



strategic plan 2009

Bay Area
Children in Nature Collaborative 

“THE CHILDREN AND NATURE
MOVEMENT IS FUELED BY THIS
FUNDAMENTAL IDEA: THE CHILD
IN NATURE IS AN ENDANGERED
SPECIES, AND THE HEALTH OF
CHILDREN AND THE HEALTH OF
THE EARTH ARE INSEPARABLE.”

—RICHARD LOUV

The *Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative Strategic Plan* is the result of the dedicated efforts of the members of the Children in Nature Collaborative; the Strategic Planning Team; and MIG, the strategic planning firm that provided partial pro bono services. We wish to give special thanks to Collaborative partner FIRST 5, Santa Clara County, for providing funding for this process.

The Strategic Planning Team includes:

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In addition, seven organizations generously sponsored a strategic planning event with more than 90 community participants and partner organizations, *Gathering our Collective Strength to Take Collective Action*: FIRST 5 Santa Clara

acknowledgements

County, Hooked On Nature, Design Focus, the Waldorf School of the Peninsula, Hidden Villa, Morgan Family Foundation, and MIG. Many thanks also are due to Ken Yeager, Supervisor, Santa Clara County, for his support of the Collaborative’s mission. The Collaborative thanks everyone who generously gave their time and ideas.

Finally, the Collaborative thanks the community participants (see Appendix B for a complete list) and partner organizations, whose invaluable work helped ensure that these strategies would leverage existing efforts and be grounded in real needs and opportunities; and who offered to partner with us to implement these actions and spread these messages to improve children’s health and wellbeing.



BAY AREA CHILDREN IN NATURE COLLABORATIVE

strategic plan 2009

PREPARED BY



January 2009

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guiding a local movement

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gathering our collective strength to take action

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strategies and implementing partners

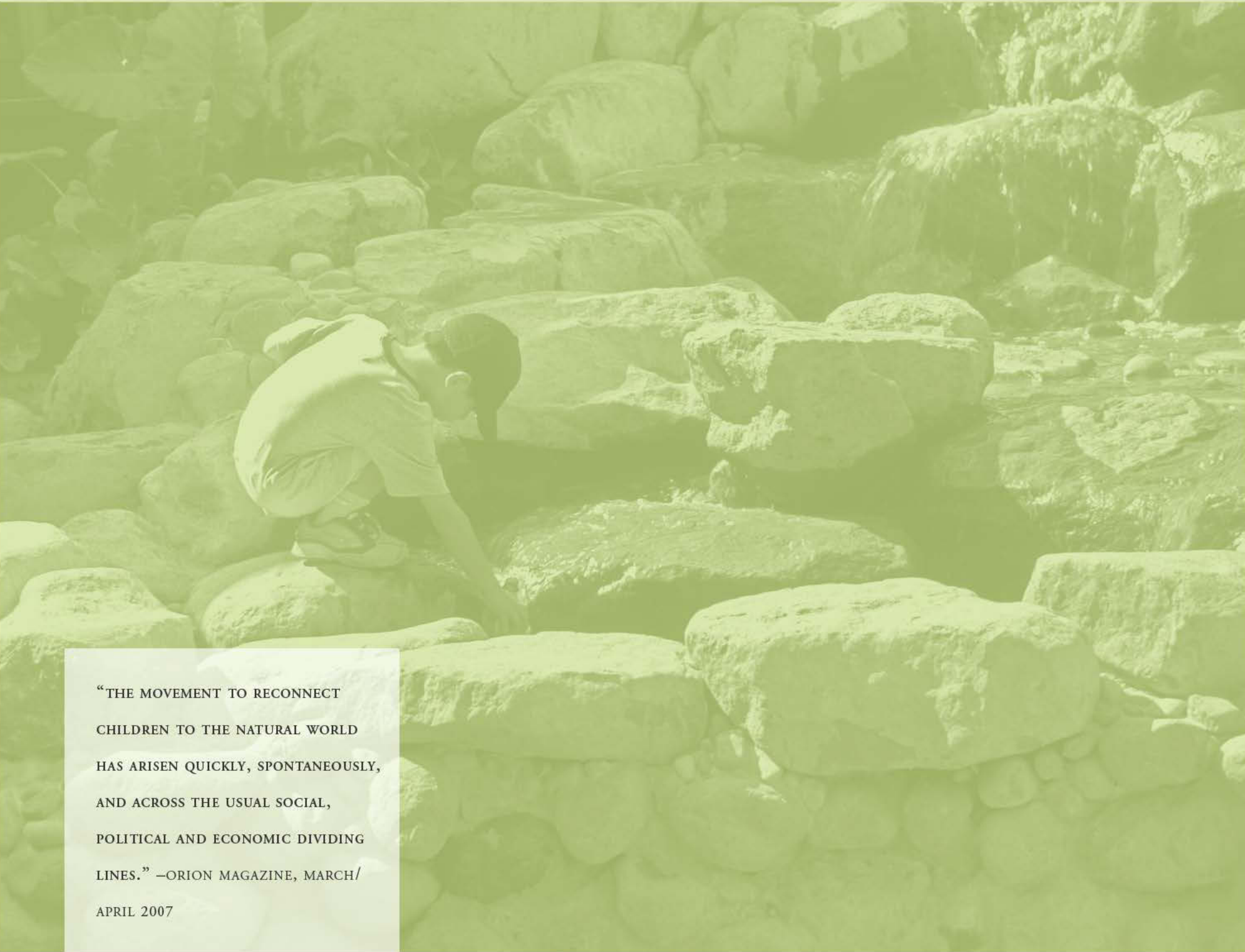
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A photograph of a person crouching among large, light-colored rocks. The person is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and a dark cap. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. In the bottom left corner, there is a white rectangular box containing text.

“THE MOVEMENT TO RECONNECT
CHILDREN TO THE NATURAL WORLD
HAS ARISEN QUICKLY, SPONTANEOUSLY,
AND ACROSS THE USUAL SOCIAL,
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIVIDING
LINES.” —ORION MAGAZINE, MARCH/
APRIL 2007

guiding a local movement

Goals and Objectives of the Strategic Plan

The goal of the Bay Area Children in Nature Strategic Plan is to catalyze a cultural shift, so that spending time in the natural world becomes the cultural norm in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties and the Bay Area. This will be accomplished over time by many coordinated partners working across sectors such as health, education, the environment, as well as through civic engagement. The Strategic Plan comes at a critical time. Awareness about the movement is increasing. There is a growing understanding of intertwined issues: alarm about the obesity epidemic, enthusiasm for urban gardens and pedestrian-friendly urban design, shock that overscheduled schoolchildren are losing recess time and experiencing stress. Partners in the community are ready to take action.

This Strategic Plan seeks to engage a diverse network of people and organizations to leverage efforts towards common goals. Rather than a top-down organization, the Collaborative acts as a convener and facilitator, to fuel and help organize a local grassroots movement: to spread key messages, collaborate with other organizations, and develop partnerships.

The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative grew out of the national movement inspired by Richard Louv's book *Last Child in the Woods* (2005) and the kick off of a local "leave no child inside" movement in September 2006 with a talk by Louv to an audience of over eight hundred people. Eighteen organizations and six community members formed the Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative in November 2007 to organize a local grassroots movement in the Bay Area. The Collaborative held seven community



"THERE IS A REVOLUTION—A CONNECTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR OWN HABITATS AND COMMUNITIES AND THE CLASSROOM IS THE ECOLOGY OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY. THE REVOLUTION IS A HOMECOMING—A GROWING AFFINITY FOR THE NATURAL WORLD."—DAVID ORR, "SENSE OF WONDER"





forums in 2007 and 2008. Leadership and self-organization began to emerge. Participants created more than 80 strategic ideas at the forums. The Collaborative created a mission, vision and guiding principles and decided to create a strategic plan. The goal was to create, with community and partner organization input,



a short list of targeted strategies with multiple approaches for implementation and to engage partners across sectors of the community.

In May 2008, the Collaborative initiated a strategic planning process with funding from First 5 Santa Clara County. Working with Carolyn Verheyen of MIG, a strategic planning consultant, the strategic planning group developed draft strategies and implementing guidelines. On October 30, 2008, the Collaborative and Founding Partners hosted a strategic

planning event, *Gathering our Collective Strength to Take Action*. More than 90 participants, representing about 35 organizations, suggested new ideas and provided feedback and suggestions for revising and refining the strategies and implementing guidelines. Many participants also volunteered to become implementing partners for the strategies or suggested ways of leveraging strategies with existing organizations and programs through collaborative action and communication to spread key messages. And the participants made new connections, shared ideas, and sparked interest in working with each other to strengthen their organization's programs.

The Bay Area Children in Nature Collaborative is part of a national movement dedicated to increasing children's time in nature. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, has inspired people across the country to work locally to spread the message and grow networks.

The ultimate goal is to create a major cultural shift so that time in nature for children is once again a normal, expected, and accepted part of children's daily life.

The movement is a response to alarming statistics. Nearly all children today spend less than a half hour a week in outdoor, unstructured free play. In fact, kindergarten teachers are finding that some children don't know how to play, while childhood obesity has skyrocketed in the last 40 years. As *Last Child in the Woods* demonstrates, time in nature is crucial for children's physical and mental health and wellness. Nature play stimulates curiosity, imagination, physical activity, healthy brain development, and social interactions. It also helps lessen the risk of childhood obesity, depression, learning and attention problems, and social and emotional problems. Time in nature is also essential for children if they are to become caring stewards of our natural environment; and it is an important fac-





“AS OUR FIRST TEACHER, NATURE INFORMS OUR SENSES, EXPANDS OUR CAPACITIES AND OPENS US TO MYSTERY.” —ANNA RAINVILLE, SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS, “THINK GLOBALLY, PLAY LOCALLY”

tor in helping children create and value a diverse community.

Children in Nature Collaborative Key Messages

The Children in Nature Collaborative developed these key messages to test with

participants at a community event. Participants liked all of the key messages, but noted the importance choosing messages for specific audiences.

- Experiences in nature bring physical, psychological, and cognitive health benefits—they make children healthier, happier and brighter.
- Unstructured play in nature is essential for children’s healthy development.
- The risk of a sedentary life inside is greater than the risk of unstructured play and going outside.
- Children can freely play and explore nature with awareness and consideration for the natural environment.
- Play is so important to child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations as the right of every child.
- Positive direct experience in nature with a caring adult leads to environmental stewardship later in life. Children’s relationship with nature is inextricably linked to their stewardship of the earth.
- Experiencing nature with others strengthens individuals and communities.
- We can adapt our local environments to ensure that children have access to nature near their homes and schools.

A Grassroots Strategic Plan

The strategic planning team developed a list of draft strategies, based on the ideas from previous community forums and their own expertise. On October 30, 2008, they gathered community members and partner organizations at a major event: *Gathering our Collective Strength to Take Action*, designed to test the strategies, generate new ideas, and provide an

opportunity for groups to share their own work. Three speakers opened the meeting: Ken Yeager, Supervisor, Santa Clara County, Cathy Andrade, Program Director, FIRST 5 Santa Clara County; and Amy Pertschuk, Managing Director, Children & Nature Network. Mary Roscoe, Coordinator, Children in Nature Network, provided a context and history of the Strategic Plan and invited the group to participate in a walk-around session to actively review and respond to the Draft Strategies. Participants from public and private education, environmental education, health, government agencies and elected offices, children and family services, land conservation, art, farming, urban gardens, and many more responded to the draft strategies, offered feedback, and volunteered to become partners to help leverage their efforts and messages with those of the Children in Nature Collaborative. The event culminated in a discussion of the strategies, and par-

ticipants volunteered to take on roles in implementing all of the strategies.

The Collaborative Model

This strategic plan is based on a collaborative model. Its goal is to engage a diverse array of groups, leaders and partners across many sectors. In this model, many disparate groups—from educators to land conservation agencies—can find a place to explore their common ground, form partnerships, and implement the ideas and strategies in this plan in their own organizations. For instance, a school could create a community garden or outdoor classrooms, and city recreation staff could lead urban or wilderness nature experiences and hikes for young teens. A key goal of the collaborative model is to catalyze a cultural shift, where many organizations and individuals, including parents, create opportunities over time for children to connect with nature, regularly and deeply.



“OVER 80 GUESTS, ALL GUIDED BY THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE HEALTHY CHILD, COMBINED TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE HERALDING CHANGE AND MEANING FOR THE YOUNGEST EARTH STEWARDS. A FESTIVE MOOD PREVAILED, THE KIND WHERE ONE KNOWS THE RIGHT THING IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN.” —ANNA RAINVILLE, SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS
“THINK GLOBALLY, PLAY LOCALLY”



gathering our collective strength to take action

Vision

The vision and mission of the Children & Nature Network is to give every child in every community a wide range of opportunities to experience nature directly, reconnecting our children with nature's joys and lessons, its profound physical and mental bounty. (The National Children & Nature Network)

Mission

The mission of the Children in Nature Collaborative is to work together to restore children's relationship with nature.

Goals

- Raise awareness of the physical, emotional, and spiritual health benefits of connecting children with nature.
- Promote unstructured play and time in nature for children and adults.

- Engage a diverse network of people and facilitate collaborations.
- Participate with other children and nature initiatives—regional, state, national, and international.

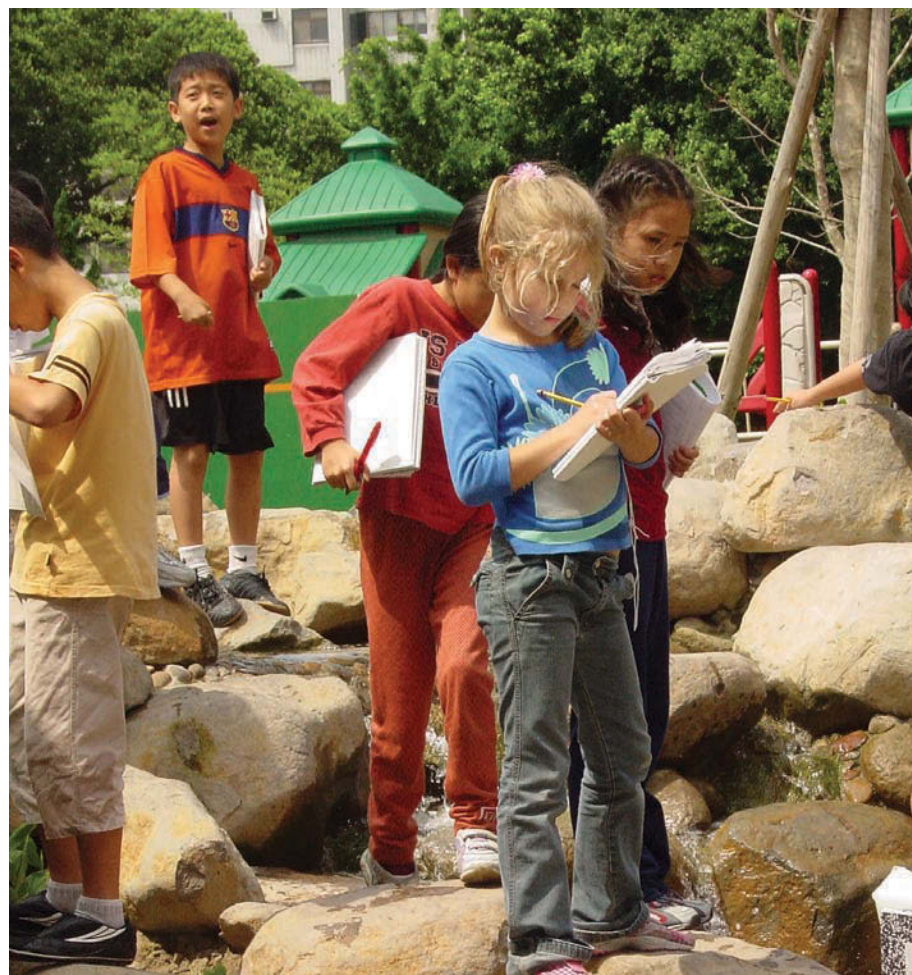
Guiding Principles

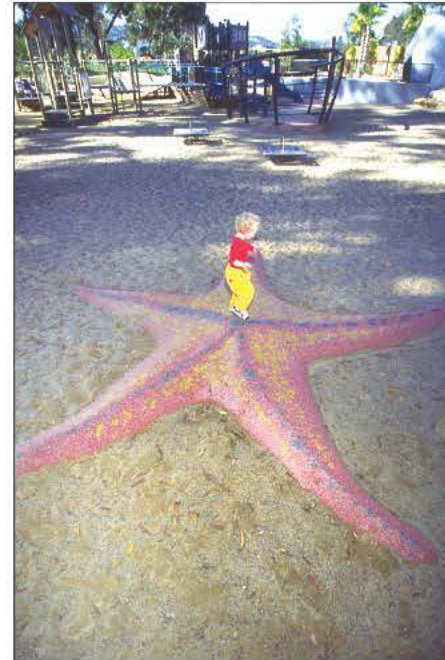
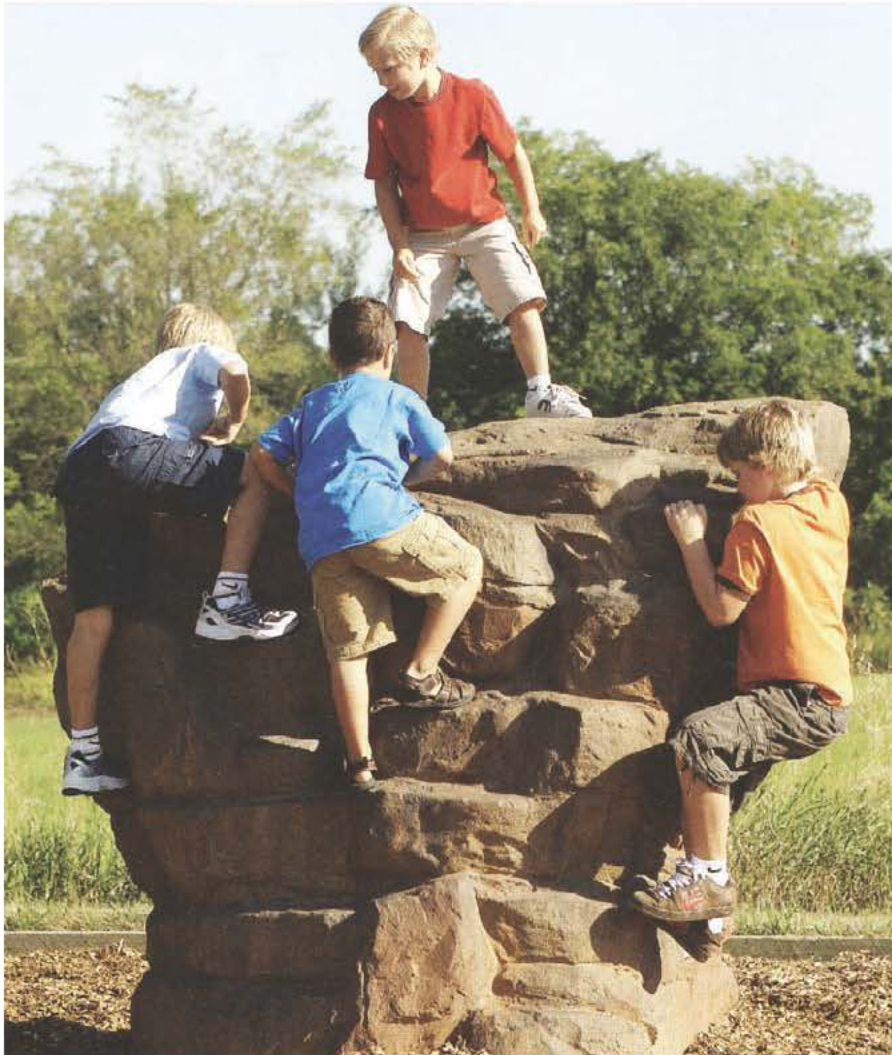
As people from all walks of life, we believe in the restorative effects of nature—for children, families, and communities.

Connection: Nature provides an opportunity to deepen our relationship to our self, each other, and our environment.

Respect: Learning to respect nature and others is fundamental for our wellbeing, the wellness of others and the Earth as a whole.

Access: To engage and connect to nature, all children and families need access to





of a caring adult who can share with them a love of the natural world and inspire a sense of awe and wonder.

Community and Society: Preserving and creating natural places to come together allows us to experience one another and to grow as neighbors and as communities.

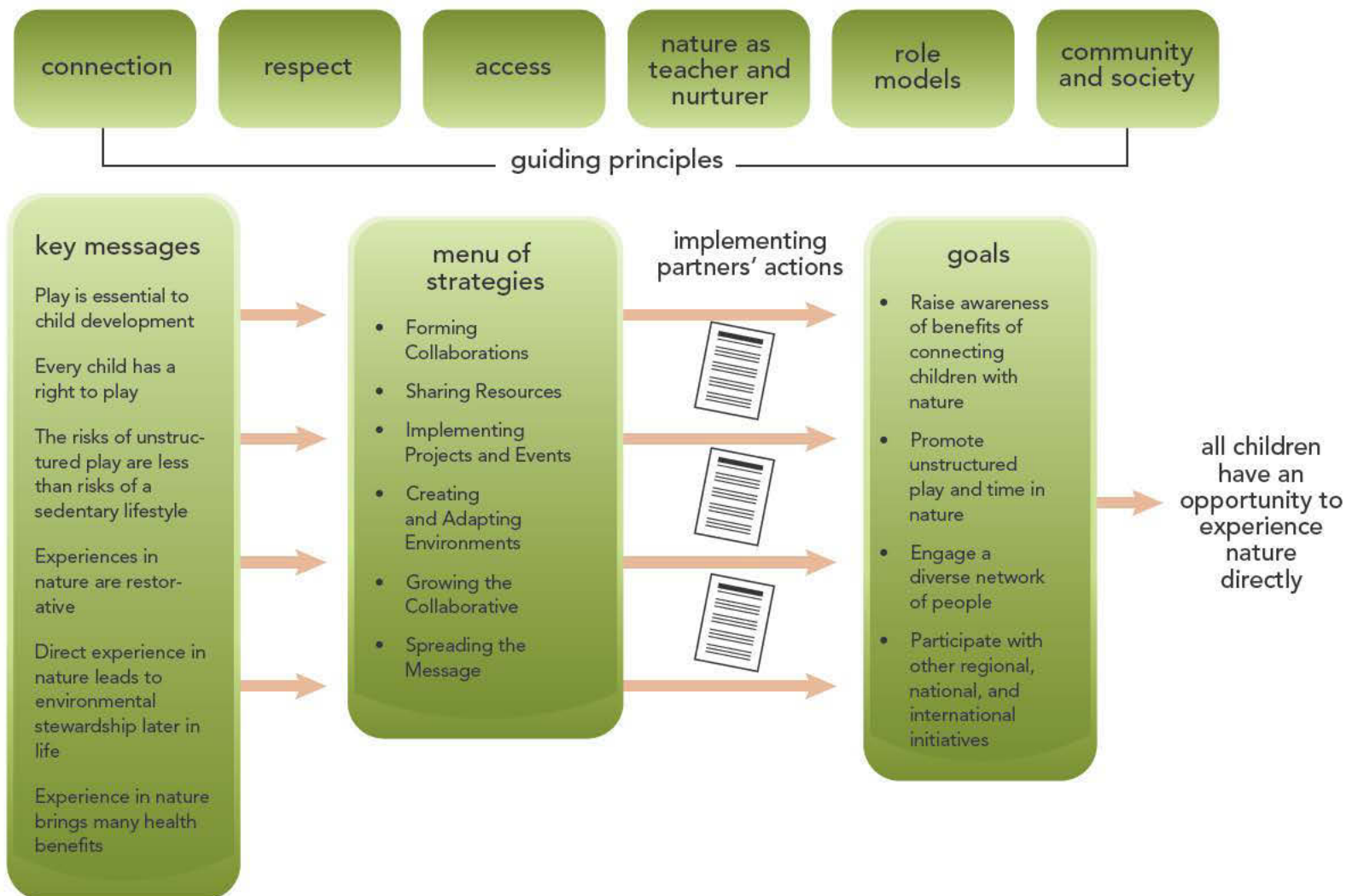
The elements of the framework fit together as shown in the diagram on page 15 to create a complete and powerful plan for the future.

information, resources, and developmentally appropriate activities.

Nature as Teacher and Nurturer: Children need the opportunity to explore nature through open-ended, unstructured and self-initiated play.

Role Models: Children need the guidance

the children in nature collaborative strategic plan framework



CHILDREN IN NATURE COLLABORATIVE'S MISSION AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS' MISSIONS

strategies and implementing partners

The Strategies

The selected strategies meet the Collaborative's goals and guiding principles, and enjoyed broad support at the Gathering. They are realistic and financially feasible; represent a clear means to an end; and probably would not happen otherwise. Finally, these strategies leverage other efforts and build on existing resources to respond to community needs, use best practices, and produce results. Implementing guidelines for these strategies are available in Appendix D to assist those creating an action plan for a strategy.

The following strategies should be considered a menu to choose from, as additional partners join the Collaborative, or even individuals take initiative independently. The Collaborative grouped the 13 strategies into 6 strategy areas. On the following pages, you'll find each strategy with a list of implementing partners, as well as an example about how an individual or organization is already taking action to implement the strategy.

Forming Collaborations

1. Collaborate with organizations that focus on children's health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
2. Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
3. Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection with nature.

Sharing Resources

4. Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (pre-schools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.
5. Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups, and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.

6. Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

Implementing Projects and Events

7. Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children, and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks, and neighborhoods.
8. Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary, and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g. organic farms, school gardens, and restoration projects).
9. Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

Creating and Adapting Environments

10. Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.
11. Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

Growing the Collaborative

12. Grow the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

Spreading the Message

13. Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.

forming collaborations | strategy one

Collaborate with organizations that focus on children's health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Hidden Villa Environmental Education Program
- Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Mid-Peninsula Open Space District
- Children's Discovery Museum
- Castro School in Mountain View

Working Together

The Children in Nature Collaborative organized a meeting of community and national partners in 2007, "Children—Nature, Play, and Wellness," that included leaders from regional and national organizations and initiatives. Follow-up meetings with local health initiatives are taking place to share resources and create joint strategies.



forming collaborations | strategy two

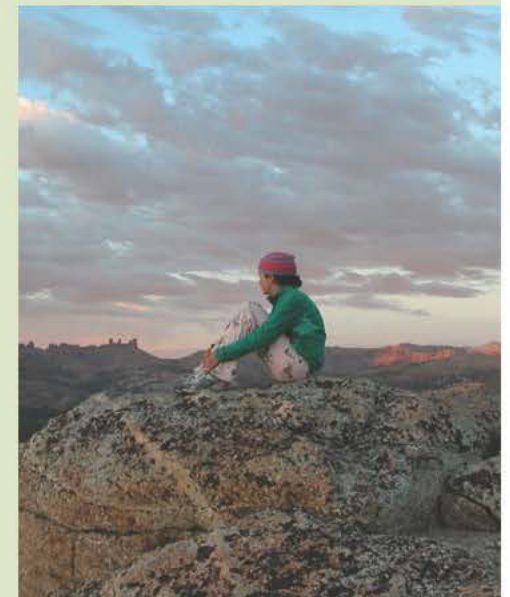
Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- FIRST5 Obesity Prevention Collaborative
- Choices for Children
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara
- Riekes Center Nature Awareness Department
- Fatherhood Collaborative
- Full Circle Farm
- Castro School in Mountain View
- Hidden Villa
- Children's Discovery Museum
- Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood

Film Night

Through a partnership with the Alliance for Childhood, the Children in Nature Collaborative sponsored local presentations of the PBS film "Where Do the Children Play?" The film examines the trends that take away children's birthright: time and opportunity for unstructured, spontaneous play, especially outdoors in nature. Cross-connections, shared resources, and key messages have developed through this partnership.



forming collaborations | strategy three

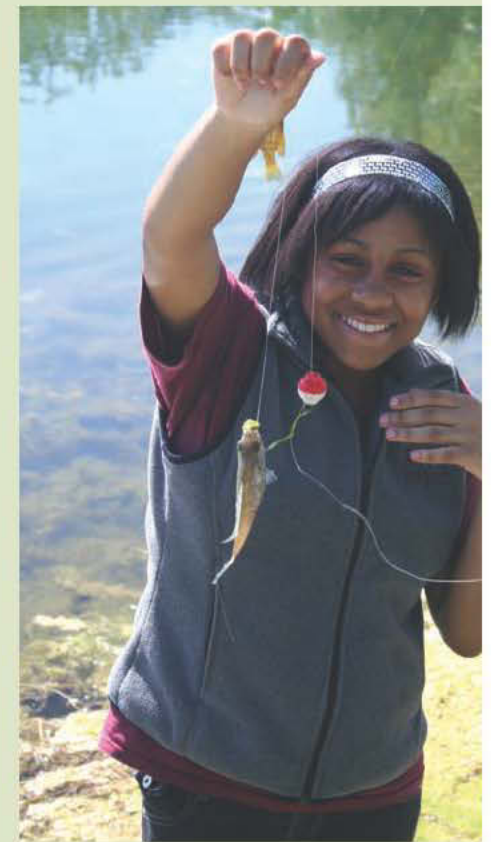
Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection with nature.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- African Community Health Institute
- Guadalupe River Park & Gardens
- Bay Area Wilderness Training
- Castro School in Mountain View
- Environmental Volunteers—Digging Deeper Project
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Kaiser Permanente
- FIRST5 EMQ
- Hidden Villa
- North Community Partnership (FIRST5)
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Catholic Charities afterschool program
- Healthy Silicon Valley Nutrition/Physical Activity Fun Walks
- Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
- After-school All-Stars
- Acterra—Young Earth Stewards

A Nature Lending Library is Born

A national leader and community activist helped his local public library in Albany, New York create its own lending library of fishing poles and outdoor equipment. Library programs in other areas of the country encourage children to read about nature, and then go outside.



sharing resources | strategy four

Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (preschools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Children, Nature, and You
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Catholic Charities West FIRST5
- Hidden Villa
- Environmental Volunteers
- FIRST5 Training Department
- FIRST5 Power of Pre-school
- PACCC/Provider Connection
- Guadalupe River Parkway

Sharing Nature Stories and Games

Children, Nature, and You—a member of the Children in Nature Collaborative—offers workshops with stories, songs and nature games to parents, caregivers and educators. The workshops explore how simple nature experiences enhance a child's developmental skills and are essential for children's health. The experiences also help adults explore and expand their own connection to nature.



sharing resources | strategy five

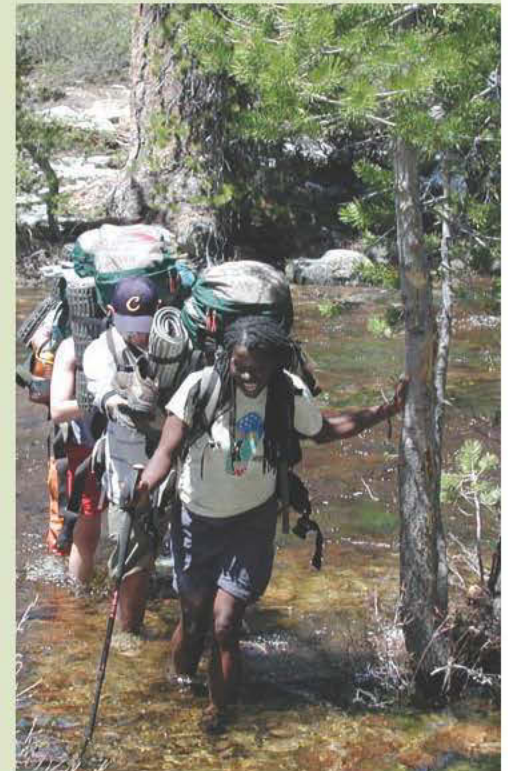
Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups, and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Environmental Volunteers
- Guadalupe River Parkway
Linda McCabe
- Catholic Charities CORAL Program
- Hidden Villa
- Riekes Cent

Helping Teachers

Bay Area Wilderness Training, a partner in the Children in Nature Collaborative, provides wilderness training to youth workers and teachers. They also provide an outdoor equipment library and vans for youth organizations and schools to take trips of their own so that all youth have access to these life-changing experiences.



sharing resources | strategy six

Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Guadalupe River Parkway
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Children's Discovery Museum
- FIRST5 website
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- 2-1-1
- MIG

Mapping a City's Play Areas

The City of Denver Play Area Master Plan maps play areas and child population data in Denver—and shows where children have access to a play area, and which areas are underserved. The Plan also surveyed households to find out how many hours per day the children engage in free, unstructured play and used this information to create new policies.



sharing resources | strategy seven

Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children, and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks, and neighborhoods.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Design Focus
- Hidden Villa
- Scott Vanderlip
- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Castro School
- Riekes Center
- Playborhood
- Midpeninsula Regional Space District
- FIRST5 Obesity Prevention Collaborative
- Alliance for Childhood

Play Day for Families

A community member organized a Play Day. He invited several families to a county park for a day of unstructured exploration together. The Play Day gave the children time in nature, connected like-minded families and inspired families to spend more time in nature.



implementing projects and events | strategy eight

Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary, and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g. organic farms, school gardens, and restoration projects).

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Midpeninsula Open Space
- Getting going Growing
- Hidden Villa
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Full Circle Farm
- Castro School
- Palo Alto Community Childcare Center
- Riekes Nature
- Environmental Volunteers
- Children's Discovery Museum
- FIRST5 EMQ
- National Fish & Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Guadalupe River Parkway
- Catholic Charities Education Services

Young Gardeners

CHEER (Coastal Habitat Education and Environmental Restoration) embarked on a pilot project with partners to implement a native plant restoration project at pre-school sites in Gilroy. Children from pre-schools and their families planted 300 native plants started from seeds in a riparian zone in Gilroy and learned about native plant restoration and nature activities.



implementing projects and events | strategy nine

Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Secret Garden
- Playborhood
- Scott Vanderlip
- Exploring a Sense of Place

A Garden for All

In Palo Alto, California, Karen Harwell turned her front and back yards into a community garden, with ducks, fruit trees, and vegetables. Children are free

to wander in and out, helping feed the ducks, water the vegetable garden, or just pick a piece of fruit to eat.



creating and adapting environments | strategy ten

Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Children's Discovery Museum
- Design Focus
- Castro School
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Don Edwards SF Bayland in Alviso
- Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
- Guadalupe River Parkway
- Scott Vanderlip
- RHAA (Ranch Horse Association of America)
- FIRST5 and KABOOM (playgrounds)
- African Community Health Institute would like to see it implemented
- Developers
- MIG

Discovering a Creek

An environmental artist and partner in the Children in Nature Collaborative worked with an organization in Berkeley that provides housing



and a comprehensive program for homeless families. He facilitated three art-with-nature outings along Cordonices Creek, which runs about 100 yards away from the village, to connect the children with the nearby natural environment.

creating and adapting environments | strategy eleven

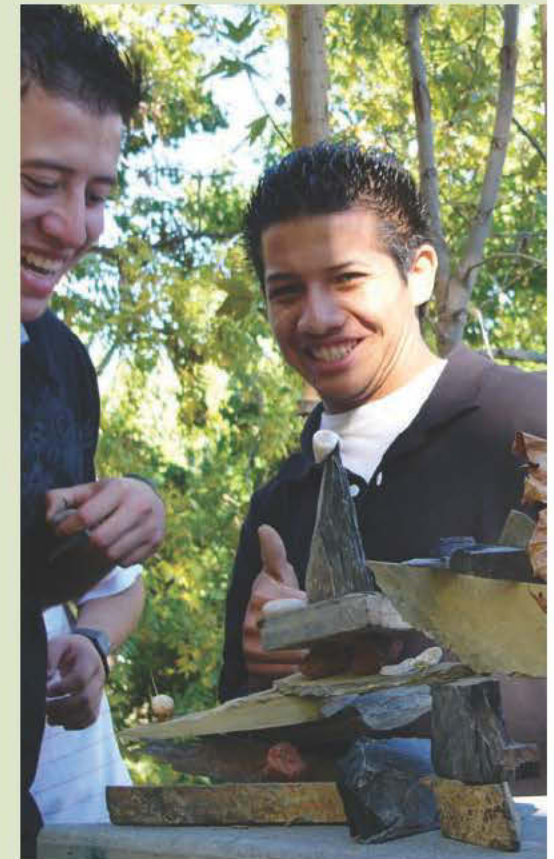
Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Wild Zones
- Exploring a Sense of Place
- Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
- Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
- Design Focus
- Full Circle Farm

Sculptures by the River

Escuela Popular, a charter school in downtown San Jose, invited the co-founders of Wild Zones to engage their students in creative activities in nature. The first event with an environmental artist brought high school students and staff of Escuela Popular to nearby Guadalupe River Park to make wonderful sculptures using natural materials.



growing the collaborative | strategy twelve

Grow the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Healthy Silicon Valley
- Guadalupe River Parkway

Teaching Children to Protect Nature

The Chicago Wilderness consortium includes 220 public and private organizations that launched Leave No Child Inside, a multi-year plan with the ultimate goal of fostering generations of children that care enough for nature to protect it. The coalition started 12 years ago to protect the Chicago region's natural spaces, help conserve the diversity of plants and animals, and enrich local residents' quality of life



spreading the message | strategy thirteen

Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.

Preliminary Implementing Partners

- Getting Going Growing
- FIRST5 Obesity Prevention Collaborative
- Hooked On Nature

Speaking to Parents

The Children & Nature Network, ecoAmerica, and the Nature Conservancy are partnering to create a marketing campaign to reach parents with young children. The grass roots tools and branding will make the campaign useful to regional movements, and will launch in spring 2009.

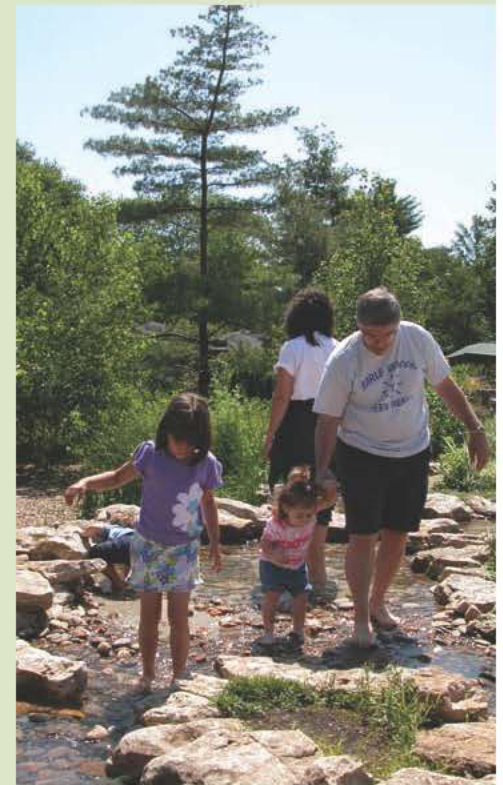




Image used courtesy Lilia Schwartz

moving forward with next steps

Implementing the Strategies

The strategies in this Plan will be implemented through an “ecosystem of organization” with clusters of organizations working across sectors to take action. Some of these actions will be coordinated and formal, involving multiple partners; some will be loosely organized and grassroots in nature; some may be undertaken by individuals (such as parents creating an opportunity for children in their neighborhood); and other actions will be ongoing, essentially leveraging already successful programs or events that connect children with nature. The Collaborative will support many of these efforts, catalyzing and facilitating the growth of this region’s movement and the cultural change it represents.

More specifically, the Children in Nature Collaborative will gather those individuals and organizations that have expressed

interest in implementing one or more of the strategies, to launch the implementation phase. At an event in early 2009, we will celebrate the completion of the Strategic Plan, outline the role of the Collaborative and its Coordinating Group, and introduce strategy implementation groups (coalescing around one or more strategy) that have formed to create action plans for the coming year. Other strategy implementation groups will form as part of this celebration event based on interest in strategies expressed in earlier phases of the strategic planning process. (The initial Implementation Guidelines, in Appendix D, will be provided to these groups as a resource of ideas from prior discussions.)

The Coordinating Group of the Collaborative will serve to track these action plans, and keep others in the Collaborative informed of progress, successes,

lessons learned, opportunities, new ideas, and other news and information useful to the local movement.

Strategy implementation groups will continue to meet, act, implement and report progress. Progress reports will be provided a quarterly meetings and on the website, with an annual evaluation of



The difference between the old and new ways of thinking about strategy and leadership is that the old revolves around the boundaries of single organizations while the new revolves around the boundaries of ecosystems, clusters of organizations that co-evolve in a larger space of collective value creation. ... in ecosystems, coordination functions through a constellation of diverse players that collectively form a vehicle for seeing current possibilities and sensing emerging opportunities.

—Theory U, *Leading from the Future as It Emerges*
by Otto Scharmer





Strategic Plan progress at the last meeting of each year. Other evaluation may be required by any future grants received.

Growing the Children in Nature Collaborative

The Collaborative seeks to balance the benefits of a strong grassroots movement that can move quickly and effectively in a variety of settings and at varying levels of effort with the support of a partnership that can leverage individual efforts and attract higher visibility and resources.

Many of the strategies in this Plan are being implemented already by different organizations in the area. The Collaborative seeks to help create an environment for relationships to form, to be a springboard for other interested people to learn, get inspired, and take action in a way that is tailored to them, alone or in partnership. The Collaborative aspires to mutual support, openness, flexibility, with a clear focus on affecting a shift in society and culture where children's experiences and connections with nature become an

everyday occurrence—strongly valued for its own sake and the many associated benefits.

The Children in Nature Collaborative will serve the following functions:

- Convene partners
- Coordinate strategies and actions
- Communicate (locally, regionally and nationally)
- Serve as a resource clearinghouse
- Educate and conduct social marketing
- Advocate
- Track progress

It is helpful to state what functions the Collaborative does not intend to perform:

- Not sole implementers of strategies, actions, programs or projects
- Not a direct service provider
- Not a funding or grant-making body
- Not an oversight body (we will not approve or evaluate projects)



- Not a closed group; membership is open to all who adhere to the guiding principles and share the vision and mission

Depending on available funding, the Collaborative will support strategy implementation specifically through a Coordinator, two annual conferences, quarterly meetings, a website, and meetings of the Coordinating Group. The Collaborative will grow over time as strategies are implemented to make a difference in the lives of children and families.

Adding Partners and Sponsors

The lists of implementing partners for each strategy in this Plan are expected to grow and change over time, with more individuals and organizations joining to take action on specific strategies and to work collectively. Joining the Children in Nature Collaborative provides access to a community of peers that shares the values, resources, and experience around environmental, social and health issues.

Any individual or organization sharing the values and vision of the Collaborative is invited to join. Partners and Sponsors are defined as follows.

Partnering organizations and individuals:

- Support the guiding principles of the Children in Nature Collaborative
- Participate in events and forums
- Initiate dialogue about the physical, psychological, and cognitive benefits of nature and unstructured play

Sponsoring organizations and individuals do the above and provide critical support and resources.

Together, working across sectors with a common mission and commitment, we can create meaningful social change, moving toward a society that values children and nature and the deep connection that can happen when they meet.



appendix a: children in nature collaborative founding partners

Organizations

Alliance for Childhood*
allianceforchildhood.org

Bay Area Wilderness Training
bawt.org

Collective Roots
collectiveroots.org

**Coastal Habitat Education
and Environmental Restoration**
cheercentral.org

**De Anza College Child
Development Center***
deanza.edu/child

Design Focus Landscape Architects*
designfocus.com

**Environmental Studies Institute
of Santa Clara University***
scu.edu

Environmental Volunteers*
evols.org

Exploring a Sense of Place*
exploringsenseofplace.org

FIRST 5 Santa Clara County*
first5kids.org

**Full Circle Farm/
Sustainable Community Gardens***
fullcirclesunnyvale.org

Getting Going Growing*
conexions.org

Hidden Villa*
hiddenvilla.org

Hooked On Nature*
hookedonnature.org

**Leaping Lizards Nature
Awareness Preschool**
leapinglizardspreschool.com

Natural Teaching Curriculum, Inc.*
naturalteachingcurriculum.org

One Wilderness School
onewilderness.com

Playborhood
playborhood.com

Riekes Center for Human Enhancement*
riekes.org

REI*
rei.com

Tender Tracks*
tendertracks.com

Waldorf School of the Peninsula
waldorfpeninsula.org

Wild Zones*
wild-zone.net

Youth Science Institute*
ysi-ca.org

Zach Pine Nature Sculpture
naturesculpture.com

Individuals

Natalie Bitton*

Maylyn Co

Toni De Marco*

Renee Fitzsimmons

Nancy Freihofer

Matt Harding*

Janet Rae Jorgensen*

Lynn Peterson*

Amy Pertschuk*

Tina Simmons

Scott Vanderlip*

Brian Williams

Ken Yeager

Ollia Yenikomshian

**Founding partners are actively engaged in promoting the mission, goals, and guiding principles of the Collaborative.*

appendix b: children in nature collaborative community event participants

Biret Adden
Children's Discovery Museum

Amy Aken
Healthy Silicon Valley

Cathy Andrade
FIRST5 Santa Clara County

Mary Ruth Bafrali
Castro School Garden

Kathryn Besser
Cherry-Chase School

Bonnie Broderick
Public Health—County of Santa Clara

Agnes Chan
Palo Alto Community Childcare Center

Julia Chen
The Playstore

Karen Chmielewski
Hidden Villa

Ken Clarkson
Riekes Center

Avery Cleary
Hooked on Nature

Mary Ann Cook
Saratoga News

Maylyn Corwin
The Health Trust, Healthy Silicon Valley

Sarah Davis
MIG

Sandra Derby
Children's Discovery Museum

Beth DeVincenzi
Hooked on Nature

Jennifer Dunbar
Design Focus

Rebecca Dye
Design Focus

Claire Elliot
Acterra Stewardship Project

Renee Fitzsimons
Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

Justine Forbes
Community Member

Nancy Freihofer
Community Member

Herman Garcia
FIRST5 Santa Clara County

Susan Goltsman
MIG

Diane Gordon
Children, Nature, and You

Roy Gordon
Children, Nature and You

Chelsea Griffie
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Kerri Hamilton
Healthy Silicon Valley

Robert Hamilton
Healthy Silicon Valley

Karen Harwell
Exploring a Sense of Place

Garth Harwood
Hidden Villa

Hank Helbush
Design Focus

Alison Hicks
Castro School Garden

Lisa Hjelm
Community Member

Kendra Hoffmaster
EMQ Children and Family Services

Marie Imai
Los Gatos-Saratoga
Observation Nursery School

Dana Jain
Educator

Tony Johnson
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Lynn Kawaratani
Children's Discovery Museum

Sherry Keith
San Francisco State University

Kelly Krotcova
Design Focus

Mike Lanza
Playborhood

Renee Lee
Choices for Children

Carmen Leong-Mench
Environmental Education Center—Alviso

Elizabeth MacAskill
Community Member

Kyle MacDonald
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Avo Makdessian
FIRST5 Santa Clara County

Jenni Martin
Children's Discovery Museum

Nancy Martin
Photographer

Kathryn Mathewson
Secret Gardens, Advocate for Open Space

Leigh AnnMaze
Midpeninsula Regional Open
Space District

Linda McCabe
Guadalupe River Parkway

Debbie Miguel
Kaiser Permanente

Elissa Miller
Project Cornerstone

Genie Moore
Environmental Education Center – Alviso

Susanne Mulcahy
Youth Science Institute

Terry Nail
Bay Area Wilderness Training

Chris Overington
Hidden Villa

Betty Peck
Kindergarten Forum

Amy Pertschuk
Children & Nature Network

Zach Pine
Nature Sculpture

Anna Rainville
National Kindergarten Alliance

John Rible
Nature-Based Outdoor Group

Mary Roscoe
Children in Nature Collaborative

Brittany Sabol
Environmental Volunteers

Patricia Senteno
One Wilderness School

Carolyn Verheyen
MIG

appendix c: additional resources

Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv

Since its initial publication, *Last Child in the Woods* has created a national conversation about the disconnection between children and nature, and his message has galvanized a national movement with grassroots initiatives and movements in over forty regions across the country.

The Children & Nature Network was created by Richard Louv and other leaders and experts to support the people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. The network provides a critical link between researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to children's health and well-being. The Children & Nature Network

has created three volumes of research with over seventy research articles. The first volume of C&NN Research and Studies highlights the benefits to children and youth from experiences in nature. The focus of the second volume is the evidence of changes in children's experiences of nature. The third volume updates the research compiled in the first and second volume. Overall, there are over seventy research articles and studies in the three volumes and an annotated bibliography for each volume. For more information about this research and the latest news articles, visit the website for the Children & Nature Network at www.childrenandnature.org.

appendix d: implementation guidelines

Forming Collaborations

1. Collaborate with organizations that focus on children's health, as well as with pediatricians, and integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
- Collaborate with like-minded organizations who may be able to incorporate our message into their projects; Partner with and link to current issues such as childhood obesity; Share ideas and focus on health benefits of nature to attract support from health-related organizations; Provide materials and resources for doctors and health related organizations; Encourage doctors to ask about outside time as part of well-child visits and to give prescriptions for nature; Create pilot projects demonstrating the benefits of nature to children and youth's physical and mental health and the health of communities
2. Collaborate and partner with groups that focus on bringing children and parents into nature to leverage our work, and reach out across sectors to groups whose missions overlap with the Children in Nature Collaborative to integrate our messages into their projects and practices.
- Outreach across sectors and increase members; Open the dialogue; Develop vision and values across organizations; Collaborate on ideas, funds, support and publicity; Share resources and rely on each other as resources; Develop as a learning collaborative with best practices and evaluation; Foster work with other collaboratives; Build collaborative cross-communications; Cross link web sites
3. Prioritize work with low-income communities to ensure that all children have opportunities for unstructured play and a connection

with nature.

- Target 10-20 sites without access to safe parks (Collaborate with existing programs and organizations working with underserved communities; Work with community centers and pre-school sites; Develop mentoring programs for inner city/urban kids)

Sharing Resources

4. Provide training and resources to early childhood caregivers (pre-schools, daycare programs, teachers and parents), and include our key messages in all materials.
- Create workshops and events that bring the message to childcare providers, parents, and play groups; Develop "train the trainer" courses and provide workshops at existing conferences for teachers and early childhood caregivers; Create pilot "green" early childhood program for families 0-5; Create a toolbox for home visitors and other

providers with materials and activities to engage parents in providing more opportunities for unstructured play and connection with nature including resources for immigrant stay-at-home

5. Provide education and resources to those who interact with youth and teens (teachers, parents, environmental education groups, and parks staff) and include key messages in all materials.
- Create a new generation of leaders by engaging young people through conferences and college-level courses; Work with environmental organizations and park staff to create an environment that encourages an interest and relationship with nature
- Provide information and resources to schools and organizations; Encourage parents to spend time in nature with their children; Empower parents to give their children space and time

to play in nature; Address parent's fears about children's safety in nature; Provide non-commercial advice on children's activities; Create resources to help parents who may have less access to nature

- Create outdoor classrooms, school gardens, and wild areas; Encourage more field trips in nature; Create nature clubs or an after school collaborative of nature programs; Develop nature programs that involve high school students working with elementary students

6. Assess, map and publicize resources (physical and organizational) that exist to connect children with nature in a variety of settings and create tools for civic leaders and city planners (e.g., potential policies and maps).

- Conduct an inventory of organizations involved in connecting children with nature; Survey to answer this question:

where do children play and where do they need to play; Develop map with what organizations and individuals are doing—mission and goals; Develop conceptual map of a “children in nature” city or healthy community as a toolkit for cities making decisions about land use or updating general plans

Implementing Projects and Events

7. Host events to raise awareness of Children in Nature messages; model unstructured play (e.g., Play Days); attract media attention; and bring teens, older children, and families with young children into nature (e.g., Nature Circles), in wilderness areas, community parks, and neighborhoods.

- Develop Play Days in diverse settings ranging from neighborhoods to parks to natural areas; Promote Nature Circles as relationship-building group experiences creating time and space to reconnect with the natural world; Cre-

ate forums that open dialogue forums; Show films or videos (including films in other languages) to demonstrate the importance of play; Create events that involve the media and include well known artists, authors, or political leaders who have a passion for or interest in our vision.

8. Create programs and projects with pre-schools, elementary, and high schools to help children and students respect the gifts of nature and experience the restorative qualities of the natural world (e.g. organic farms, school gardens, and restoration projects).

- Create program for native plant restoration with preschools and daycare programs to help children and parents connect with nature and associate nature with restorative qualities; Encourage welcoming children in nature and creating wonder, awe, and play in programs to promote being in nature

9. Create front yard community gardens to connect children to nature and develop neighborhood communities.

- Promote and encourage front yard community gardens with vegetables, natural water spaces, play spaces (tree forts, rocks, etc) designed primarily for children; Create yards as a community gathering place for kids and adults to share in developing a common garden space.

Creating and Adapting Environments

10. Work with relevant projects and people to gain more access to natural areas, preserve or develop natural areas, or adapt existing parks and play spaces with natural areas that encourage a full range of play opportunities.

- Advocate for reconnecting communities to their natural environment by working with local agencies who are public landowners to open or

increase access to their properties;
Develop more nearby parks where
kids can walk on their own

11. Create Wild Zones as places where adults, children and adolescents can co-create a new form of public space that is dedicated to unstructured free play in a natural setting.

- Create Wild Zones in school yards, parks, and natural areas; Train play rangers to help create open-ended possibilities for self-designed play, learning, and socializing

Growing the Collaborative

12. Grow the Children in Nature Collaborative and become sustainable by expanding partner members, increasing cultural diversity, building resources, linking people and organizations, monitoring progress and achieving our goals.

- Expand the number of partnerships in the Collaborative; Sponsor two conferences annually to develop resources,

innovative projects, and replicable models; Host quarterly meetings to promote collaboration and implementation of strategies through growing partnerships and update partners on national news; Create schedule of coordinating group meetings open to all partners

Spreading the Message

13. Create a joint social marketing campaign with other organizations to spread joint messages, and implement a grassroots, regional, broad social marketing campaign to spread a unified core message.

- Establish a regional media campaign with a campaign name i.e. the “Green Hour”; Join a national social marketing campaigns to support grassroots focus; Create broad media coverage i.e. advertising connected to public transportation; Leverage working across sectors by creating cross or joint messaging building public awareness about

the importance of play and nature;
Create films, podcasts, public service announcements; Write articles and materials for schools and organizations to promote unstructured play and nature; Develop toolkits or resources for policy-makers

