Heather Karels
Jamie Spooner
Jenifer Miller
Joe Prete
Josh Malchow
Matt Petroskie
Nate Bennett
Nicole Barden
Rob Barnett
Sander Carren
Sean Leigh
She'om Rose
Stacey Norden
Susan Dobbins

Patron Donors:

Edmund Leopold
James and Gayle Prete
Mary and Pete Dalbis

In Kind Donors:

Joseph Prete

Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature

Writer: Danielle Cohen

And as suburbs and exurbs continue to expand, nature is parceled off more, and kids seem less inclined to spend time in a fenced-in yard, let alone jump the fence into a neighbor's or walk in the woods. Instead, indoor activities can seem easier (no sunscreen necessary!), safer, and even more sociable for kids who are growing up with multiplayer video games and social media accounts.

Why go outside?

Recent studies have exposed the benefit—even necessity—of spending time outdoors, both for kids and adults. Some argue that it can be any outdoor environment. Some claim it has to be a “green” environment—one with trees and leaves. Others still have shown that just a picture of greenery can benefit mental health. These nuances aside, most of the studies agree that kids who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive, and less anxious than kids who spend more time indoors. While it's unclear how exactly the *cognitive* functioning and mood improvements occur, there are a few things we do know about why nature is good for kids' minds.

It builds confidence. The way that kids play in nature has a lot less structure than most types of indoor play. There are infinite ways to interact with outdoor environments, from the backyard to the park to the local hiking trail or lake, and letting your child choose how he treats nature means he has the power to control his own actions.

It promotes creativity and imagination. This unstructured style of play also allows kids to interact meaningfully with their surroundings. They can think more freely, design their own activities, and approach the world in inventive ways.

It teaches responsibility. Living things die if mistreated or not taken care of properly, and entrusting a child to take care of the living parts of their environment means they'll learn what happens when they forget to water a plant, or pull a flower out by its roots.

More next month.....

WHY YOUR KIDS SHOULD STAY ACTIVE OUTDOORS THIS WINTER

Getting outdoors in the winter isn't always easy, but there are many reasons why it is worth the effort. Contrary to common misconceptions, outdoor play in winter is *beneficial* to your kids' health and well-being.

Here are some of the reasons why we should get outside even when the temperatures drop:

- Despite several myths, playing outside in the cold actually **strengthens your children's immune system.** Leave your fears of bacteria and dust behind and venture out into the fresh air!
 - As we know, **kids need to stay active.** Playing outside helps them burn off “extra energy” and avoids a sedentary lifestyle. It helps with concentration in class and keeps them from bouncing off the walls.
 - Playing outside in the cold **helps kids problem solve when facing new challenges:** slippery surfaces, harder materials, loose parts frozen in place.
 - **Continues exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D.** Getting their daily dose of sunlight provide essential Vitamin D, which helps with mental, physical, and emotional health. Sunlight can help improve mood
- and mental planning skills, help with concentration and energy levels, contribute to bone strength and heart health, and helps regulate circadian rhythms. It only takes 10-20 minutes for their daily dosage of vitamin D, which is doable even in the depth of winter.
- **Children get to experience and interact with the outdoors from a different perspective.** What used to be green might now be white. Puddles they used to splash in might now be hard and slippery. Instead of splashing around, they can practice breaking the ice.
 - Using **different muscles; gross motor development.** Just like running in sand is different from running on pavement, moving around in the snow engages different muscles than playing on grass or dirt. Pulling a sled up a hill, pushing a snowball around the yard, not to mention skating and skiing — these activities help children continue to develop balance, coordination and gross motor skills.

<https://getthekidsoutside.com/kids-active-outside-in-winter/>

Upcoming Fundraisers...

As a nonprofit, we rely on the donations from our community to help sustain us. Our goal is to reach as many families as we can so that their children have an alternative to traditional public education. We want to open up doors and get students outside and learning!

GIVING TUESDAY

One of our biggest fundraisers is Giving Tuesday, which is held on **November 29th.**

We also are currently selling Christmas Sugar Cookies made by **Krafty Kookies 406.**

Please consider donating.

Interested in Donating?

Choose what of our learning topics or projects you would like to support with your donation.

- Gardening
 Math Outdoor Lab
 Weather Monitoring and Data Collection Materials
 Bird and Pond Native Plant Garden
 Environmental Study and Testing Materials
 Silviculture Study Materials
 Reading Books (supplemental and for independent reading)
 General Use Donation
- Total Donation: _____

Method of Payment

- Check
 Bill Me
 Visa
 MasterCard
 American Express
- Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____

Credit Card # _____ CID _____ Exp. date _____

Signature _____

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