

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.



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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.



Natural Connections Academy, Inc.



The OWL Connection

Updates and News:

With a new year comes new opportunities. For the remainder of the school year and through the summer we will be offering opportunities for students, including homeschool students, to get outside. We will be offering outdoor treks to students in our local area. Treks will last approximately 2 hours and will either be snowshoe hikes or regular hikes (based on weather and trail conditions). During those two hours, students will have the opportunity to hike on private land, like Stimson Lumber land, and in local parks (like Heyburn State Park).

The treks will be offered twice a week, in the morning and in the afternoon. We are hoping to have Tuesdays for 9-12 year olds and Thursdays for 6-8 year olds. If we have a large group of students, for example, from a consortium, we will also do mixed age groups. Each hike will have a focus topic. As examples, the first hike will focus on snowshoeing - practice, etiquette, and history, and the second will focus on local types of trees - characteristics, identification.

We also are exploring the idea of adding additional classes: Garden Discovery and What's in Idaho: Native Plants in the spring. We will expand our offerings by also creating a summer program. Included in the program will be some gardening, some native plant identification, and lots of hiking. In addition, there will be swimming, boating, games, and local field trips.

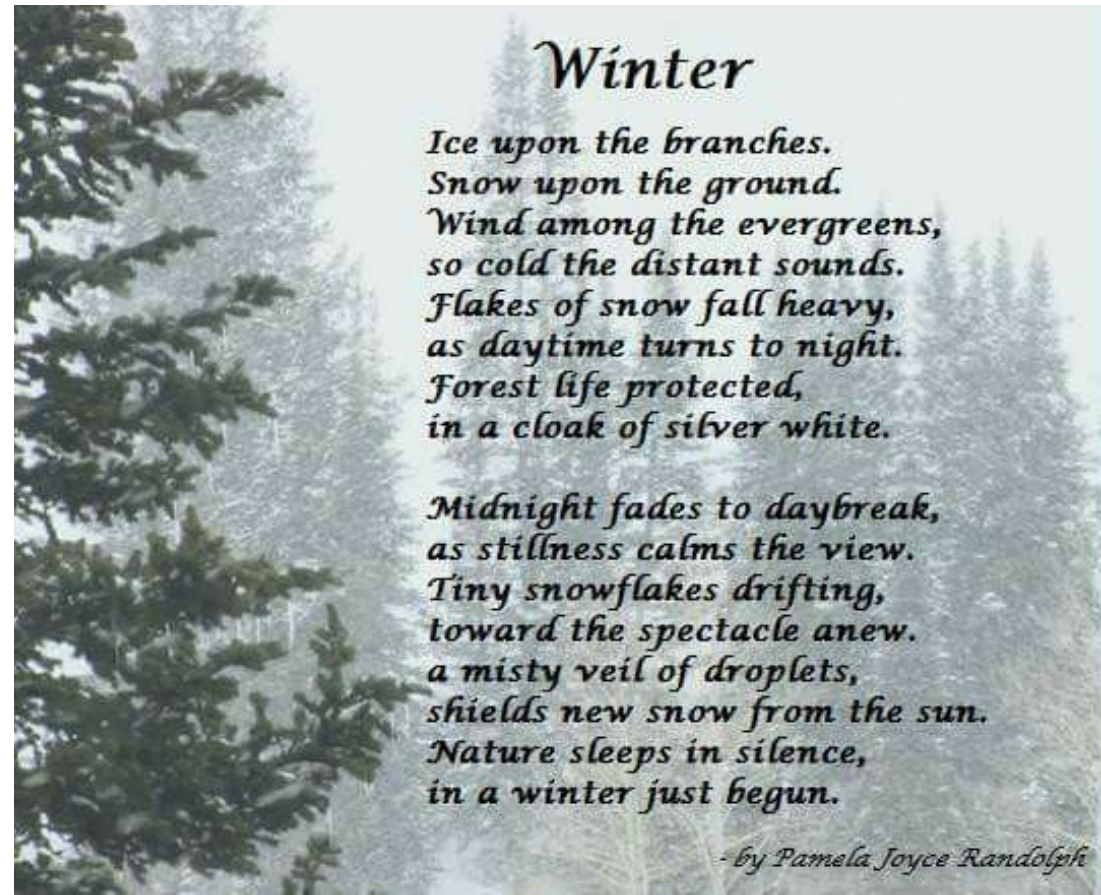
Jack, the school dog, and I continue to explore nature. We have been hiking on adjacent Stimson Lumber land and have seen many different animal tracks in the snow. There are so many moose tracks on the property that it amazes me. Coyote tracks and scat are fairly common, but we're keeping watch for cougar tracks since one has been caught on a trail camera in our area. We've investigated the drainage that fills Squaw Creek from our land



and the land around us. Due to recent rains and thawing from our false spring, the creek has been pretty full. As we walk along the trail, we can hear the creek roaring from the abundant runoff.

We are seeking a company to assist us in enhancing our marketing so that we can attract more students. Currently, we are in contact with companies that specialize in working with schools. At this point, we are unsure of which company to pursue or what path to take. However, it is evident that we should continue to expand our outreach. We hope that our interactions with students will continue to grow as a result of our marketing efforts and our added offerings.





Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature

Writer: Danielle Cohen

Continued from last month...

- **It provides different stimulation.** Nature may seem less stimulating than your son's violent video game, but in reality, it activates more senses—you can see, hear, smell, and touch outdoor environments. “As the young spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings, their senses narrow,” Louv warns, “and this reduces the richness of human experience.”
- **It gets kids moving.** Most ways of interacting with nature involve more exercise than sitting on the couch. Your kid doesn't have to be joining the local soccer team or riding a bike through the park—even a walk will get her blood pumping. Not only is exercise good for kids' bodies, but it seems to make them more focused, which is especially beneficial for kids with ADHD.
- **It makes them think.** Louv says that nature creates a unique sense of wonder for kids that no other environment can provide. The phenomena that occur naturally in backyards and parks everyday make kids ask questions about the earth and the life that it supports.
- **It reduces stress and fatigue.** According to the Attention Restoration Theory, urban environments require what's called directed attention, which forces us to ignore distractions and exhausts our brains. In natural environments, we practice an effortless type of attention known as soft fascination that creates feelings of pleasure, not fatigue.

So while screen time is the easier, more popular choice, it's important to set aside time for outdoor play.

BIRDS WE SEE IN NORHTERN IDAHO IN WINTER!



Red-breasted Nuthatch



Male House Finch



Female House Finch



American Goldfinch



Steller's Jay

There is evidence to suggest that spending time outdoors can have a number of benefits for children's education and development. Some studies have found that children who have access to nature and spend more time outdoors tend to have:

1. Improved attention and concentration: Children who have the opportunity to play and learn in natural environments may be better able to focus and pay attention, which can help with learning and academic achievement.
2. Enhanced creativity and problem-solving skills: Being in nature can provide a rich and varied environment that encourages children to explore, experiment, and think creatively.
3. Increased physical activity and improved physical health: Outdoor play and exercise can help children develop strong bodies and improve their overall physical health, which can have positive impacts on learning and achievement.
4. Improved mental health and well-being: Spending time in nature has been linked to a number of mental health benefits, including reduced stress and anxiety and improved mood.
5. Increased social and emotional skills: Outdoor play and learning can provide opportunities for children to interact with others, develop social skills, and build self-esteem.
6. While more research is needed to fully understand the link between outdoor time and children's long-term achievement in education, these findings suggest that outdoor experiences can have a positive impact on children's learning and development.

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: _____

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Address _____
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Signature _____

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