



# Outdoor Nature-Based Licensing/Certification

IPEL Presentation

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[www.dcyf.wa.gov](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov)



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

# SB 5151 Passed – What does that mean?



- Washington first in nation to permanently license outdoor, nature-based child care for preschool and school age children
- Aligns with DCYF's Strategic and Racial Equity Plan



# Outdoor Preschool Pilot





# What did we learn?





# Approach to Risk, Risky Play and Protecting Children

- **Hazard** = a source of harm that is not obvious to the child, such that the potential for injury is hidden; or a source of harm that is greater than a child can manage to avoid.
- **Risk** = a situation in which a child can recognize and evaluate a challenge and decide on a course of action, although there is the potential for injury. In this context, risk can be necessary to support healthy child development.
- **Risky Play** = play that is thrilling, exciting and where there is a risk of physical injury. This includes play involving heights, speed, dangerous tools or near dangerous elements (e.g., fall into something).
- **Benefit-Risk Assessment** = a process of identifying hazards and risky play elements in early childhood outdoor play and making plans to mitigate children's risk of injury while maintaining the developmental benefits for children.



# Myth-Busting

Don't go outside in the cold, you'll get sick.

Better instruction happens indoors.

Children have more injuries outside.



# Benefits of Outdoor, Nature-Based Programs



## Better physical development

- Strength, eyesight, hearing, bone structure, immune system and lifelong interest in physical activities.

## Better cognitive development

- Executive functioning, self-regulation, self-esteem, observation and problem-solving, abstract reasoning and focus.

## Better social-emotional development

- Independence, collaboration, reduced anxiety/depression, empathy and care for nature.

## STEM learning

## Educator/adult well-being



# Nature-Based ECE National Context (Natural Start Alliance Survey)

**Estimated number of nature-based preschools and forest kindergartens in the U.S. by year**



As of 2017, at least 250 nature preschools and forest kindergartens operate in 43 states. Many are concentrated in the Pacific Northwest, California, the Upper Midwest, the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

**Children enrolled in nature preschools or kindergarten programs by race, ethnicity or origin (some children belong to more than one category)**

Race, Ethnicity or Origin	Average (Mean) Reported Percentage
White	83%
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin	7%
Asian	6%
Black or African American	3%
Middle Eastern or North African	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	<1%
Other Race, Ethnicity or Origin	1%

<http://naturalstart.org/bright-ideas/nature-preschools-and-kindergartens-record-numbers-us>



# Social Responsibility

By licensing/certifying outdoor programs, we can:

1. Increase options for all families.
2. Increase access for families that need subsidies, regulated or full-day care.
3. Promote connections to nature for more children.
4. Honor tribal relations through partnership and curriculum.



# Where do we go from here?

5151 in effect since July 25, 2021

Send interested folks to:

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/licensed-provider/onb>

Outdoor nature-based orientation scheduled  
Application process following orientation  
ONB licensing/certification process begins!



# Licensing/Certification Process



OPP Licensors will continue to support ONB

Will contract to standards as we work with stakeholders to write, review and file ONB WACs



# Questions | Feedback





# Thanks

