

April E. Zajko, M.Ed

**Experienced Nature-Based Educator offering professional development,
Mentoring & Coaching, as well as nature-based college courses!**

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You can check out my presentation style by viewing trainings on my [YouTube Channel](#)

FB Page: [“April’s Teaching Tree”](#) ~ Instagram: [@aprils_teaching_tree](#)



Biographical information:

Vermont licensed Early Childhood Educator and Reading Specialist

Masters of Education from the University of Virginia

Vermont Instructor Registry – Master level certified until 6/1/2025

Current position: Early Childhood Educational Consultant & College Instructor

Note - Custom workshops are also available. I need at least 6 weeks to prep for the training. There may be an additional fee for custom workshops. This is to pay for research, planning, and prep of the materials.

General information:

When setting up trainings for the first time with a new school or organization, I would prefer to do a phone consultation or Zoom meeting prior to scheduling our training to better prepare for your unique group. Please email me to set up time to discuss your training needs -

aprilzajko@gmail.com

My in-person workshops are hands-on and interactive. I prefer to be in a room with enough space for participants to move around to complete activities, and with adult sized tables & chairs so participants are able to sit and take notes comfortably.

My online trainings are kept engaging and interactive. Participants need to be able to have cameras on and be able to use their microphone so that they can actively engage with the the whole group and connect in a break out room activity.

Please limit in-person registration to 25 so that participants can be actively engaged. If a larger group size is necessary, I can reformat the workshop but it is less interactive with more than 25 participants. Online trainings are limited to 40 participants.

In-person trainings, for a portion of the workshop I would like to use a slideshow and to share photographs related to the course content. I will provide the computer and projector, but need the host to provide a screen and an electric outlet.

I strive to connect with the group, articulate the material that is relevant, engaging and use humor to help inspire the participants to get the most out of our training time.

My goal is for us to partner in a collaborative way so that your professional development training meets the goals & learning objectives we set at our pre-workshop consultation!

Professional Bio ~ April Zajko, M.Ed. is a licensed early childhood educator and reading specialist. She has a deep passion for the natural world, advocates for protecting play, and feels that giving children strong roots allows them to flourish and grow for a lifetime. April shares her knowledge of early childhood through teaching college courses, mentoring & coaching, and leading professional development trainings for early childhood educators and nature-based educators. Learn more about April at her website, www.aprilsteachingtree.com

Training Title: Shifting toward Nature-Based Approaches

(Training hours are dependent on the content selected. An “Intro” two hour option is available, but most programs select a one full day training for 6 hours. Multiple 2 hour sessions with optional additional hours of homework can be offered as well.)

Workshop Description: Are you ready to shift your program to include more outdoor learning and nature-based approaches? Participants will research six main developmental benefits of nature play so they can confidently share information with stakeholders about why they have shifted to outdoor learning. Participants will examine changes to the outdoor learning environment in order to foster deep engaged play and learning. Through interactive small group conversation we will create an “Action Plan” to prioritize next steps in developing their outdoor programs. Programs will receive resources to help support them to overcome the obstacles that they face. (THIS WORKSHOP IS TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF THE PROGRAM SO THE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES CAN BE CUSTOMIZED.)

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will complete a pre-survey to identify current strengths and weaknesses, and provide the opportunity to ask specific questions that can guide the content of the training.
- Participants will explore six main developmental benefits of nature play and practice communicating these benefits to stakeholders.
- Participants will examine outdoor learning environments and discuss changes to foster deep engagement in play and learning.
- Participants will create “Action Plans” for next steps in developing their outdoor programs.

Training Title: P.O.W.E.R. ~ Path of Wellness, Environment, and Relationships

(6 hours of training and optional additional hours of homework - total 10 hours)

Workshop Description: As child care providers it is easy to feel like we are giving away our power and begin to feel burned out. We will explore the eight domains of wellness and determine which areas in their life they need to add focus and attention. We will discuss ways to improve the environments that we live, work, and socialize that align with our core values. We will brainstorm how to develop nurturing and supportive relationships as a way to build support for one another. Throughout the session participants will hear inspiring stories of growth and transformation that others have found on their own path back to reclaiming their inner power.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will explore the eight domains of wellness and determine which areas in their life they need to add focus and attention.
- Participants will discuss ways to improve the environments that we live, work, and socialize that align with our core values.
- Participants will brainstorm how to develop nurturing and supportive relationships as a way to build support one another

Training Title: Leading with Empathy

(6 hour training as a 2+2+2 model – 2 hours in person, 2 hours of a practice component, 2 hours in person)

Workshop Description: Growing into effective early childhood educators requires us to go outside of our comfort zones, and to examine both our strengths and our weaknesses. Learn how to use active listening, observation, and empathetic response as a way to understand and build trusting relationships with children, families, and coworkers. Leading with empathy helps us to explore the concepts of courage, compassion, and connection as we explore how to create the most supportive learning environment for all children. Participants will look at specific ways to create an environment that is built on trust, inclusion, and conveys a sense of belonging to all. Participants will explore ways to share resources with their teams on how to teach emotional vocabulary, self-regulation, and techniques to model social and emotional skills for their staff and families.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about **Active Listening & Observation & Empathetic Response** as a way to understand and build trusting relationships with both children and families.
- Participants will explore the concepts of **courage, compassion, and connection** as we explore how to create the most supportive learning environment for all children.
- Participants will explore ways to share resources with their teams on how to teach **emotional vocabulary, self-regulation, and techniques to model social and emotional skills** for their staff and families.

Training Title: Self-Care for Care Providers

(6 hour training as a 2+2+2 model – 2 hours in person, 2 hours of a practice component, 2 hours in person)

Workshop Description: Early childhood educators are well trained in how to care for others and spend large amounts of time creating nurturing and caring environments for young children. This level of compassion can take a toll on care providers' health. Participants will learn the differences between burn out, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma. During the training, we will practice recognizing and addressing issues related to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. We will explore daily, weekly, and monthly self-care techniques that are easy to implement, cost little to no money, and that help re-energize care providers. Participants will create a **"Self Care Action Plan"** as a way to prioritize self-care.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will define the differences between burn out, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma.
- Participants will practice recognizing and addressing issues related to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue.
- Participants will explore daily, weekly, and monthly self-care techniques
- Participants will create a **"Self Care Action Plan"** as a way to prioritize self-care as a way to prevent overwhelm and burn out.

"Curriculum Development for Nature Based Early Childhood

Educators" is a 3 college credit course that can be taken for undergraduate or graduate credit through Castleton University in Vermont. Taught virtually by April Zajko, M.Ed.

Times: Three full day synchronous Zoom meetings; 9:00 am - 3:30 pm with a lunch break

Format: Online

- Zoom for three synchronous meetings
- Self paced modules of content and submission of work

Location: Online Learning Management System or Technology Tools: Zoom and Google Docs (we will not use Canvas for our course)

(Next time offered: Summer 2022 - dates to be announced)

Course Description: "Early childhood educators who support a nature-based approach in their classroom often discover that they need to embrace a unique design to curriculum development. This curriculum work often differs from conventional approaches included in college or previous internship experiences. In the context of examining indoor and outdoor environments, preschool and kindergarten teachers will discuss how to utilize nature to foster skill development in young children and how to meaningfully embed early learning standards in a nature-based program. We will discuss how we can incorporate authentic observations to assess and monitor our student's growth and to continually enrich our programs. Participants will feel empowered to incorporate developmentally appropriate teaching practices including: interactions, learning environment (indoors and outdoors), daily schedules, routines, and implement a dynamic nature-based approach in their classrooms. Participants will design a nature-based integrated curriculum unit that includes language and literacy, mathematical thinking, nature and sciences, social studies and creative expression for early education. Due to the small class size and course format, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their current practices as they begin to consider and solidify new concepts presented."

Growing Outdoor Classrooms ~ 3-credit course through Castleton University

Taught virtually by April Zajko, M.Ed.

Times: Two synchronous Zoom meetings on two Saturdays, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm with a lunch break

Format: Online

- Zoom for two synchronous meetings
- Self paced modules of content and submission of work

Location: Online Learning Management System or Technology Tools: Zoom and Google Docs (we will not use Canvas for our course)

(Next time offered: March - May 2022 - Registration at this link:

<https://www.fairbanksmuseum.org/educate/professional-development>

Cost: \$975

Course Description: Every outdoor classroom is as unique as the school or program that designs and builds it. Whether you are starting from scratch, transforming a traditional playground into a nature-inspired play area, or expanding an existing outdoor classroom, this course will help you define and prioritize design elements for your space. Research confirms that learning outdoors promotes child development and learning in all domains – physical, cognitive, and social/emotional. By understanding the benefits of outdoor learning, participants will discover ways to share information with stakeholders as a powerful way to communicate the value of creating nature inspired learning spaces

Audience: Early Childhood Educators (PreK - 3rd grade)

Course Goals

1. To explain the developmental benefits of learning in an outdoor classroom and create buy-in with stakeholders within your school or early childhood program.

2. To develop a vision map and action plan for developing an outdoor classroom that meets the need all children.
3. To define obstacles, develop solutions, and create a funding plan in order for the outdoor classroom to be established and thrive for years to come.
4. Establish or expand the outdoor classroom that meets the developmental needs of young children

Course Objectives ~Through participation in this class, the student will be able to:

- Recognize the differences between an outdoor classroom and traditional playground
- Describe the significance of nature-based education in early childhood (preschool through 3rd grade) and name the developmental benefits from learning in an outdoor classroom.
- Demonstrate ways to share information with stakeholders about outdoor classrooms as a way to communicate the value of creating nature inspired learning spaces
- Explore ways to get buy-in from stakeholders and discuss ways to assemble in inner circle of supporters
- Design a vision map of your outdoor classroom with multiple phases of implementation
- Research ways to secure funding to build or expand outdoor classrooms
- Develop an action plan for creating an outdoor classroom based on your vision and research.

Growing Outdoor Classrooms – Workshop Series

Each module can be presented as a two hour virtual or in-person training, or select multiple modules to be implemented as a series of training for your school, childcare program, or network.

1 Introduction to Outdoor Classrooms ~ Every outdoor classroom is as unique as the school or program that designs and builds it. This module will define terms related to outdoor classrooms, give an overview of what an outdoor classroom can become, and help define key factors in how outdoor classrooms differ from typical playgrounds. Participants will learn about the Engineering Design Process as an instructional model for all aged children in the outdoor classroom.

2 Developmental Benefits of Outdoor Classroom ~ Research confirms that learning outdoors promotes child development and learning in all domains – physical, cognitive, and social emotional. This module will increase participants' understanding of the benefits of outdoor learning and will learn ways to share information with stakeholders as a powerful way to communicate the value of creating nature inspired learning spaces. Once stakeholders understand how outdoor classrooms positively impact student growth, development, and learning they will be more confident in investing time and money into building or expanding the outdoor learning space.

3 “What’s your WHY?” ~ Getting clear on WHY you want to create or expand your Outdoor Classroom helps you to define your goals. In this module you will be tasked with writing down your “Why Story” and sharing your story with three people who might be interested in your project. Most people agree that children need more time outdoors, and sharing your WHY will help you find your inner circle of supporters.

4 Growing Your Team ~ Often an Outdoor Classroom begins as a dream of an individual teacher, but to really grow and thrive you will need a team of supporters. This module will provide a five-step plan for growing a dynamic team with sample letters, social media blurbs, and newsletter content that you can share with your stakeholders. After completing this module you will have the confidence to share your WHY with others which will help you organically grow your team! (Find Your Inner Circle of Supporters; Gain Administrative Support; Connecting with Community Members; Partnering with Area Businesses; Private Online Group to Help You Stretch & Grow)

5 Design Elements of an Outdoor Classroom ~ Whether you are starting from scratch, transforming a traditional playground into a nature-inspired play area, or expanding an existing outdoor classroom this module will help you define and prioritize design elements for your space. Participants will create the “Outdoor Classroom Map & Vision” which is a scaled map of your current space and how you would like to transform the space. In this model participants will also list their current resources, identify barriers, and create a wish list so that their vision of

an outdoor classroom begins to take shape. Find a visible space within your program to display your “Outdoor Classroom Map & Vision” so you will begin to get more buy in. Learn how to conduct a child survey to get the most important input...the children themselves!

6 Immediate Results with Little (or no) Money ~ One of the most important things about Outdoor Classrooms is to keep it simple. It is easy during the design phase to get overwhelmed by the options or end up spending countless hours on Pinterest gathering ideas without gaining steam. This module is designed for you to roll up your sleeves and make the first phase of changes to your outdoor space. You will photograph and share with your families about the changes and the benefits of creating this space. You will also add more detail your “Wish List” to post on your “Vision Map”. Projects like this one take some energy to get started, but once the ball is rolling the buy in and excitement builds.

7 Funding & Power of Story ~ As the old saying goes, ‘money doesn’t grow on trees’. This module will explore seven different ways to fund your outdoor classroom. Participants will also explore the power of story in creating a compelling case for getting others to support this project.

8 How We Teach in an Outdoor Classroom ~ Children learn through play, so we should prioritize unstructured child-initiated PLAY during our outdoor time. This module will explore developmentally effective approaches to: staff/child interactions, circle time outdoors, seasonal considerations, open-ended inquiry, clean up procedures, and considerations for developmentally appropriate practice while teaching outdoors. Participants will help contribute to a list of curriculum resources to use to foster outdoor learning.

9 Content Areas ~ Children learn through play and teachers can add materials that foster learning within all content areas. In this module, we will closely examine ways to use the outdoors as an instructional tool for learning activities in all content areas ~ math, science, literacy, gross motor, and art. We will how to document student learning while outdoors.

10 Tools of the Trade ~ A powerful teaching truth of Outdoor Classroom is that ‘less is more’. This module will explore suggestions for materials, science tools, toys, and loose parts that can enhance learning and development in the outdoor classroom. Learn practical ways to rotate and store materials that make the process easier to implement with mixed ages of children.

11 Risk in the Outdoor Classroom ~ ensuring healthy and safe environments is the top priority of licensed programs, but we also know that children need to have the opportunity to take healthy risks. This module will help you navigate through some of the “Big Bad Wolf” issues that arise in the context of Outdoor Classrooms: parent worries about health & safety, staff perceptions, child care licensing regulations, liability insurance concerns, and seasonal considerations. Participants will have the opportunity to read written policies from other programs and will draft language to add to their parent handbook.

12 Obstacles Implementing Outdoor Classrooms ~ This module will offer tips and tricks of the trade to help overcome obstacles in our outdoor spaces. We will explore perceived barriers that keep students stuck indoors. : teacher & staff lack of confidence teaching outdoors, schedule confines, ticks, poison ivy, storage, weather, clothing, perception of administrators, and academic pressures. Participants throughout the course are encouraged to share questions, concerns, and obstacles that they are facing by posting in our private FB group. This module can be tailored to the specific needs of the cohort, so post your questions as we go!

13 Sustainability Plan: Building Family & Community Relationships ~ Growing Outdoor Classrooms is a journey. Take time to celebrate how far your project has come, even if you’ve only taken small steps. Create a simple scrapbook or binder of the project to date. Share photos and thank you notes with all your supporters. This module will help you plan out what is next along this journey and will give you strategies for building even deeper family and community relationships. You will create a “Sustainability Plan” that works for you and will keep this journey going. The private FB group will continue to exist and I hope that you will want to continue to be active in the group.

Title: Active Indoor Play Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description : Childcare providers know that healthy children are ACTIVE all day, but how can we arrange our learning environment to support gross motor play. This two-hour training will help childcare providers feel ready to support gross motor play indoors on days that they can't get outside. Learn more about the gross motor skills children ages 0-5 should know, explore LOTS of ways to get children moving indoors, explore how to incorporate yoga activities into circle time and transitions throughout the day, and learn how to teach calming and self-regulation with slower movement & breathing activities.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will define gross motor skills for children ages 0-5 years old and will create a binder of resources that will keep kids moving and engaged throughout the day.
- Participants will explore a wide variety of indoor gross motor activities that will keep children engaged and burn off excess energy
- Participants will learn yoga activities to use at circle time and transitions, as well as learning how to teach calming and self-regulation with slower movement activities.
- Participants will explore ways to create a “Cozy Cottage” space in their program for children to use to self-regulate.

Training Title: **Curriculum Builder Series** **Length = 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model**

Workshop Description: This is a two part series to help child care providers feel more comfortable creating curriculum and writing lesson plans tailored to the children in their programs. The first evening session will focus on developing integrated curriculum units using a template to gather ideas and align activities to the Vermont Early Learning Standards. The second evening session will focus on how to take the 'big ideas' of the curriculum unit and create weekly lesson plans that foster learning and play for all children in your program. Participants will be expected to complete about one hour of homework between the two sessions so that at the completion of the second evening, participants will leave with a solid foundation of materials to implement a new curriculum unit in their program.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will learn how to use a template to create integrated curriculum units for early childhood settings.
2. Participants will explore resources for developing their own curriculum units and discuss ways to manage materials and supplies for successfully implementing the units in their programs.
3. Participants will explore a variety of lesson plan formats that could be used in early childhood settings.
4. Participants will gain knowledge in effectively writing custom lesson plans that meet the needs of the children in their programs.

Training Title: Curriculum Basics Length – 2 hours

Workshop Description: Interested in starting to create your own curriculum but not sure where to start? This is the workshop for you. Learn how to take big ideas and make them into a unit plan with weekly lesson plans tailored to the children in your program.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will utilize a template to create integrated curriculum units and will explore a variety of lesson plan formats that could be used in early childhood settings.
2. Participants will explore resources for developing their own curriculum units and discuss ways to manage materials and supplies for successfully implementing the units in their programs.
3. Participants will gain knowledge in effectively writing custom lesson plans that meet the needs of the children in their programs.

Training Title: Infants and Toddlers are Marvelous Mathematicians! Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: We know that children develop mathematical concepts and skills very early in life. This workshop will explore how to set up a developmentally appropriate learning environment and what types of math materials are safe even for infants! We will explore how adults can use intentional 'math talk' and teachable moments to create math learning experience for infants and toddlers as they explore and discover the world around them. We will look closely at ways to integrate math into daily events, as well as explore ways to create engaging activities to meet the needs of all abilities in your care.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will have hands-on opportunities to interact with a variety of math materials appropriate for infants and toddlers.
2. Participants will investigate ways to set up the learning environment to foster math learning.
3. Participants will develop activities to address all four mathematical strands of the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Training Title: S.T.E.A.M.: Making Math Count Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: Are you ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work on fostering deep mathematical thinking for your preschoolers...throughout the whole day? This workshop will explore how to set up the learning environment to foster S.T.E.A.M, what types of math materials to offer, and how to use effective questioning to support all children. We will look closely at ways to integrate math into daily events, including arrival, transitions, small groups, and snacks/meals, as well as explore ways create engaging S.T.E.A.M. activities to meet the needs of all abilities in your preschool class.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will have hands-on opportunities to interact with a wide variety of math materials appropriate to use with children ages 3-5.
2. Participants will investigate ways to set up the S.T.E.A.M. learning environment to foster math learning.
3. Participants will develop activities to address all four mathematical strands of the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Training Title: Magnificent Math Materials Length – 2 hours

Workshop Description: Buying hundreds of dollars of math materials is likely not in the budget for most child care providers, but having hands-on learning tools for young children is essential. During this workshop participants will discover lots of ways to add inexpensive materials to their program in order to foster mathematical learning. We will discuss ways to set up the learning environment to foster math that is developmentally appropriate for infants through kindergarten. By utilizing the Vermont Early Learning Standards as a framework, participants will develop activities to address all four mathematical strands and will leave with a plethora of ideas to bring back to their programs.

Learning Objectives:

4. Participants will have hands-on opportunities to interact with a wide variety of math materials.
5. Participants will investigate ways to set up the learning environment to foster math learning for infants through kindergarten.
6. Participants will develop activities to address all four mathematical strands

Training Title: **Barnyard Math** Length – 2 hours

Workshop Description:

Young children are eager to learn how about farms, and this workshop will help providers find ways to incorporate literacy, movement, and LOTS of math into a dynamic study life on a farm. This workshop will explore how to implement an integrated curriculum unit appropriate for preschool through kindergarten. Participants will leave with many ideas for creating math materials that meet the new Vermont Early Learning Standards. Participants will also receive a list of quality children’s literature and access to an integrated curriculum unit.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore ways to incorporate early math skills in a dynamic study about life on a farm.

Participants will create math materials that meet the new Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching a farm theme, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Training Title: Math Naturally for Preschoolers Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: Children love to play with items from nature, and this workshop will explore ways to use natural materials (sticks, pinecones, shells, rocks, etc.) to practice early math concepts for preschoolers. We will explore the new Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) and find ways to make homemade math materials that touch on every math standard. During the workshop, participants will create their own collections of items to use in their programs, and will learn about additional ways to gather natural items to inspire your young mathematicians.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore the Vermont Early Learning Standards for math and will practice games and activities to teach the standards

Participants will discover ways to use natural materials to teach math standards, and will create their own collection of items to use in their programs.

Note for host => For each participant to leave with a nice set of materials, I will need help gathering natural items such as sticks, pinecones, shells, and rocks. If possible, participants can walk around the workshop site to gather materials. Or the host and the trainer (that’s me!) can both bring materials to the training.

Training Title: Everyday Science Length – 2 hours

Workshop Description: Young children are natural scientists. They observe, ask questions, predict, and test out theories all day long. This workshop will give providers lots of ideas on how to set up the environment to foster scientific thinking. Participants will learn engaging ways to get children observing, questioning, and investigating using materials that are often found in childcares. We will use the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) as a framework for developing hands-on fun science activities for your youngest learners

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will explore ways to set up the learning environment to foster science inspired play.
2. Participants will gain knowledge in ways to create play-based, hands-on activities for teaching the science standards in the new VELs.

Training Title: Breathing Life into the Art Center

Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: Open ended art experiences give children the opportunity to learn about their world and about themselves. This workshop will help you create an engaging art center that will work for both toddlers and preschoolers, using low cost materials and supplies. We will draft a materials list, discuss organizing tips and tricks, and explore art techniques that are kid-tested and preschool teacher approved! We will also learn how to focus on the process of art (not the product) so that children are learning and growing in meaningful ways, and how to communicate this important information to parents.

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will design an engaging art center to meet the needs of the children in their programs.
2. Participants will draft an art materials list and explore ways to organize the learning space.
3. Participants will explore art techniques that support learning for children ages toddlers through age 5.

Title: Eco Art Length – 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: Are you looking for ways to incorporate age-appropriate “green” and fun art experiences with your children? Come and get inspired to use a wide variety of recycled and natural materials. Leave with fresh ideas for teaching about caring for our planet by showing children how to reduce, reuse, recycle, and repurpose. Activities to take back to your center will include sculpture, collage, marbling, paper mache, land art, and more!

Training Title: Gardening All Year 2 hours; or 6 hours as a 2+2+2 model

Workshop Description: Do you want to help children connect to the natural world through gardening, composting, and observing the seasonal changes happening in our local ecosystems? This workshop will explore how to implement a year-round study of plants, using both indoor and outdoor gardening activities. Participants will gain many ideas for creating engaging learning environments, lists of suggested plants for children, science experiments, tips for sensory explorations, and meaningful ways to get young children growing plants all year!

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will discuss ways to incorporate both indoor and outdoor gardening concepts into preschool and kindergarten classrooms.

2. Participants will investigate a variety of ways to create engaging learning explorations to teach characteristics of living organisms and local ecosystems.
3. Participants will sketch their current outdoor learning environments and will illustrate changes they would like to make to enhance child engagement with the natural world (DELETE this objective if offered as a 90 minute or 2 hour workshop)

Title: Everyday Science: Easy ways to bring science into your childcare setting

Workshop Description:

Young children are natural scientists. They observe, ask questions, predict, and test out theories all day long. This workshop will give providers lots of ideas on how to set up the learning environment to foster scientific thinking. Participants will learn engaging ways to get children observing, questioning, and investigating using materials that are often found in childcares. We will use the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) as a framework for developing hands-on fun science activities for your youngest learners.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore ways to set up the learning environment to foster science inspired play.

Participants will gain knowledge in ways to create play-based, hands-on activities for teaching the science standards in the new VELs.

Workshop Title: Story Time & STEM

Presenters: April Zajko, M.Ed. – aprilzajko@gmail.com

Length: 2 hours

Workshop Description:

This hands-on workshop will utilize children's literature as a way to dive into creative project-based activities that target both Math and Science early learning standards. Learn how preschool classrooms can use 'story time' as way to launch deeply engaged Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) projects. The workshop will begin with an overview of the STEM model of learning, review open-ended questioning techniques, and provide information on how to design an engaging integrated

curriculum unit based on a single children's book. Small groups will have time to begin their own unit that they will take back to their programs.

NOTE: Each program team should bring a copy of the Vermont Early Learning Standards, a copy of the objectives from Teaching Strategies Gold, and a copy of a children's book to design their unit around.

Training Title: Messy Play for Preschoolers

Workshop Description: Are you looking for ways to add messy play and sensory experiences to your program? Well roll up your sleeves and join us! We will learn how this type of play fosters fine motor development, hand/eye coordination, early math skills, language development, and inquiry based science skills. This will be a hands-on training and so please come prepared to get your hands dirty! Participants will leave with a recipe book that they can share with families!

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore the Vermont Early Learning Standards and how messy play and sensory experiences help children practice many standards including math, language, and science.

Participants will create several messy play recipes, participate in hands-on sensory play activities, and will leave with a messy play recipe book.

*Note for host => Need access to a microwave (or an electric tea kettle to boil water). There is an **additional \$50 materials fee** for this training to cover the cost of the supplies for the recipes we make in class. All materials will be left with the host or can be 'raffled off' amongst the participants by drawing names from a hat.*

Title: Bringing the Outdoors In: Creating Joyful Learning Environments

Workshop Description: Are you looking for ways to improve your classroom or child care environment? Would you like to bring the great outdoors into your program? Create softness and warmth? We will explore ways to transform our learning spaces to help children connect with the natural world...so children can explore, investigate, build, and discover using treasures from the Earth.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore ways to set up indoor environments that foster creativity, joy, and learning for young children.

Participants will discover ways to use natural materials for sensory play, fine motor work, early math skills, and construction.

Integrated Curriculum Units

Science Based Integrated Units (not all of these have descriptions included in this document)

What's the Weather?

3-2-1 Blast Off! (Solar System Study)

Force and Motion for Young Children

Five Senses

Tree Study Year Round

All About Apples & Pumpkins

Farm Unit

Animals in Winter & Hibernation Party & Tracks

Winter Science Concepts

Light & Shadows

Maple Sugaring

Birds & Nests

Gardening

Pond Study

Everyday Science: Easy ways to bring science into your childcare setting

Gardening All Year

Title: Winter Science Concepts

Workshop Description:

One of the best parts of working with children in Vermont is helping to connect them to the natural environment all year long. Winter may drive many providers indoors, but this workshop will give you a huge toolkit of ideas for ways to incorporate winter science concepts in to your childcare or preschool program. There will be lots of hands-on science explorations that will get you ready for engaging your children during our long winter ahead. There will be centers set up for participants to rotate through to engage in discovery-based lessons. Investigations and centers will include: creating a winter forest scape for your room, Snowflake Bentley activities, make a snowflake catcher necklace, soapy snowmen, ice play, blubber & insulation experiment, indoor & outdoor gross motor games with a winter theme, thematic healthy snacks, and snowy art projects. We will explore quality children's literature that can be used to introduce and reinforce the science concepts being presented. Participants will also be given lesson plans and detailed information to implement a winter thematic unit for ages 3-6.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn about a famous Vermonter, Snowflake Bentley, and learn how to share his story with children and learn how to make a simple tool with children to catch & view snowflakes.

Participants will leave the workshop with a plethora of teaching tools to teach hands-on inquiry based lessons, and will receive detailed lesson plans for teaching a winter theme for preschool aged children.

Title: Winter Scientists

Workshop Description: Winter is a perfect time for early childhood educators to foster scientific inquiry skills with our children. We will explore ten science explorations and experiments for children to gain a deeper understanding of the physical properties of objects and materials. We will also examine how to offer tools and other simple technology for engaged playful winter learning.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore ten science explorations and experiments for children to gain a deeper understanding of the physical properties of objects and materials.

Participants will examine how to offer tools and other simple technology for engaged playful winter learning.

Title: Pond Study

Workshop Description: Hop on over to this fun interactive training to learn about Pond Life! We will explore ways to teach about animal life in a pond ecosystem. Participants will also learn how to set up centers inspired by ponds and frogs, including dramatic play, science center, play dough center, sensory bin, water table, writing center, and art. Participants will receive two weeks of lesson plans for teaching children about ponds.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn ways to teach about animal life in a pond ecosystem.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching ponds and frogs, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Title: 3-2-1 Blast Off!

Workshop Description: Are you looking for ways to incorporate literacy, math, and music into a dynamic study about Outer Space? This workshop will explore how to implement an integrated curriculum unit appropriate for preschool through kindergarten. Participants will leave with many ideas for creating dramatic play props, an interactive “command center” to teach early math skills, an annotated list of quality children’s literature, and access to lesson plans & an integrated curriculum unit for you to use in your program. The presenter is an educator who has worked at the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium and has taught this unit with preschoolers at the museum’s Balch Nature School and with their summer camps for ages 5-10.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore ways to incorporate literacy, math, and music into a dynamic study about Outer Space.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching about Outer Space, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Participants will make dramatic play props to engage their young astronauts. (delete this objective if offered as a 90 minute workshop)

Title: What’s the Weather?

Workshop Description: Join us for a lively discussion about ways to incorporate weather concepts into your preschool in kindergarten classrooms. During the workshop there will be learning stations set up for participants to engage in discovery-based lessons. Add new ideas for gross motor activities, sensory play, fine motor, math, and literacy. We will explore quality children’s literature that can be used to introduce and reinforce science concepts presented that can be used year-round. Participants will also be given access to an in-depth integrated curriculum unit for children in preschool – kindergarten.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore daily routines that they could implement in their teaching to observe, document, and create visual representations of the weather throughout the year.

Participants will discover ways to incorporate literacy, math, and music into a dynamic study about weather.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching about weather, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Title: Birds & Nests

Workshop Description: Spring is a perfect time to study local birds and the life cycle from egg to adult. Participants will also learn how to set up centers inspired by birds and nests, including dramatic play, science center, play dough center, sensory bin, water table, writing center, and art. Participants will receive two weeks of lesson plans for teaching children about birds.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn ways to teach about local birds and the life cycle of birds.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching about birds and nests, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Title: Gardening with Children

Workshop Description:

Roll up your sleeves and get ready to get dirty. This workshop will explain simple garden designs, review kid approved plants, tips for gardening with children, and explain favorite planting projects. Participants will also learn how to set up centers inspired by a garden theme, including dramatic play, science center, play dough center, sensory bin, water table, writing center, and art. Participants will receive three weeks of lesson plans for teaching children about plants and gardens.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will learn many different ways to begin (or expand) gardening with their children.

Participants will receive an integrated curriculum unit for teaching about gardening, appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.

Title: Natural Materials to Inspire Literacy Development

Workshop Description: Nature offers a bounty of materials that can be transformed into meaningful and engaging literacy activities for young children. Sticks, stones, bark, moss, clay, leaves, sand, pinecones, and shells are just a sampling of the materials that we will explore as mediums for teaching literacy. Come learn how to select and offer natural materials to create a literacy rich environment both indoors and outdoors. Learn ways to create materials to help children develop the foundational skills needed for engaging with print and explore writing in wide variety of modalities. We will use the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) as a framework for developing hands-on fun literacy activities for your youngest learners.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will discuss ways to incorporate natural materials both indoors and outdoors to help children develop the foundational skills needed for engaging with print and to inspire children's writing.

Participants will investigate a variety of materials (sticks, stones, bark, moss, clay, leaves, sand, pinecones, and shells) to create engaging learning activities that support literacy development.

Mindful Learning Environments, led by April Zajko, M.Ed.

Workshop Description: Come examine practical ways to make early childhood environments that are welcoming and inviting for young children and their families. Creating calm and nurturing learning spaces will foster cognitive growth, as well as social and emotional learning which are essential in the holistic development of all children. Participants will explore breathing techniques and calm down strategies to use with young children to promote self regulation. We will take a virtual tour of several preschool classrooms to closely examine how they have created calm and cozy areas that meet the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) while being aesthetically pleasing and home-like.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will explore effective strategies to promote social and emotional learning by designing cozy and nurturing spaces for even the busiest of classrooms.

Participants will practice using the ECERS tool to compare and contrast photographs of early childhood classrooms.

Participants will explore breathing techniques and calm down strategies to use with young children to promote self regulation.

“Who Will Help Me Bake the Bread?” led by April Zajko, M.Ed.

Workshop Description: Journey with Little Red Hen on the path from planting wheat berries, caring for the wheat, milling the wheat, making the bread, and best of all, eating FRESH bread. Participants will learn easy ways to bake bread and make fresh butter with their children. Examine a collection of children’s books that explore the process of making bread and a wide assortment of Little Red Hen stories.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will examine a collection of children’s books that explore the process of making bread.

Participants will identify the steps from wheat berries to bread and learn engaging ways to involve children in the bread making process.

Participants will receive access to an integrated curriculum unit for teaching about wheat, bread, and Little Red Hen activities appropriate for preschool through kindergarten learners.