



N.E. Miles ECDC College of Charleston

2022 Recertification
Application

Nature Explore

Commitment

We are grateful for the opportunity to annually renew our *Nature Explore* certification, as the process helps us maintain focus on continued improvement. As a campus-based demonstration and laboratory program, we have a responsibility to model best practices in our community, including connecting children with the natural world. Our efforts focus on commitment to 3 “big ideas”

- ▶ Sustainability & ecological responsibility
- ▶ Loose parts play
- ▶ Collaborations within and external to our campus

The following slides share highlights of our work in 2021-22 on these ideas

Earth Day

We like to invite families and people across campus to visit our Nature Explore playground. This year we celebrated NAEYC's Week of the Young Child and Earth Day with a special family event. There were a variety of hands-on opportunities to learn about nature. This included a recycling art station, making bird feeders, and planting flowers.



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Outdoor Garden Mural

We continued to extend the work on our garden mural this year and welcomed four new lead teachers. We invited parents to help and our Butterfly class designed the vision for the wall.



Routines



Routines and daily hands-on activities continue to be an enjoyment for our students. These are an opportunity for our children to develop ownership and responsibility.

Learning about habitats and animals around us

We welcomed the College's Grice Marine Lab and City of Charleston's Nature Center to visit ECDC. The children were able to learn more about native species and local habitats.



Learning about habitats and animals around us

Our outdoor space invites the children to observe the natural changes in animal life cycles and the four seasons. Children explore the area to find creatures and other living things to ask and answer questions about the world around them.



Loose Parts

The children develop their imagination in child centered play all the time. They can explore a variety of loose parts including cardboard boxes, wood, pulleys, rocks, stumps, tubes, fabric, and outdoor objects they discover on the playground or from our nature walks. This helps the children develop both large and small muscle control and hand-eye coordination.



Loose Parts

Our outdoor area continues to foster imagination, exploration, and risk taking. The children use loose parts in a variety of ways to expand their creativity. Using loose parts in these ways also helps the children maintain attentiveness and focus.



Music and Art in Nature

Our Nature Explore playground also helps the children demonstrate appreciation for different forms or artistic expression. This includes writing, music, and drama. The children often have opportunities to demonstrate self-expression and creativity.



The Garden



Gardening helps our children recognize they are members of a group who tend the garden. They also use their senses to construct knowledge about their world around them.

