

## Protecting the Democracy of Children through Sustainable Risk Management: An Investigation into Risk Assessment and Nature-Based Play

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**Abstract :** This work explores the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive risks and benefits related to nature-based teaching and highlights the importance of promoting a sustainable workforce within early childhood programs. Assessing and managing risks can help programs reimagine their approach to teaching, learning, recruitment, family connectivity, and staff motivation. The importance of staff sustainability and motivation/engagement related to social justice and the environment will be discussed. We will explore ways to manage fears and limitations faced by early childhood programs regarding nature experiences and risky play in a variety of locations using a lens of place-based learning. We will also examine the alignment of sustainability and social-emotional development, mental health supports, social awareness, and risk assessment. The work will discuss the varied perceptions of risk in diverse areas and the impact on the early childhood workforce. Motivational theory and compassion resiliency are hallmarks of both recruiting and retaining high-quality early childhood educators; the work will discuss how to balance programmatic constraints and healthy motivation for students and teachers while empowering individuals to advocate for their mental health and well-being. Finally, the work will highlight the positive impact of nature-based teaching practices and the overall benefit to young children and their educators.

**Keywords :** child's rights, inclusion, nature-based education, risk assessment

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