

Community News

ENC Nature Preschool Opens Doors to Students for First Time

by: Lori Whalen
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Mud Play

NEWPORT BEACH...The ENC Nature Preschool welcomed students for the first time. 72 children, ages 2 1/2 to 5, walked through the gates where they started their day exploring the grounds of the Nature Play Area. Trails ramble through three outdoor classrooms, the Sequoia, Yosemite and Joshua Tree Play Areas. They rode bright yellow tricycles and scooters along the bicycle path imprinted with animal tracks reflecting the names of their classrooms: bears, tortoise and coyote.

Throughout the day they played and learned in the art zone, the music zone, and the organic garden. They climbed on rocks, stumps and logs, sifted sand in the sand play area, and felt mud squish through their toes in the mud pit. After lunch, they took their food scraps to the compost area and then got down to business being creative on the dramatic play stage.



ENC Nature Preschool would not have been possible without the assistance of donations from donors like Frank and Joan Randall, who recently gifted \$1,000,000 to the school. The Randall's' gift, as well as the generosity of many, many community members, will help the new school to provide quality early childhood education through hands-on experience with Nature.

The ENC Nature Preschool classrooms are warm, welcoming and conducive to learning. The ENC is aiming to achieve Platinum LEED Certification for the new facility. The US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. It is also the ENC's goal to achieve certification through the Living Building Challenge. The preschool was already awarded a citation from the American Institute of Architects Orange County Chapter (AIAOCC) in 2015.

The building features a photovoltaic array to generate the energy necessary to be net-positive; water efficiency features; daylighting; recycled, regional and rapidly renewable materials; and natural ventilation. Other sustainable features include light pollution reduction, energy use reduction, recycling programs, green housekeeping practices and an electric vehicle charging station.

"Nature Preschools provide a safe, stimulating environment where children can reach their full potential," said ENC Nature Preschool Director Sue Bierlich. "Research has shown that outdoor play increases fitness levels and learning outside increases students' ability to think both critically and creatively."

"The ENC Nature Preschool will be a model nature based school, and we are enthusiastic about sharing our model with administrators from a multitude of educational institutions -- from preschools to universities." said ENC Executive Director Bo Glover. "We know that a nature based education can be instrumental in helping students reach their potential physically, emotionally, socially and academically. Most importantly we are passionate about empowering people to make change: to strengthen their communities, and literally save the world."

For more information or to donate to the ENC's Nature Preschool, visit encnaturepreschool.org or contact ENC Executive Director Bo Glover at 949-645-8489 ext. 101 or bo@enccenter.org. Photos: ENC