



GODDARD SCHOOL CREATES OUTDOOR CLASSROOM WITH NATURE TRAIL

By Mark Shuller • Oct 05, 2010

ANDERSON TWP (FOX19) - Exploring nature in your own backyard helps make sense of the habitat around us. To foster this opportunity for knowledge, the Goddard School located in Anderson Twp., OH forged a new Nature Trail to create an “outdoor” classroom.

“The nature trail is an innovative way to allow children to explore insects, animals, and plants in their own, natural habitat. Being on the trail draws upon children’s identification and observation skills which are core capabilities for the developing scientist”, says Mark Reinhart, Owner of The Goddard School® in Anderson Twp.

Walking through the nature trail introduces children at an early age to excitement of our environment and provides an enriching and hands-on learning opportunity. Exploring at different times of day and during a variety of seasons allows real-life opportunities for the children to compare changes in the environment over time, and to understand that some changes in the environment are reversible and some are not.

Teachers initiate conversations about the common needs of living things, as well as ways the environment meets the unique needs of each organism. Open ended questions, such as “Tell me about things the trees need to stay alive?” or “What might happen to that Cardinal if this tree no longer existed?” allows children to develop critical thinking skills, says Amy Blankenship, the School’s Director.

A favorite activity among children is bringing teacher-approved items from the trail into the classroom for further investigation. Pine cones, twigs, leaves, bark, and stones are placed in the science center or sensory table along with magnifying glasses, water, eye droppers and a balance. Finding new uses for familiar materials, such as painting with pine needles, gluing with leaves, and sculpting with rocks and play dough is an important learning objective for young children according to Heather Craft, the School’s Kindergarten Teacher.

“Students are asked to record scientific observations through pictures and words.” This is a fun science experience and helps children learn how to relay information to others which is an objective defined by the Early Learning Content Standards defined by the State of Ohio.

“This addition to our school will allow years of added enrichment, and foster the idea that new learning experiences can be fun, challenging and safe, all at the same time,” says Amy Blankenship.