

Reflection on Water Outside From an Outdoor School Co-Director

December 2021

“As each educator of Seedkeepers Forest School enters into basecamp for the day, we remind ourselves to think of nature itself as the curriculum. Curriculum that is ever-changing, meaningful to each individual child, and unplanned. Our goal is to plant the seed in each child's heart that everything around them is connected.

As I walk down a trail to the creek where several children are playing I sit and observe. One child is trying to catch a salamander in his metal pail, another is forming art along the banks of opened oyster shells deemed as last night's dinner for the racoons. I place a few laminated sheets of creek ecology identification and walk away. Several others are creating a water pathway along the banks with rock dams and hulled buckets of water from the creek. They quickly try to fix the cracks in the dam with mud and small stones, learning that the force of the water is too hard for their dam to hold.

I tell a story to them as they work tirelessly together. As I weave a story I let them know that our school is here because of a large flashflood many years ago on this land due to clearcutting the trees on the mountainside above our school. How not having the trees to help soak in the hard rains created the creek beds to swell, destroying all the buildings and roads this land once had. As the trees grew throughout the years the land healed, allowing natural biological filters like the clams they see daily to return to the creeks, serving as an indicator that our waterways are clean. As I walk away, I sing softly, “Water is life, life from the water, water is life, life from the water ...aho”.

I sit again and observe. The children find sticks, mulch, and other debris and place them along their water pathway, they slow the pour from their buckets to assimilate the flow of a creek and not a flood...the connection was made, and this time, the dam held the water successfully.

As an off grid program the children learn the value of water every day. We use the upper pond to fill our toilet in our bath house by the long blue pipe that runs through basecamp. We collect rainwater from the rooftops of our warmhut and bathhouse for our handwashing.

We observe wildlife daily in their movement to and from the creeks and ponds. As an educator, I share in their excitement daily, by being within their sense of wonder. I hope all educators can help children find that connection, whether it's from a puddle on their playground, to a rain barrel attached to their school's gutters, allowing the children to find the curriculum within nature develops the most meaningful lessons.”

—Mickey Morton, Co-Director, Seedkeepers Forest School