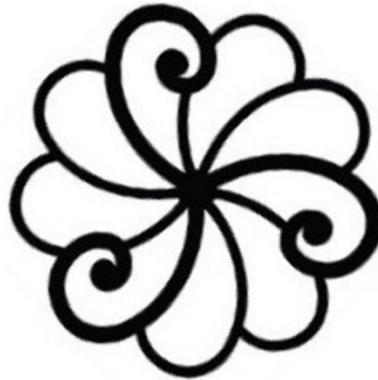


PERMIE KIDS

Inspiration Grows



Cultivating the “Learning Landscape” with:

Interconnected Ethical Edges

Natural Thinking Tools

Community Virtues

Transdisciplinary Concepts

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Learning Landscapes: Everyone Should Get Lost in the Forest

Warning: You are moving into another dimension – a dimension of place, a dimension of time, and a dimension of space. You’re moving into a landscape of both science and art, of things and ideas. The story you are about to read is true. You’re now crossing over into the Learning Landscapes zone...

“Oh no, Mama, we lost the hiking path. I’m too tired to walk alllllll the way back the way we came. How can we get back to our car?”

“Hmm, I don’t know. How can we use what we know about ourselves, hiking and navigation, and what we know about this landscape to get where we want to go?”

Silence... then my son notices the sun setting. Since we parked in the west lot, we should follow the sun. A train whistle cracks the silence. Ah ha! The west lot is near the train station,



confirming we need to head that way. But there is no path, so maybe we should head to the edge of the woods. There might be a better way to get back. My two children are using their observational and critical thinking skills to find a solution to this problem.

Now, let me just say that this mother wasn’t lost. Our interests and passions led us to depart from the well-marked walking path to instead forge our own for the day. I stood back while my children’s natural curiosity lead us deeper and deeper into the forest. The journey into the woods started with their questions and natural exploration, so why not let that be our guide to creating our path out?

We headed for the edge of the forest because the kids thought it would be easier to see the setting sun if we weren’t under the canopy of the trees. Soon, we were on an expedition through a field of blackberry and raspberry brambles on the tree lined edge of the forest. Following many pricks, several scratches, and a few tears (along with munching on a couple of the ripe berries), my kids decided the new plan was to get on my shoulders while I finished walking us through the brambles and back into the woods.

Have you ever stopped to look at the edge of a natural forested area? You can easily walk through a meadow with tall grass and wild flowers. But as you approach the edge of the forest you encounter scratchy shrubs, tangling vines, sapling trees whose branches are so low you have to duck under, and as we did, brambles.

An edge is simply where two or more things meet and in nature the edge is where typically the most opportunity for productivity and diversity occurs. It isn't simply about the natural resources there, but the *natural relationships* that occur that make the edge so interesting and productive. After you push your way through the edge, you find yourself inside a forest that seems, relatively speaking, open and once again easy to navigate, only having a layer of decaying leaves to tromp through.



After about another 45 minutes of walking, including over a fallen tree that bridged a deep ravine, we got back to the car. On the way home, my children recalled all the elements of the forest that we explored and then came to better understand while we were “lost.” In addition, my son made a list of things he would want to pack for future hikes to be better prepared if we find ourselves once again in the big unknown.



We also discussed the natural elements of the landscape that animals and plants make use of to survive and how we might creatively use those resources if necessary. However, it was only when my son said to me, “You know, Ma, I think it is ok to get a few scratches if you learn a big lesson,” that I knew the physical terrain had become a learning landscape for him. Pretty profound for a three-year-old.

Designing learning based on our children’s emerging wonderment and curiosity about the world around them can be a lot of fun and

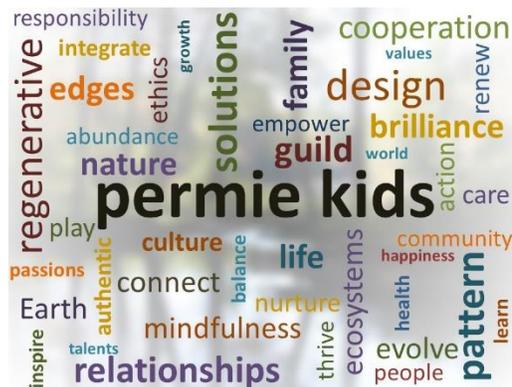
incredibly rewarding. Experiential, emergent learning provides space and support for our children and the situation to influence the direction of the learning. When we do this, we often gain a better understanding of ourselves, one another and our learning landscape. Rather than thinking about teaching children a “lesson,” we can co-create the learning landscape with them. This transforms the learning landscape from one focused on “what” is learned or produced to one that addresses the deeper questions of “why” and “how” our children can embrace the process of lifelong learning.

How can experiences, curiosity and natural relationships be leveraged in our children’s learning landscape?

What's the Story?

The primary mission of PERMIE KIDS is to help us remember what we all know, but may have forgotten – the art and wisdom of designing beautiful relationships that nourish life.

In partnership with community (which includes not just people, but also Nature and our interconnections), our children, families and communities co-create ethical, ecological relationships that honor the intrinsic dignity, worth and transformative potential of each and every person and all our relations.



Education is our greatest resource
to ethically and ecologically nourish life
and transform the future.

Nature vs nature

The word “Nature” was traditionally used to represent all of the universe including the living and nonliving things within it. Nature was viewed in a spiritual context, deserving of respect and admiration.

As we have come to think of Nature as a natural resource to be managed, used and consumed, we have replaced the capital letter “N” with a lowercase one. Coincidence? Maybe, but language is consciousness.

Children are not separate from the world around them. They are part of an intricate ecosystem. To fully understand one’s authentic self, we need to understand our connection to, role within, and our responsibility to nourish our place, time, culture, and community.

Our learning community is dedicated to helping our children come to know their essential “life story.” The unfolding of our children’s life stories is the conscious creation of life. It is a process, not a destination, that connects our children to the past, transforms the future and enables balance in the convergence of science and spirit in their learning and life landscapes.

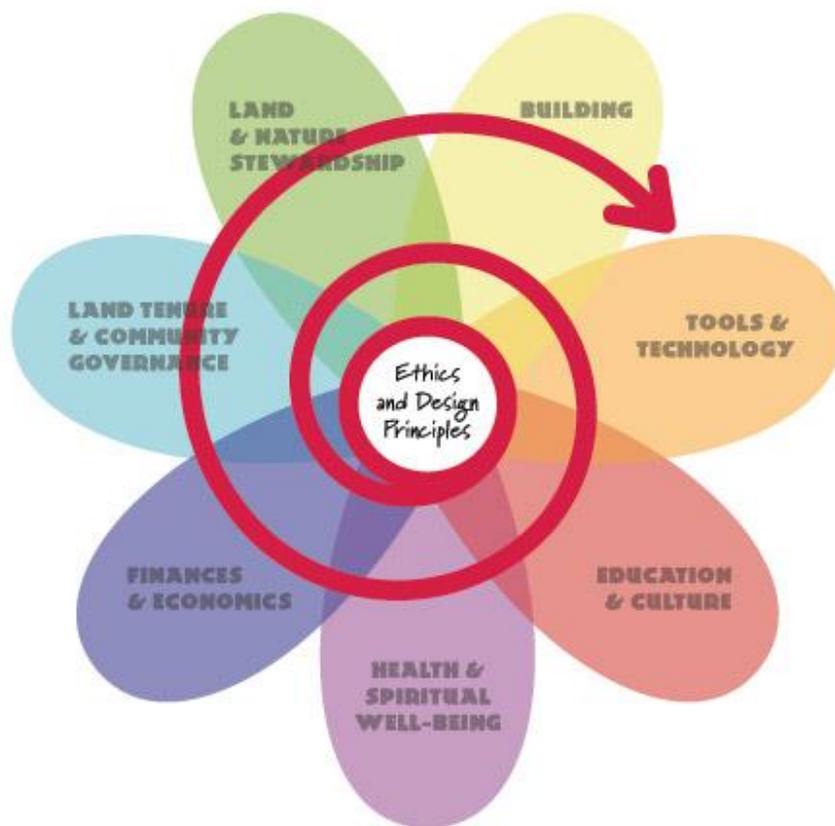
Our children and youth develop not just academically and individually, but holistically and collectively as part of community. Education is a resource that we can use to nourish life and transform the future. A deep relationship with Nature, family and community lays the foundation for exploring emerging values, beliefs, passions and talents.

Changing the Story

If you want to spark curiosity and cultivate community, tell a compelling story. It is through stories that natural relationships are revealed and shared. It is through stories that inspiration grows. The story or myths we choose to believe, live and tell today communicate the ethics, values and beliefs that will transform the future. What is our story?

Whole systems thinking tools and ethics are the foundation for more than just “my story” or “your story.” Although each story is unique, we have a common thread that unites us within *our story* in learning and life.

Our story emerges in relation to our shared covenant that brings our community together. We chose to co-create a shared story through a covenant of ethics and thinking tools that help us go beyond scientific observations of the patterns of nature and connect us with the ancient wisdom and sacredness of all.



* Much gratitude to Richard Telford from [Permaculture Principles](#) who created the permaculture flower.