

# ***Nature-Based Learning***

## **Anna Murray Douglass Academy School #12**

### **What is nature-based learning:**

Nature-based learning (NBL) occurs when education is connected to the natural world. Students can participate in outdoor experiences that complement and enhance the curriculum, or bring outdoor artifacts and ideas into their classrooms to create more robust educational opportunities. For the 2023-24 school year we are working together to offer educational experiences that get the school community more connected to nature.

### **Why is nature-based learning important:**

- Healthy communication and improved reasoning skills
- Improved emotional, mental, and physical health
- Improved academic performance
- Greater school, students, families, and community connections

### **Who are the nature-based learning partners:**

[Rochester Ecology Partners](#) & [The Center for Youth: Earthworks Program](#) are partnering with the ADMA School 12 to offer nature-based learning opportunities. We will collaborate closely with Kyra Stephenson, your nature-based learning coach to offer lessons that are rooted in community building practices, social-emotional wellbeing, and academically connected.

**AMDA School #12** Kyra Stephenson has been a science educator for over 20 years. For the last five year, she has done extensive research and field work on the impact connecting with nature has on students. This has brought her to the RCSD as a Nature-Based Learning Coach, where she runs the 1st ever nature-based learning program in the area with support from our many community partners. As a Nature-Based Learning Coach, it is Kyra's mission to help students and staff develop a reciprocal relationship with nature, so one can enhance their learning capabilities and experience the social-emotional and continual health benefits the outdoors has.



**Rochester Ecology Partners** serves people in Greater Rochester through nature-based learning and community building. Staff members working with the school are Chris Widmaier, Lindsay Clark, Timmi Okung, and Katie Tokaryk.



**The Center for Youth: Earthworks Program** aims to create a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment, where people develop resilience, self-confidence and an appreciation for the natural world. Staff members working with the school are Taylor Naugle, Loretta Hauslauer, and Venice Aureli.



## **Nature Based Learning Activities for Individual Classrooms**

### **Framework 1 - Model NBL Classroom**

The nature-based learning team supports classrooms intensively as a way to demonstrate and assess the power of nature-based learning. The NBL coach and educators collaborate with the classroom teacher to provide weekly NBL experiences for students through the course of a marking period with the option to extend the length of time and depth of NBL integration. In this collaboration teachers, students, and parents will be partners in documenting the implementation and impact of NBL as well as help to tell the story of NBL as a strategy for meeting academic, community building, and SEL goals.

### **Framework 2 - NBL Series of Experiences**

Teachers work with their NBL team to integrate NBL into a series of 3-9 lessons that guide students in a progression of experiences that meet academic, community building, or SEL goals. These experiences are a combination of in-class lessons, nearby nature lessons and field studies to natural environments. The NBL team can lead lessons, support teachers in the facilitation of lessons, and work with teachers to design experiences that meet their needs and is aligned with Science, Math, ELA, SEL, Arts, and PE standards.

### **Framework 3 - As Needed NBL Support**

Teachers can request support from the NBL team to integrate nature-based learning into their teaching.

This includes the following:

1. Coaching and consultation

2. One time NBL experiences in and out of the classroom
3. Field studies near and far
4. Materials and Equipment to facilitate NBL

## **NBL Activities for the Multiple Classrooms**

**Take me Outside Days** - Throughout the year we will facilitate activities that encourage classes to take their learning outside.

**Mindful Nature Fridays** - Students engage in nature-based activities to find peace and wellness on Friday mornings

## **NBL for Educators**

**Mindful Mornings** - An opportunity for school staff to find nature together over a cup of coffee, tea, and snacks.

**Book Study** - A series of conversations about a nature-based piece of literature

**Professional Development** - Workshops that introduce and deepen engagement with the why, how, and what of nature-based learning. Whenever possible these activities will include nature-based learning.

## **NBL for the Community**

**Out of School Community Events** - We hope to collaborate with the PTA to provide opportunities for families to participate in out of school activities and community events that celebrate our many connections with nature.