

SPARROW'S NEST PLAY PRESENTS

PLACE-BASED EDUCATION

SIMPLE STEPS WITH HUGE IMPACT



WHAT IS PLACE-BASED EDUCATION?

CONNECTING LEARNING WITH COMMUNITY

"Place-based education might be best characterized as the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her home ground..."

-Place-Based Education, David Sobel

IGNITES A LOVE OF NATURE

NATURE BEGINS JUST OUTSIDE OUR FRONT DOOR

Children begin to learn that nature isn't only in a far away place, but in the places they pass each day on the way to and from school. Soon they learn to care for this environment and invest in it.



ESTABLISHES A LOVE OF COMMUNITY

LOVING ONE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

A place is made up of the people who inhabit it. As children experience learning in the community, they get to know its members and build relationships.



INSPIRES STEWARDSHIP

WE ARE ALL CARETAKERS OF ONE ANOTHER

Healthy relationships with land and neighbors lead children and their families to care for the small patches of nature they experience in their place. Studies show that more than any other influence, this inspires stewardship.



IMPROVES OUTCOMES

HIGHER RATES OF ACHIEVEMENT

When students feels connected to a place and a part of the greater community, attendance and participation rates go up. Students gain confidence from the relationships they develop with community partners and their achievement rises.



RENEWS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

TO KNOW A PLACE IS TO LOVE IT

When people feel attachment to a place, they invest their time, energy and lives in that place.



SPARROW'S NEST PLAY PASSIVE AREA PROPOSAL

Applicant: Vangie Rodenbeck, Director of Sparrow's Nest Play (a Saturday Nature Play Group, beginning October 2022).*

Contact Information: [REDACTED]; [REDACTED];
<https://sparrowsnestplay.org/>

1) Description of Program

Sparrow's Nest Play, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located in Powder Springs, is requesting permission to use the Passive Area located on Brownsville Rd adjacent to Powder Springs Park two Saturdays a month from 10am - 1pm. Ten children, ages 6 - 12 would use this area each session.

*A Nature Play Program is an enrichment and mentoring program entirely outdoors, all-weather nature immersion experience for school age children. Activities are focused on seasonal nature studies, environmental awareness, and community.

2) Desired timeline for project and fund source

October 2022 - May 2023; with potential for summer expansion

Tentative Weekly Schedule:

Saturdays, twice monthly from 10am - 1pm.

Independently funded.

3) Benefits for Powder Springs

Sparrow's Nest Play is a strong proponent of place-based education.

Individuals engaged in community:

Students and families will be able to participate in a nature play program that aims to provide children with enduring connections to our ecological place, our community and our food systems.

Sparrow's Nest Play is a place-based educational model. Afternoons of nature play (at Sparrow's Nest Play) would compliment the education received at our local elementary schools. In this way, students have the opportunity to communicate and inspire the larger community through arts, science and real life representations of their nature studies. They will gain a total sense of place: ecological, cultural and food systems.

Nature play organizations emphasize building community among students, families, teachers and the larger community. We will invite regular guests from our greater community to take part in the program. We provide encouragement and opportunities for group bonding, collaboration and teamwork among the students as well as reflection and individual empowerment.

Environmental Stewardship and Social Justice:

Sparrow's Nest Play students will increase their dedication to stewardship and global-mindedness through their nature-connection journeys.

In his book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louve references studies that suggest one of the best ways to ensure a growing global community of life-long environmental stewards is to help children form a deep connection to place and nature at a very young age. In addition, nature play inherently provides children with experiences of compassion, holistic world view, spatial-awareness, emotional awareness, resiliency, creativity, problem-solving, helpfulness and respectful communication. These competencies and the intimate connections to place allow for the development of children that positively influence their community and can serve as resilient global citizens.

Diversity and equity:

Sparrow's Nest Play has a deep, critical commitment to diversity and equity and has much to offer in guiding our community in this regard.

Participants would receive instruction and modeling in equity and inclusivity practices throughout our conversations, practices and activities. Sparrow's Nest Play is dedicated to participating in as many trainings and forums on this topic as we can find. We seek to continue connection with advocacy groups in Cobb County.

At the core, forest schools and nature play programs promote diversity and equity by providing children with opportunities to develop love, respect and mindful inter-connectedness with all earth's inhabitants, including humans. Respect for the astounding diversity of our ecosystems is grounding for respect of diversity among all of human life and culture.

Sparrow's Nest Play embraces all gender identities, sexual preferences and family structures. We commit to continually evaluating and improving racial, cultural, and gender-based inclusivity and reparations.

We particularly seek to honor the ancestral lands of the Cherokee and Muscogee Creek that once dwelled in this place.

Sparrow's Nest Play is committed to making the program accessible to all income levels as we move forward. We hope to conduct fundraising to be able to provide financial assistance from our program's inception. We offer choices about how many days per week families can choose to participate as a way to help families find affordable tuition.

4) Leave No Trace We would not use the land any differently than it is already being used by the wider community (as a recreational site/ environmental study site).

5) Potential environmental impacts

- The trail in the Passive Area would receive more use.
- As part of a nature play curriculum, ***we do request*** that our students be able to build temporary natural shelters out of fallen materials in the forest, use natural materials to make art, as well as play in the stream, use fallen clay from banks, and dig in the sand.

- We would NOT engage in activities that cause erosion or harm plants and animals. A central purpose of the program is to teach/ model respect for and protection of the land and its inhabitants.

To address these environmental impacts we agree to volunteer to help with trail maintenance, work as stewards, “pack it out”, and rotate our use of areas. Here are some examples:

- Use a buckets to pack-out our own waste
- Leave no litter
- Observe if areas are becoming overused, and move our activities around to allow vegetation to remain intact.

Examples of how we would act as stewards:

- Pick up litter
- Pick up and dispose of dog feces when encountered
- Conduct daily checks for hazards/ unsafe land-use
- Volunteer to help with trail maintenance; including overgrowth of brush on stairs leading to area
- Keep a detailed record of wildlife encountered made available for public use

6) Health and Safety issues

- Sparrow’s Nest Play will have our own general liability insurance for the business and teachers.
- **We do request** the use of restrooms in the Concession Stand for use by our students between 10am and 1:00pm on Saturdays when in session.
- The “Sparrow’s Nest Play Safety Plan” (see attachment) is based on the *Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook* compiled by the Natural Start Alliance. Sparrow’s Nest Play also

consulted with the Forest School Teacher Institute. In summary the safety issues addressed are:

- Essential Safety Practices
- Appropriate Outdoor Clothing
- Attending to “Risky Play”
- Toileting and Hygiene
- General Health and Illnesses
- COVID-19/ Infectious Diseases
- Weather Safety
- Environmental Safety
- Emergency Preparedness Plan

7) Ongoing maintenance plan

Because the trail in the Passive Area would receive more use, we agree to volunteer to help with trail maintenance. We have noticed the stairs easily become overgrown by the natural brush on either side. This is something we could easily maintain in a way that keeps the integrity of the natural area.

8) Additional information you feel may help the committee make a decision

I have over 15 years of experience in children’s ministry, extensive experience running Christian camps, writing children’s curriculum, planning and running children’s activities and events, and teaching children the Bible.

I have classical training in early childhood education, child-growth and development, extensive experience as a classroom paraprofessional, substitute teacher and teacher, parent-liaison in the IEP process, and I am a recognized expert on special-needs modification for Christian publishing.

I have extensive experience in social-media marketing and nonprofit administration, which I gained as the Executive Director of PURE Ministries,

a network of churches and ministries devoted to special-needs inclusion.

I have assisted in the development and marketing of a very successful Christian preschool and home-school co-op run from a church which started in 2005 and is still operating today.

I have a Bachelor's degree from Point University in Christian Ministry and a Master of Arts in Theology from Lincoln Christian University. I have recently completed 65+ hours of training from The Forest School Teacher Institute in Chattanooga, TN.

Read more about my love for our community in a blog I wrote called [*Hope, Place and Neighbors*](#).