Children Discovering Nature in Northwest Minnesota

Nature-based Play in Northwest MN

What is Nature-based Play?
Nature-based play puts kids in touch with nature by encouraging them to play with rocks, water, sand, leaves, sticks and other materials found outdoors. A nature-based play space looks more like woods, prairie or garden than a playground. Unlike the open woods, though, these spaces usually have a border, so parents know where their kids are, and so kids can play freely in the space.

Get Involved
There are lots of ways to get involved in the making the play space. Everyone is welcome: kids, adults, people with skills with plants and trees, educators, naturalists, artists, builders... anyone who’s excited about making a new space at Castle Park! For more info, contact Sarah (info below), or visit the website below.

Creating a Nature-based Play Space for Crookston
Over the last year, the City of Crookston has been making plans for Castle Park, including a campground, dog park and river access. In June, a group of community members (both adults and youth) met to share ideas about how to transform a part of the park into a nature-based play space. Their ideas turned into the two designs that were presented at National Night Out on August 2nd. Kids and adults gave feedback, which was used to create a final design. These brainstorming and feedback sessions are part of a bigger process to develop plans for the play space, create and install the space in Castle Park, and make it come to life with plants, paths, rocks, logs, art and activity!

Northwest Minnesota Natural Play Spaces Design Timeline

www.umcrookston.edu/childrenandnature

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Design for a Nature-based Play Space at Castle Park

Fast Facts About Outdoor Time and Children  
www.beoutthere.org

- Children are spending half as much time outdoors as they did 20 years ago. (Juster et al 2004); (Burdette & Whitaker 2005); (Kuo & Sullivan 2001)

- Today, kids 8-18 years old devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes using entertainment media in a typical day (more than 53 hours a week). (Kaiser Family Foundation)

- In a typical week, only 6% of children ages 9-13 play outside on their own. (Children & Nature Network, 2008)

- Children who play outside are more physically active, more creative in their play, less aggressive and show better concentration. (Burdette and Whitaker, 2005; Ginsburg et al., 2007)

- Sixty minutes of daily unstructured free play is essential to children’s physical and mental health. (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2008)

- The most direct route to caring for the environment as an adult is participating in “wild nature activities” before the age of 11. (Wells and Lekies, 2006)