

Coaching & Mentoring CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 3 • June 2025

Our goal is to provide you with practical, inspiring resources to support your work and professional growth in the early learning and child care field.

Welcome to the June's edition of the ECCDC Coaching and Mentoring newsletter which will focus on **environmental sustainability practices** in early learning and child care.

“Environmental sustainability in early childhood involves integrating eco-friendly practices into daily routines and activities to build a foundation of environmental awareness and responsibility in young children” (Google, n.d.).



Spotlight on Environmental Sustainability

In a time when the changing climate is impacting the health and well-being of children across the globe - which is particularly evident in Canada during the wildfire season - what can we do in our role as ECEs to support environmentally sustainable practices? This is something that many involved in early learning and child care in Canada have been contemplating, including the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF). Check out the CCCC article which includes useful resources, 'Simple as ABC: Everyday Actions for Healthy and Sustainable Child Care Settings' by [clicking here](#).



To find out what sustainability in early childhood education is please [click here](#) or on the image at left.

Environmentally Sustainable Practices in Early Childhood Education by Sara Abbara, Brock University, Student Intern with the ECCDC

Definition

Environmentally sustainable practices in early childhood education involve teaching children how to care for the environment through everyday actions. These practices encourage awareness, responsibility, and respect for nature while fostering a sense of stewardship (Davis, 2015).

Sustainable education integrates environmental concepts into learning through nature-based experiences, waste reduction, and conservation efforts.

Characteristics of Environmentally Sustainable Practices

- Encourages eco-friendly behaviours from a young age.
- Promotes awareness of natural ecosystems.
- Teaches resource conservation and waste reduction.
- Supports outdoor, nature-based learning experiences.
- Develops a sense of responsibility for the planet.

Types of Sustainable Practices in Early Learning

- **Waste Reduction** – teaching children to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials.
- **Energy Conservation** – encouraging habits like turning off lights and saving water.
- **Composting & Gardening** – introducing children to growing food and composting waste.
- **Outdoor Learning** – engaging children in nature to develop environmental awareness.



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- **Eco-friendly Materials** – using sustainable and non-toxic classroom resources.
- **Animal and Habitat Care** – exploring local wildlife and their ecosystems.
- **Climate Awareness** – educating young learners about the effects of climate change in simple terms.

The Role of Educators in Promoting Sustainability

- Integrating sustainability themes into daily routines and activities.
- Providing hands-on experiences like gardening, recycling, and composting.
- Encouraging discussions about nature and conservation.
- Modeling sustainable behaviours such as reducing waste and conserving energy.
- Creating a curriculum that includes outdoor and experiential learning.

Research and Theoretical Foundations

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory

Hands-on, nature-based learning supports children's development in the preoperational stage (ages 2-7) by fostering exploration and curiosity (Piaget, 1952).

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Environmental education thrives in collaborative settings, where children learn through guided experiences with educators and peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Ontario's Early Years Frameworks

- *How Does Learning Happen?* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014) emphasizes environmental responsibility as part of well-being and engagement.
- *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (ELECT) (Best Start Panel, 2007) recognizes sustainability education as key to developing social responsibility.

Example of Sustainable Practices in Action

Activity: Creating a Classroom Garden (Hands-on Environmental Learning)		
Learning Areas: Science, Social Responsibility, Fine Motor Skills		
Step 1: Set Up the Environment	Step 2: Inquiry & Exploration	Step 3: Reflection & Extension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a garden space in the classroom or outdoor area. Provide child-friendly tools, soil, and seeds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to plant seeds and observe their growth. Discuss plant needs like sunlight, water, and healthy soil. Teach composting by using food scraps as natural fertilizer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask children questions like “<i>What do plants need to grow?</i>” and “<i>How can we take care of them?</i>” Document learning through drawings, journals, and group discussions Extend learning by harvesting vegetables and preparing a healthy snack.

Resources for Sustainable Practices in Early Learning Books & Articles

Harvard Center on the Developing Child. (n.d.). *The benefits of nature-based learning*.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Algonquin Books.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *Teaching sustainability in early childhood education*. <https://www.naeyc.org>

Sobel, D. (1996). *Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education*. The Orion Society.

Wilson, R. (2012). *Nature and young children: Encouraging creative play and learning in natural environments*. Routledge.

Government Documents

Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning (2007). *Early learning for every child today*. Ontario Ministry of Education. Queen’s Printers Press.

Davis, J. (2015). *Young children and the environment: Early education for sustainability* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *How does learning happen? Ontario’s pedagogy for the early years*. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf>

Piaget, J. (1952). *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*. International Universities Press. London.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

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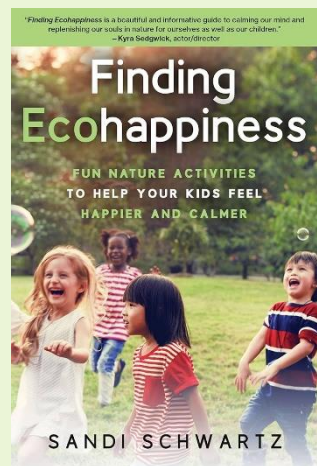
Early Childhood Innovation: *Sustainability and Structure*. [Click here](#) to watch the video or on the image at left.

Professional Development and Networking Opportunities

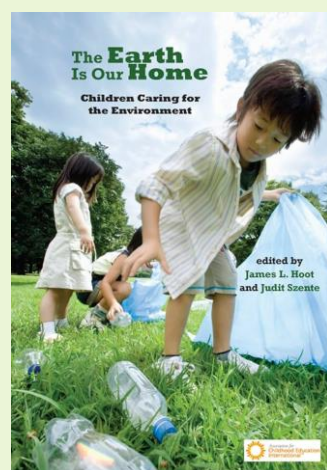
We are taking a break from training over the summer and working tirelessly to develop a sensational ESTEEM offering for Fall 2025 through Spring 2026. Look out for the 2025-2026 ESTEEM which will hit your inbox later in the summer or [click here](#) to check out the training events and registration near the end of summer.

Sustainability Books and Resources

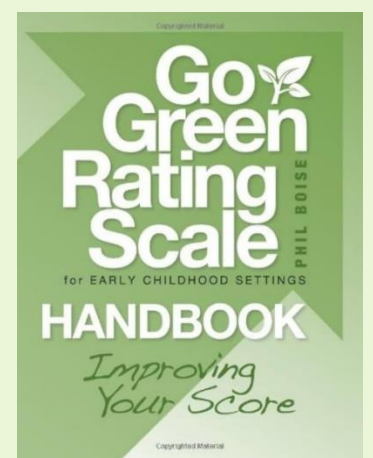
The following books are available to borrow from the ECCDC lending library and for purchase via the [ECCDC E-Store](#).



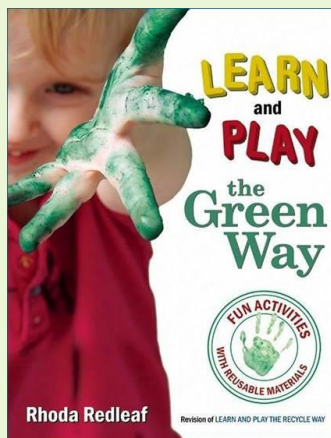
Finding Echohappiness:
Fun nature activities to
help your kids feel
happier and calmer by
Sandi Schwartz



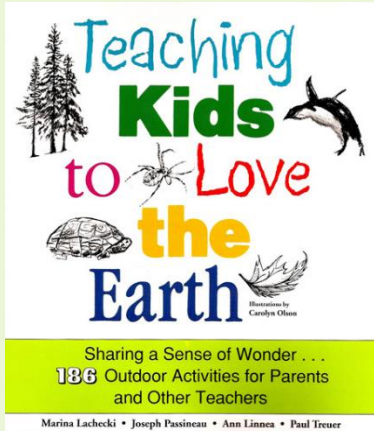
The Earth is Our Home:
Children Caring for the
Environment by James
L. Hoot & Judit Szente



Go Green Rating Scale for
Early Childhood Settings
Handbook: Improving
your Score by Phil Boise



Learn and Play the
Green Way: Fun
activities with reusable
materials by Rhoda
Redleaf



Teaching Kids to Love the
Earth by Marina Lachecki,
Joseph Passineau, Ann
Linnea & Paul Treuer

ECCDC Blogs and Podcasts

Treasure baskets are the ultimate loose parts for infants and toddlers; however, they can be adapted for all ages and are a great way to support sustainability as they can be developed using recycled and upcycled materials. To find out more about treasure baskets, check out the ECCDC blog and podcast below.



[Click here](#) to read *Treasure Baskets at Every Age!*



[Click here](#) to listen to *Treasure Baskets*.

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Resource Delivery Service

For those of you who have memberships with ECCDC, we offer a resource delivery service. For more information or to arrange a delivery directly to your program, please contact the ECCDC at 905.646.7311 ext. 304 or by [email](#).

Coming Soon

Mark your calendars! The next ECCDC podcast drops on Wednesday June 18, 2025. This episode explores Nature-based Outdoor Play.

In this episode we will be joined by Joclyn, Joelle, and Tiffney from Greenbelt Academy and Early Learning Centre in Niagara, who will be sharing their journeys to nature-based outdoor play and discussing their approach to nature-based outdoor play.

The ECCDC podcast is available on [Spotify](#) and [Apple](#) Podcasts! Stay tuned - you won't want to miss these insightful conversations. [Click here](#) to listen to other ECCDC Podcasts

Educator Well Being through Mindfulness

Gratitude Journaling: This month's mindfulness experience to support educator well-being revolves around the enriching practice of gratitude journaling. This simple, yet powerful activity involves taking time to reflect and write down things for which you are thankful. It's about recognizing and appreciating the positives in your life, big or small.

The Power of Gratitude

Gratitude journaling is more than listing the good things in life; it's a practice that can shift your mindset, enhance your mood, and even impact your overall well-being. By focusing on gratitude, you train your mind to identify and appreciate the positives, which can significantly reduce stress and increase happiness.



How to Start a Gratitude Journal

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Choose Your Medium | Whether it's a physical notebook or a digital app, choose a journaling medium that feels comfortable and accessible to you. |
| Set Aside Regular Time | Dedicate a few minutes each Monday to write in your gratitude journal. Mornings can be an ideal time to set a positive tone for the day. |
| Be Specific | Instead of generic statements, try to be specific about what you're grateful for. Detailed entries can provide deeper insights into what truly brings you joy and contentment. |
| Reflect on the Why | When writing about what you're grateful for, delve into why it makes you feel thankful. This deepens the practice and enhances its benefits. |
| Include the Challenges | Sometimes, it's helpful to write about challenges and what they teach you or how they help you grow. This can foster a sense of gratitude even in difficult times. |

Benefits of Gratitude Journaling

Regular gratitude journaling can lead to increased optimism, better sleep, and even improvements in physical health. It's a practice that encourages you to look beyond the immediate hurdles and find joy and meaning in what you already have.

Making It a Habit

Like any practice, the key to reaping the benefits of gratitude journaling is consistency. Over time, this ritual can become a cherished part of your Mindful Monday, helping you start your week on a positive, grateful note.

By incorporating gratitude journaling into your routine, you're not just recording happy moments, you're actively cultivating a mindset of appreciation and positivity that can transform your perspective on life.