

Resources to Help You Accomplish Award Criteria for Schools

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Category #1 - Be physically active and play outside every day to grow up healthy.

Action Option #1: We provide outdoor experiences every day for all students.

Idea: Discourage the elimination of outdoor recess for discipline reasons at your school. Create alternate disciplinary action.

Action Option #2: We encourage outside play for our students and their families, provide and communicate ideas, and have developed a recognition program.

Idea: Send home monthly ideas via school newsletter or website posting of quick outside play ideas that families can do. Set up recognition program such as have a bulletin board that families can send in photos to display of their family playing outside.

Monthly ideas to send home:

[December- January-February](#)

*Ah...snowflakes – The next time you see it start to snow outside your window, grab your coat and your family to go to catch as many snowflakes as you can on your tongues.

- *Build a family snowman or snow sculpture together.
- *Go sledding together.
- *Build a snow fort.
- *Gather up family, friends & neighbors – together roll the biggest snowball ever!
- *Take a walk outside and see if you can find all the letters of the alphabet in some form of natural object (not man made).
- *Take a walk as the sun sets and watch for the brilliant colors in the western sky.
- *Go outside and count colors of birds in your backyard and on a walk.
- * On a clear night go outside and see if you can find the Big and Little Dipper Constellations.

March

- *Fly your kite month – Go to a local open green space/park and fly kites with the family.
- *Hiking anyone? – This month, take the whole family out on a hike to your favorite park.

April

- *Cloud watching month – Find your favorite pair of sunglasses and nice place to lay out in the yard where you won't be disturbed. Look up at the clouds and see what shapes you can find as the clouds pass above you.
- *Have a race with dandelion seed heads –whoever has most seeds left on their dandelion at finish line wins!
- *During the next rain, put on rain gear - go for a rain walk adventure! Catch raindrops on your tongue. Look for animals that like to be out in the rain.

May

- *Rent a canoe and canoe on a local river or pond with your family.
- *Take a family bike ride on one of the local bike trails.
- *Find some mud and make mud pies and have a family face painting with mud.

June-August

- *Run for fun month! – Plan a time with your family and/or friends go to an open field, your school's track or some place outside that has enough space where you can run in a straight line or large circles for as long as you can.

*Make a miniature fairy or elf house in your backyard (get the book from the library: Fairy Houses by Tracy Kane for inspiration!)

* Play outdoor games- get friends and family together to play baseball/ Frisbee/ croquet/ cornhole, etc.

* Visit one of the local parks natural play areas and build a stick fort that your whole family can fit in.

September

*Visit a local shallow water creek or shallow river access as a family and explore the river bank and critters in the water.

* Visit a Tall Grass Prairie at a local park and marvel at the colorful tall wildflowers.

*Go on a rock collecting hike and find as many shapes, sizes and colors as you can.

*Make clover leaf necklaces and crowns from the white clovers in your yard.

October

*Catch a lucky leaf month – This gorgeous fall season, enjoy catching falling leaves in your local woods or a stand of trees close to your school or home. If you catch one before it hits the ground it brings you good luck!

* Make a leaf crown by gluing pretty leaves on a paper headband.

* Rake a surprise leaf pile! Have an adult hide wrapped lollipops in leaf pile, then dive in to find them!

*Look for seeds and figure out how they travel- helicopter wings? parachutes? hitchhiking (sticky)? Play games with the seeds.

November

*Adopt a tree and decorate it with natural healthy food treats- seeds, nuts, and fruits-for the animals (get the book NIGHT TREE from the library by Eve Bunting for inspiration).

*Go for a “listening walk” in your neighborhood, or park. Stop every few minutes and write down all the different sounds that you heard in a family nature journal.

Action Option #3: We provide inspiration to experience the outdoors with posters or other medium in our school and for families.

Poster Source: BENEFITS OF NATURE (2 posters) and BENEFITS OF GREEN

SCHOOLYARDS: (4 posters) Children and Nature Network site: TOOLS AND RESOURCS – INFOGRAPHICS to download 6 posters to put up in your school building:

Go to this website: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/learn/tools-resources/>

Poster Source: DID YOUR CHILD PLAY OUTSIDE TODAY?

2-foot by 3-foot version:

<https://ohiolnci.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/DidYourChildPlayOutside.pdf?x76179>

11 x 17 inch version:

<https://ohiolnci.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/DidYourChildPlayOutside11x17.pdf?x76179>

Poster Source: Ohio Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights

<https://ohiolnci.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/OhioChildrensOutdoor2BD390-1.pdf?x76179>

Category #3 - Connect with nature, with free time to explore the outdoors.

Action Option #2: We incorporate the outdoor experiences in homework assignments.

IDEA: Check out Miami County Park’s FAMILY NATURE QUEST program for schools :

<http://miamicountyparks.com/pages/FamilyNatureQuest.htm>

This would meet this homework requirement utilizing take home picture books with suggested outdoor activities for the children to complete at home and also earn prizes for doing so!

Create a similar program by having the students check these books out from the library. All suggested books and activities are listed on this website.

IDEA: Assign the students at least once a week for homework to go outside for 15 minutes and record in their journal pictures or writing of their observations. They could pick the same spot and have a yearly seasonal nature journal.

Category #5 - Explore the diversity of Ohio's natural habitats.

Action Option #2: We send home monthly suggestions of a family excursion to an Ohio natural habitat.

Five Rivers MetroParks

25 facilities 16000 acres 90% which is habitat. Visit www.metroparks.org

Miami County Parks: www.miamicountyparks.com

Fall: **Stillwater Prairie**- Native Tall Grass Prairie and Pond habitat

Winter: **Charleston Falls** – Frozen Waterfalls and Cave habitat

Spring: **Garbry Big Woods** Sanctuary Boardwalk- wildflowers/old growth forest habitat

Summer: **Rangeline Rd. River Access Stillwater** Prairie – River habitat

All around Ohio natural habitats to visit and explore:

- **Cedar bog** “bog habitat”
- **Ohio Caverns**
- Feel like being in the Lord of the Rings? Go to **Hocking Hills/Oldman's cave**
- **Caesar's Creek** and **Cowan Lake** fossils- ancient habitat that – Step back in time 350 million years and find relics of the ancient creatures who lived then.
- **Brandywine Falls** – **Cuyahoga Valley National Park** waterfalls that would fool you into thinking you step foot into a fairytale.
- “Bigger Ohio adventure series” – Birds galore at **Magee Marsh Wildlife Refuge** Ottawa
- **Clifton Gorge**- Greene county
- “It's groovy at **Kelly's Island**” as you explore the glacial grooves left behind up at Lake Erie area- the largest and best accessible example of this geological phenomenon anywhere in the world
- **Hocking Hills Rock House:** the coolest kind of house to explore

Action Option #3: We encourage our students to participate in a local park or nature center outdoor program once a month.

IDEA: Go to these websites each month and highlight an activity for your students' families:

<http://www.miamicountyparks.com/> – Miami County Park District

<https://www.metroparks.org/> - Five Rivers MetroParks

<http://www.cwpd.org/> - Centerville- Washington Parks

<http://www.bruknernaturecenter.com/> Brukner Nature Center

<http://aullwood.audubon.org/> Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm

Category #6 - Understand the patterns and cycles in nature.

Action Option #2: We post on social media or website/page a fact or information about patterns and cycles.

IDEA: Post the below nature cycle observations every month:

January

Water Cycle – We don't think about the water cycle much when it's cold out but it's there all around you in some form. During or just after a snow, go sit in a meadow or prairie and be as still as you can. Observe how this frozen part of the water cycle can make everything so quiet, peaceful and beautiful.

February

Lifecycle of a raptor – Take a hike in the woods as you can and look for tall tree trunks that have been broken off by a storm, or a strong fork at the end of a large branch. These are the perfect home for a raptor who are beginning to raise their new family this time of year! See if you can spot a mama owl at the top of a tree cavity or hawk feeding her young in her large nest.

March

The Cycle of hibernation - Life in the water is starting to wake up! Visit a wetland area and see if you can find salamanders or a few fairy shrimp who look a little tired after their long winter nap.

April

Cycle of photosynthesis – What evidence is there of photosynthesis you see emerging from the spring growth?

May

The cycle of life - "Watch Me Grow in the Spring!" Sometime this spring or summer, find a bird's nest that has eggs in it if it's close enough to the ground where you can safely see into it without touching. Create a journal and every day when mama and daddy bird are not around, gently observe how their little birds emerge and grow. Record what you see each day and before you know it they are grown up and moved away. You can also take pictures if you want to as part of your journal. *Remember to be very careful and respectful as you observe these little creatures.*

And if a baby bird falls out of the nest, it's ok for you to gently return them to the nest. The mom will still take care of it even though you've touched it.

June (An open field anywhere)

Seasons and time cycle – June 21st is the longest day of the year. It starts the summer solstice or, when we officially change our season from spring to summer. Be the early bird this year and get up just before the sun does and find a nice quiet place to watch the sun come up on this longest day of the year. Observe how long it takes from the time you just start to see the sun until it is in full sight. And if you're lucky, you'll have time to go on a walk to start your day off right!

July (in your neighborhood)

Water cycle, summer style! "Where does your Rain Go?"

We've all heard about the water cycle and now's your chance to be a part of it in your neighborhood! Playing in the rain can be so much fun for everyone if you dress for it. When it starts raining sometime this month, grab your poncho and your family head out to learn about your neighborhood's (watershed) drainage system. Are you uphill or downhill? Whose yard flows onto your yard? Where is the nearest ditch? What stream does that ditch flow into? What river does that stream flow into?

August

Rock cycle – With your family, wade in a stream, get some sure footing and then pick up a rock that's staring up at you. What part of the rock lifecycle journey is it on? Does it look rough like a brand new rock? That would be an *igneous rock* (new rock from magma). Is it going through changes as a *metamorphic rock* (changes made from heat and pressure), you might see some crystals there. Or is it at the end of its cycle as a smooth *sedimentary rock* (layers of old rock deposits)? Is the water you are standing in helping it on its journey? And can you find any little aquatic friends clinging on the bottom of the rock? Talk about it with your family and see what everyone thinks. Take a close look at life in the water.

September

Carbon Cycle – Take part in a campfire event this month. Have some fun with your friends and family as you observe this part of the carbon cycle. As you watch the beautiful shapes and colors of the flames, remember that you are actually seeing part of the carbon cycle at work. As the fire releases the energy that is trapped in the wood, carbon is being released into the air as CO₂. The green leaves of the living trees will breathe in this CO₂ and recapture the carbon, then naturally breathe out clean oxygen for us ...for free!

October

Decomposition cycle- In nature, life is born, as we witnessed a few months ago, and it dies and turns back into healthy soil. Walk the gravel lane until you reach the woods. Stop, close your eyes and take a deep breath. What do you smell? The fall leaves? Open your eyes and silently look around. What do you see? Gorgeous color? You are actually witnessing the decomposition cycle - nature's way of recycling death so there can again be life! As you walk the trails and by the cabin of this beautiful park, look at the color and falling leaves all around you. Are they green because they are still filled with chlorophyll and making food? Are they showing their true, brilliant color? Or are they turning brown because they have begun the decomposition part of their life? There is no better time of year to experience this part of the life cycle!

November

Physiological cycles (Activity and rest) – Ever wonder what the frogs do in the deep cold of winter? Where do they go when it's icy or snowing? You never see them jumping on top of the snow. Wood frogs hibernate inside logs, burrows, under rocks or leaf piles just like you see at Garbry Big Woods. Our local Leopard frog is aquatic and likes to hibernate underwater, dug into the mud or at the bottom of a pond or the stream. When in hibernation, they actually stop breathing, their heart stops and ice crystals form in their blood. When the weather warms, they defrost, and their lungs and heart go back into action. This month, walk through the woods and see if you can find a good place for a wood frog to “chill out” for the winter. And take a walk around the pond and look into the water. Can you spot a sleeping Leopard Frog? Yep, they're in there.

December (An open field anywhere or your backyard)

Lunar cycle – December is a great time to enjoy a crisp evening to look at a full moon and the star constellations! Take advantage of the clear winter nights by putting on your winter gear and take the family outside to see these awesome sights. Look up what day the full moon is this month and view it with your binoculars. Or better yet, be a part of the Stillwater Stargazers at Brukner Nature Center. They meet every 3rd Saturday of the month at dusk (5995 Horseshoe Bend Rd. Troy, Ohio 45373). Phone (937)698-6493 for details. There are many other local stargazing clubs as well. Find one near to you online.

Other IDEAS - Others can be short-term observations like finding a crystalized part of a rock that indicates metamorphosis part of the rock cycle. Or, finding animal bones- part of the animal or decomposition cycle. Rock cycle, cycle of decomposition, nitrogen/carbon cycle, water cycle, photosynthesis, energy cycle, seasons, life cycles of animals (mammal, bird, insect, etc.), plant cycles, algae cycle, planetary cycles (earth/moon's rotation cycles, planet orbiting), soil cycle, nutrient cycling (floodplains help streams with this).

Category #8 - Be fully immersed in nature by camping

overnight.

Action option #1: We provide local camping information.

IDEA: Here is information to provide for families:

- State-wide list of camping facilities
<http://www.parksandcampgrounds.com/parks/stargazing/usa/ohio/index.html>
- Five Rivers MetroParks has car and backpacking camping opportunities see
<https://www.metroparks.org/things-to-do/camping/>
- ohiocamper.com – gives camping resources by activity
- parks.ohiodnr.gov/camping for state parks
- Hocking Hills - explorehockinghills.com/lodging/campgrounds/
- <http://www.camplakeerie.com>
- Put-in-Bay – South Bass Island
- CAMP OUT IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD!

Action Option #2: We encourage participation in the Great American Campout National Wildlife Federation.

IDEA: Website for information: <http://www.nwf.org/Great-American-Campout/About.aspx>

Category #9 - Learn how to give back to nature.

Action Option #2: We encourage monthly nature focus ideas for students, parents, school staff and our community to give back to nature including recycling, planting seeds/trees/food shrubs, etc.

IDEA: Post the following monthly ideas on your school website or in your school newsletter:

January

Recycle everything you can and buy recycled products.

February

Use re-usable shopping bags. Eliminate plastic bag use when shopping.

March - April

Insert in your communications this 2 page Wildlife Brochure about Wild Babies below shown in PDF.



Wildlife Brochure
WILD BABIES.pdf

May

Try organic lawn care to reduce and eliminate toxic pesticide/herbicide use.

June - July

Leave a small section of your yard un-mowed to allow a few native wildflowers grow there-
Plant milkweed for the Monarch Butterflies.

August

Only use cloth napkins and reusable cups, plates and silverware instead of disposable for your picnics and backyard get-togethers.

September

Plant a shrub that produces food for wildlife.

October

Shop at local farmers markets and practice eating in season foods.

November

Pick up litter – don't just walk by the can on the ground. Animals get trapped in litter.

December

Use a reusable bottle instead of buying bottled water.

Leave No Trace Principles

In addition you might mention to your audience the Leave No Trace (LNT) references with the understanding that they help us preserve cultural artifacts by leaving them undisturbed, help wildlife by leaving them in their habitat for example leaving bird nests alone, and not littering by packing all your trash out. LNT as presented here is not intended to keep kids from playing in the woods, building stick houses and using natural items like leaves and twigs in playful creative on site or craft related activities. These on-site play arrangements can be left in nature and will naturally return to the environment with no harm. Nature Play is a basic part of Leaving No Child Inside. Nature Play does make an impact on the land. If an especially sensitive habitat is being or potentially being impacted, explaining to the children why it is sensitive and asking them to help protect it by modifying where they are playing in nature is appropriate. Work with the children to identify where they can play. Don't use LNT to eliminate play in natural places. If no one plays in the woods, in several generations no one will protect the woods and it will be lost to development.

Leave No Trace for Every Kid

<https://Int.org/learn/seven-principles-overview>

<https://Int.org/teach/leave-no-trace-every-kid>

<https://Int.org/teach/teaching-resources>

Action Option #4: We encourage families to certify their backyards as National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitats.

IDEA: Go to this website for more info:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Backyard_Wildlife_Habitat

Action Option #5: We participate in the *Lights Out Miami Valley* program to protect birds by eliminating extraneous outdoor lighting during migration season.

IDEA: Go to these websites for more info:

<http://ohiolightsout.org/about/>

<http://obcinet.org/ohiolightsout/>

Action Option #8: We have toured and taken a pledge at the Montgomery County Environmental Learning Center.

IDEA: Visit this website for more info:

http://www.mcoho.org/departments/solid_waste/environmental_learning_center.php

http://www.mcoho.org/departments/solid_waste/grant_programs.php

http://www.mcoho.org/departments/solid_waste/contests_and_projects.php

http://www.mcoho.org/departments/solid_waste/keep_montgomery_county_beautiful/organize_your_own_cleanup_beautification_project.php