

Antioch University New England

Education Department

Course #: CNED 575

Course Title: PLC to Support Initiating Play and Learning Outdoors

Credits: 1 graduate level credit

Term and year: Fall 2015

Required Prerequisites: None

Fee: \$350

Meeting times & location: Monday, August 24, 5:30-7:30
Monday, September 14, 5:30-7:30
Saturday, September 26, 9-2
Monday, October 5 5:30-7:30
Monday, November 2 5:30-7:30
Monday, December 7 5:30-7:30
Ottauquechee School, Quechee, VT

First-Last day of course: Sep. 14, 2015-Dec. 7, 2015

Instructor Information

Name: Eliza Minnucci

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Instructor availability: by email and phone

Course Description:

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are growing nationally as an effective way to share and gain knowledge as well as make lasting changes in practice. The PLC to Support Initiating Play and Learning Outdoors will serve to provide interested educators with a forum for discussing topics essential to taking students outdoors productively. As a group of practitioners we will bring a variety of experiences to share with each other, as well as commit to implementing and reflecting on changes in our practice to enhance the play and learning of our students in extended outdoor experiences. Guided both by the instructors and by participant interest we will explore theory and best practices together through readings, participant documentation and shared images and anecdotes from our own settings.

Each monthly PLC session will include shared photos and anecdotes from participants, reflection on implementation of previous month's topic, discussion on current month's readings, and making a commitment of change inspired by this discussion. Participants receiving course credit, in addition to sharing photos

of their work monthly, will create two 2-page “documentations” of successful work outdoors with children, reflecting connections to Common Core Standards, Vermont Early Learning Standards or the standards appropriate to the setting in which they teach or hope to teach. These documentations may describe an implementation of a successful routine, an application of academic curriculum outdoors, a thematic unit applied in the forest setting, use/involvement of additional staff or volunteers to help meet standards, or other aspect of the participant’s work with his/her students outside.

Course Purpose and Objectives:

Objective: Participants will increase their ability to lead children in productive play and learning outdoors. Participants will gain skills leading to extended outdoor experiences for their students. Deepening their knowledge of both developmentally appropriate best-practices and application of Common Core and Early Learning Standards, participants will improve the opportunities for learning in their educational settings.

This course will answer the following questions, as well as more questions raised by the participants themselves:

- How can I develop the necessary infrastructure to support my students in extended outdoor experiences?
- What routines will support developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for my students?
- How do I balance risks and benefits in my setting?
- How do I begin to apply academic standards in an outdoor setting?
- How do I involve administrators, staff and volunteers in this endeavor?
- What is the teacher’s role in supporting learning opportunities for students?
- How do I fund additional gear or staffing for successful outdoor experiences?
- How do I communicate student learning to administrators, staff and parents?

Readings:

Required:

Description of Seminar Sessions

Our monthly meetings will consist of sharing photos and anecdotes from our educational settings, reflecting on our work towards commitments made at previous session, discussion of a new topic and making commitments of change to enact before the next session. Most sessions will also include a site visit to participants’ educational

settings. The Saturday half-day session in September will allow participants to participate in a mock forest kindergarten session at the Ottauquechee School, complete with fire, snack, and forest-john.

Schedule of Seminar Sessions

Monday, August 24, 5:30-7:30

Monday, September 14, 5:30-7:30

Saturday, September 19, 9-2

Monday, October 5 5:30-7:30

Monday, November 2 5:30-7:30

Monday, December 7 5:30-7:30

Assignments

Session Participation: In this collaborative PLC model seminar sessions are most fruitful for participants through their active involvement. In detail this means: having completed the assigned reading, having forwarded photos of your work outdoors with children prior to the session and contributing ideas and questions to the discussion. One absence in case of illness or emergency may be made-up by written reflection on the readings and session topic by email with the instructors. The face-to-face sharing at the sessions make up the meat of this course, and two absences, or more, jeopardize the participant's receiving a grade reflecting completion of the course.

Written Documentation: Each participant will be responsible for creating two "documentations" of their work outdoors with children over the course of the fall. The first, due October 5, and the second due November 2, should meet the following requirements:

- tell the story of a successful endeavor, routine or learning in the outdoors that recently took place
- be turned in electronically as an email attachment to the instructors
(Pages, Word, or Open Office Document)
- be 500-1000 words
- include photos
- highlight the Early Learning Standards, or Common Core Standards embedded in the endeavor
- include quotes from children, staff, volunteers and parents if possible

"Documentations" by course participants will become part of the AUNE Nature-based Early Childhood program collection, which may be turned into a resource for educators in the future. With permission these pieces may also be posted on the www.forestkinder.org blog to share with like-minded educators around the world. With this audience in mind, "Documentations" should clearly illustrate the work of the children and teachers involved in the endeavor, should highlight the learning outcomes, and should provide enough detail that the activities described within are repeatable by other practitioners.

As support for completing these assignments, examples of “Documentations” will be made available to participants, as well as a list of suggested topics. Participants may select a suggested topic, but are also encouraged to look to their own challenges and growth during the course for inspiration. What is interesting, difficult and new to you, is very likely to be well-received by our intended audience.

In short, coursework requirements are:

- monthly reading assignment 5-25 pages completed before session
- monthly photo documentation forwarded electronically to instructors by the Friday before the upcoming session (3-10 photos)
- session attendance and participation
- two written “documentations,” 500-1000 words accompanied by photos, due October 5 and November 2.

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation criteria to receive credit: Student work will be assessed on the following criteria:

Form: Was the student’s participation conducive to productive discussion, characterized by preparation, thoughtfulness and respect? Was the work presented organized in order to effectively communicate its content to the audience of the work?

Content: Did the student contribute to the topics of discussion and bring and elicit perspectives on working productively with young children? Did the work reflect productive and positive outdoor educational experiences for children?

Process: Was the participant at each session, ready for involvement? Was the work received in a timely fashion? Did the student respond to instructor feedback and/or questions?

Student Disability Services:

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Antioch New England does not exclude or discriminate against otherwise qualified students with disabilities. Those with documented disabilities, diagnosed by a qualified professional, and disclosed to the Director for Student Disability Services, may request and be accorded reasonable accommodations that will allow them to participate in the institution's programs and services.

For more information and support, please contact the Director of Student Disability Services, Fran Ziperstein, fziperstein@antioch.edu

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy

As a community of scholar-practitioners, Antioch University New England promotes the principles of academic integrity. Accordingly, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are grounds for disciplinary measures.

“Plagiarize” is defined in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as “...to steal and pass off (the ideas and words of others) as one's own; to use (a credited production) without crediting the source; to present as new and original an idea or product from an existing source...” Plagiarizing includes not only taking direct quotes from written or oral sources without citation, but also paraphrasing others' ideas.

Students found to have plagiarized or engaged in other acts of academic dishonesty will receive "No Credit (NC)" for the course and may be subject to other disciplinary sanctions through regular academic department and institutional procedures for misconduct, including probation or disenrollment.

Writing Support

Writers at all levels improve by getting feedback on their work. To supplement faculty support, the AUNE Writing Center provides both face-to-face assistance and phone or Skype sessions. The Writing Center can help with all parts of the writing process, including brainstorming and outlining, structuring and organizing your work, revising and polishing drafts, integrating sources, formatting citations, and more. The Writing Center also provides support for designing presentations and presentation aids, and for resumes, cover letters, and CVs.

- To make an appointment with the AUNE Writing Center, ask a question, or check out writing resources, visit <http://www.antiochne.edu/writingcenter/>, or come visit us in person at the Writing Center office in the Library.
- Online writing support is also available via the Virtual Writing Center. You can submit your work via the VWC website, <http://www.antioch.edu/vwc/>, and you will receive written feedback within 48 hours.