



# Chrysalis

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“When we are alone on a starlit night; when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children; when we know love in our hearts; or when, like the Japanese poet Basho we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash – at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the “newness,” the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.”<sup>1</sup>

~ Thomas Merton

These moments that Thomas Merton calls to mind are moments like Thomas Berry’s Meadow Across the Creek moment...

Moments when we glimpse the beauty of children playing, when we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash...

Moments when we are overtaken by immediacy and rest in it...

Moments when we “sink from our shallows,” as Thomas Merton would say, and are gifted with a glimpse of the depth that resides just beneath the surface of our lives...

Moments that give us a touchstone for our actions in the world.

At the midpoint of our Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice program, as we enter into a process of recognizing a practice for the second year, these moments guide us.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), 297.



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We ask ourselves: What if the touchstone for our actions shifted from our socially constructed world to a much larger sense of Self, to a felt sense of deep belonging to a sacred universe? What if we started there?

We know how easily we slip into creating projects and activities that come from a place of our human thinking and willing. This is what we have been trained to do at school and at work – we move so readily into an action plan.

What if, at the beginning of forming a practice, we took time to get in touch with our foundational holiness, our first nature, as a place to begin?

What if we could surrender to our deepest identity connected to Source and see what flows from there?

What if we could learn to listen from *that* place to what is wanting to form?

What if we recognized that this place of deep connection to Source is our first nature and that living, thinking and acting autonomously, cut off from Source, is the dis-ease of our time?

This is what Thomas Berry recognized and has guided us to recognize. Through this recognition he gifted us with the image of a “communion of subjects” as a guiding image and touchstone for our actions in the world.

Thomas stayed true to his first nature as he entered into a journey to recognize his true calling and work in the world. He is a wonderful example of Frederick Buechner's view of vocation as “the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Buechner quoted by Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 16.

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During the first year of The Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program, participants are invited to be present to the natural world in a deeply listening and receptive way; to “hold at bay” habitual ways of “knowing about” and accumulating information; to attune themselves to a sacred universe.

From this place of deep connection, individual practices flow and flourish during the second year of the program. For the graduating class of 2016 what emerged was nothing less than a symphony of life-affirming voices: stories, deep inner work and openings to intuition, pedagogical re-imaginings, embodied ecological ethics, portals to silence and centering and InterBeing.

In this issue of *Chrysalis* you will read about one of these practices, “Re-imagining Montessori’s Great Lessons In the Light of Thomas Berry: Cosmic Stories of Writing and Math,” which finds further expression in a two-part series offered by the Center in October.

Also in this issue you will read about an Enlivenment Series that explores the terrain of a new poetic ecology and *living* science, led by science teachers who are also graduates of the Center’s Inner Life of the Child in Nature program.

At the end of each Inner Life program, we share these practices in a celebratory gathering and, in closing, walk silently to the Marsh Bridge at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary where we cross, one by one, in a ritual that symbolizes a new work being birthed in the world.

This year, after we waited in Silence for all to gather at the Star Child Pool after the Marsh Bridge Crossing, we made our way from the darkness of the pool up a narrow path to the light on the bank of the lake. I was the first to arrive. As I looked out over the lake there was the heron, perched in the majesty of his stillness on branches that had fallen into the water. As others came up from the darkness into the light, they too were drawn into his stillness. On an impulse of rising, he took flight and was joined by another heron, who appeared as if from nowhere. We stood in awe as they circled the lake three times and flew off.

An ineffable moment of grace...

In Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Whalen-Levitt". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a mix of capital and lowercase letters.

Peggy Whalen-Levitt, Director

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# Re-imagining Montessori's Great Lessons in the Light of Thomas Berry, Part 2: Cosmic Stories of Writing and Math

by

Heather Koch and Andrea Reed

“Re-imagining Montessori's Great Lessons in the Light of Thomas Berry: A Message of Hope” was published in the Spring 2016 issue of *Chrysalis*, in which Heather Koch and Andrea Reed explored the Creation Story, the Coming of Life on Earth, and the Coming of Humans. Here, in Part 2, they consider Montessori's Cosmic Stories of Writing and Math)

For over a decade, we have gained inspiration from Jennifer Morgan's trilogy of beautifully illustrated books, The Universe Series, and have captured the imagination of our students over the years. Speaking as the Universe, the author presents timelines and captivating stories that we include as extensions to our presentations of the first three great lessons. In *Born with a Bang*, Morgan leads the reader through the beginnings of the Universe and the formation of Earth.<sup>1</sup> In *From Lava to Life*, the Universe tells of the coming of life on Earth, and how life evolved in all its incredible diversity.<sup>2</sup> These first two books, along with *Ancient Denvers*, inspired our students to paint their own versions of The Universe Story, illustrating its journey from a speck of dust to galaxies of stars, along with the evolution of Earth and its inhabitants over the millenia.<sup>2</sup> Her final book, *Mammals Who Morph*, delves into the evolution of humans.<sup>4</sup> This last story does not go deeply into the history of writing and math so we decided to fill the void.

## A Cosmic Story of Literature and Writing

As we immersed ourselves in this next re-imagining, we began to see connections forming between several diverse elements from both AMS conferences and educator programs at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World (CEINW), which we began to weave together into “A Cosmic Story of

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Morgan, *Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story* (Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Morgan, *From Lava to Life: The Universe Tells Our Earth Story* (Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Kirk Johnson, Jan Vriesen, Gary Stabb, Donna Braginetz, *Ancient Denvers: Scenes from the Past 300 Million Years of the Colorado Front Range* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Morgan, *Mammals Who Morph: The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story* (Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications, 2006).

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Literature and Writing”. Natural connections began to form between these complementary sources of inspiration, which included: a newly composed “letter from the Universe”; a lesson on the genres of literature; “heart words” representing the inner capacities that we were working to cultivate throughout the year<sup>5</sup>; and quotes from Thomas Berry.

We began the presentation of the great lesson with a new “letter from the Universe,” in which students were invited to imagine the beginnings of writing, as our early human ancestors painted on the sides of caves, telling of great adventures over cold mountains, down into warm green valleys and through forests of trees. Through this letter, we hoped to convey the importance of stories, both spoken and written, in our lives. Through stories, humans are able to cultivate inner capacities for communion with the universe, the earth, all beings and each other.

Next, we read the book, *Should You Be a River*, which takes the reader on a journey through diverse manifestations of the earth and its elements of fire, water, and air.<sup>6</sup> This beautifully illustrated poem fit with the theme carried throughout Jennifer Morgan’s books of a Universe in which all earth elements and living beings are one.

In order to continue the unifying theme of the river, we used a canvas with a circulating river painted on it for the layout of our lesson cards. We called it the “The Stream of Writing.” As we introduced the students to the many forms that stories have taken throughout human history, we read descriptions of such genres as epic, myth, poetry, and folktale as well as modern genres ranging from science fiction to realistic fiction. For each genre, we laid out a stone with the genre name written on it and placed it on the canvas river. Along with the stones, we laid out books from each genre. We also selected Thomas Berry quotes to read along with each genre, focusing on those that represented the human capacities both reflected in and strengthened by great literature. For example, for poetry we read, “Poetry and the depth of soul emerge from the human world because the inner form of the mountains and the numinous quality of the sky have activated these depths in the human.”<sup>7</sup> For folktale we read, “Our human responsibility as one voice among so many throughout the universe is to develop our capacities to listen as incessantly as the hovering hydrogen atoms, as profoundly as our human ancestors and their faithful descendants in today’s indigenous peoples.”<sup>8</sup> We chose heart words for each literary genre that corresponded with the inner capacities described in writings by Robert Sardello<sup>9</sup> and Herbert Witzmann.<sup>10</sup> We went around “The Stream of Writing,” placing a stone, books, quotes and heart words for each type of literature.

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<sup>5</sup> We used Sophia Center’s “Hearthstones,” clay hearts imprinted with inspirational words.

<sup>6</sup> Ed Young, *Should You Be a River: A Poem About Love* (New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Children, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (Harper Collins, 1992), 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Sardello, *The Power of Soul: Living the Twelve Virtues* (Benson, NC: Goldenstone Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Witzmann, *The Virtues: The Seasons of the Soul* (Dornach, Switzerland: Spicker Books, 1990).

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We ended the lesson with a final note from the Universe, telling them that nature is not only our home and the home of all of Earth's beings, but it is also a powerful source of inspiration for this amazing human gift of writing. We reminded them that when they write, they are the Universe at her most creative and that their writing is a celebration of the beauty and creativity that have been a part of Earth and a part of the Universe since the beginning.

As a follow-up to the lesson, students chose a literary genre to explore more deeply. They selected a book to read, along with a connecting Thomas Berry quote and heart word. After reading the book, the children copied the quote and heart word and drew a picture. We were amazed at the deep connections students made between their chosen books and the inner capacities they represented. Some younger students asked to be paired with an older student. A six- and seven-year old decided to work together and chose the genre of poetry, a copy of *Should You Be a River*, and the heart word "love". Their quotation was: "We have a sense of immense gratitude that we participate in such a beautiful world."<sup>11</sup> They both drew a picture of themselves with a beautiful mountain in the background. Another seven-year-old chose a fairy tale, *Hansel and Gretel*,<sup>12</sup> along with the heart word "freedom." She copied, "To eliminate the tension would be to eliminate the beauty."<sup>13</sup> As she shared her drawing with her classmates she added, "The sadness of the story makes it more beautiful." A six-year-old, who was new to the classroom, picked the folktale, *Baboushka*,<sup>14</sup> and the heart word "faith". She copied the quotation, "I think that is one of the most important things we are learning from tribal peoples of the world. We are learning to address the river and be addressed by the river."<sup>15</sup> An eight-year-old chose *The Story of Heidi*,<sup>16</sup> an example of realistic fiction. Her heart word was "healing" and she wrote, "Humans give voice to their most exalted and terrible feelings only because they find themselves immersed in the universe filled with such awesome realities."<sup>17</sup> She drew a picture of the mountainous setting of the story and shared with us that, "Heidi was healed by having time in nature." Another eight-year-old read the mystery, *The Eleventh Hour*.<sup>18</sup> She chose the heart word "courage" and the quote, "Every being has its own interior, its self, its mystery, its numinous aspect."<sup>19</sup> As she shared her quote and drawing, she commented, "Everyone has a mystery inside them."

As a follow-up to our work in the fall with our ECU Theatre Interns, we embarked on another semester of exploring the connections between drama and nature, this time through play-writing. Guided by Alyssa Silva and Jordan Biggers, we divided the elementary students into groups of six to write an original play. We

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Berry with Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth* (New London, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1991), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Katie Daynes, *Hansel and Gretel* (London: Usborne Publishing, Ltd., 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 60.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Scholey, *Baboushka: A Christmas Folktale from Russia* (Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Berry with Thomas Clarke, *Befriending the Earth* (New London, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1991), 20.

<sup>16</sup> Johanna Spyri, *The Story of Heidi* (London: Usborne Publishing, Ltd., 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 41.

<sup>18</sup> Graeme Base, *The Eleventh Hour: A Curious Mystery* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 134.



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invited each group to incorporate into their scripts one of the four seasons, an element of nature and an inner capacity. The following are some of the titles: “Animals Back in Tessellation,” “Mutual Presence Saves the Day,” “Into the Labyrinth,” and “Summer Humility Mandala.” Their writing reflected a celebration of nature as a wellspring of imagination.



### A Cosmic Story of Math

For our last great lesson, we wrote one more letter from the Universe in celebration of another creative human endeavor, mathematics. We again wrote it from the perspective of the Universe and invited our students to see the Universe reflected in the mirror of math. We wrote:

In this story of math, the main characters are numbers, shapes, symbols and patterns, each with their own set of feelings and behaviors, all working together like musicians playing a symphony.<sup>20</sup> On this journey through the history of math, you will discover that the best pieces of math are like poetry, except that they are written in their own special language. Mathematical theorems have changed the way we humans look at the world and the best ones fill us with awe and surprise. You will follow the torch of discovery from the construction of the Egyptian pyramids to measuring the tallest mountain on earth, Mount Everest. You will meet familiar names from ancient history, like Pythagoras and Euclid, and from modern day, such as Albert Einstein and Steven Hawking. As you travel across physical and abstract worlds, you will encounter well-known concepts, like pi and negative numbers, and more mysterious ones that bewilder you, but remember... “Only by dealing with difficulty does the creativity come forth.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Alex Bellos, *The Grapes of Math* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), xii.

<sup>21</sup> Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era: A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers LLC, 1992), 56.

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We unrolled our BC/AD timeline and laid out a mat with the peace lily candle in the center surrounded by representations of the four cardinal directions and heart words associated with each: reverence for north, gratitude for east, love for south and wonder for west. We lit the candle and placed objects with it that served as inspirations to us for the story of math: star fish, sand dollar, pinecone, flower, conch shell, spiral galaxy. As we read each part of the story we placed the story cards on the timeline along with a corresponding heart word. We also paired each with a quotation with a math emphasis, many by Thomas Berry and some by famous mathematicians, both past and present. For example, with the Babylonian story card we matched the heart word “power” because they understood the special power of the number sixty, which continues to be important to us today. We picked the Thomas Berry quotation, “The realm or power that brings forth the universe is not itself an event in time, nor a position in space, but is rather the very matrix out of which the conditions arise that enable temporal events to occur in space.”<sup>22</sup>

We ended with a final message from the Universe:

Your discovery of these mathematical relationships as the essence of the universe itself is one of your most impressive and longest-running collaborative works. Your human civilization has progressed as far as it has thanks to early discoveries about simple shapes like triangles and circles, and the development of number systems to quantify the world around you. Math is the language of the Universe and every being embodies math. Snails build their spiral shells, spiders their webs, bees their hexagonal honey combs. And you...with math....you awaken to the order of the universe. Sincerely, Your Universe.

Again as a follow-up to the lesson, students chose a quotation to copy and respond to with a drawing. This time, we invited students to choose their own heart words to express how they felt about the story of math. An eight-year-old chose, “The adventure of the universe depends on our capacity to listen.”<sup>23</sup> He selected the heart word “passion” and drew the flat bead frame, a recent math lesson he just received and enjoyed practicing. Another eight-year-old copied, “Only by dealing with the difficulty does the creativity come forth.”<sup>24</sup> He chose the heart word “light” and drew a supernova out of which came the birth of the sun and the solar system. A seven-year-old picked the same quotation along with the heart word “prosperity”. She drew a puzzle with each piece representing the puzzle of life to be solved through numbers.

Lower-elementary students continued studies of the timeline of math, launching into nature studies involving Fibonacci numbers and flowering plants, botany dissection, and botany nomenclature and art. A lower-elementary student recalled Escher’s last work, “Snakes,” and recognized the Fibonacci numbers in it and many of his other works in the exhibit at the Museum of Art in Raleigh. Upper-elementary students also made connections between the Cosmic Story of Math and the natural world, awakening their imaginations for a final immersion into studies of physical science, chemistry and art during the last days of school. We observed a student stopping to marvel at a sea shell while reading about Fibonacci’s sequence.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 56.



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We considered the words of Montessorian John Snyder:

“Above all, children who are helped to refine their taste and broaden their experience are better able to accept the many explicit and implicit invitations we give them to join the great stream of human creativity, better able to evaluate their own progress, and better able to appreciate the efforts of others. These habits of mind are gifts that will keep on giving through a whole lifetime of cultural experience and exploration.”<sup>25</sup>

### A Graduation Earth Walk

As the end of the school year approached, we reflected on the power of the graduation ceremony of last year’s sixth-graders held at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary and set out to establish a tradition of our own to celebrate all we had shared throughout this school year. As we reflected on our great lessons we saw them as stepping stones leading us to this moment. We thought about how over the past three years of working with CEINW, we have come to feel present to the natural world in a new way. Along with our students, we have discovered a growing awareness of our connection to all living things. We experienced moments of deep intimacy with the natural world, as we tended the school garden, picked buttercups from the fields, and tasted honeysuckle from the edge of the woods. We let gratitude fill our hearts as we came to understand more fully that each moment is a gift. We wanted to acknowledge all that we had shared together—our love, gratitude, reverence and wonder for the natural world and for each other.

Thomas Berry’s call for us to engage our imaginations and cultivate human capacities that allow us to enter more fully into communion with the natural world served as a beacon throughout our Practice.<sup>26</sup>

A celebratory ritual began to shape as we recalled a meeting with the Inner Life of the Child in Nature participants in which Carolyn Toben shared a powerful story of walking around Timberlake Earth Sanctuary. She asked the trees and flowers and animals she encountered to share their feelings toward us as we have grown in our communion with them. This story was also a part of Carolyn’s Opening Reflections of the very first “Inner Life” commencement in 2008.<sup>27</sup> Her words inspired the following ceremony.

On the next-to-the-last day of school, all of the extended-day, lower- and upper-elementary students and teachers met in the outdoor learning structure. We reviewed the six strands of the Web of Life that were introduced at the beginning of the school year.<sup>28</sup> Next, we read the students a letter from The Indian School

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<sup>25</sup> John R. Snyder, “Bringing The World of Artistic Expression To the Child” (This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Website address is ordinarypersonslife.com, 2013), 4.

<sup>26</sup> For a close reading of these capacities in the work of Thomas Berry, see Peggy Whalen-Levitt, “Thomas Berry’s ‘Communion of Subjects’: Awakening the ‘Heart of the Universe’,” *The Ecozoic*, forthcoming.

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn Toben, “Opening Reflections.” *The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice, 2006-2008*. (Whitsett, NC: The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, 2008), 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Louv, *The Web of Life: Weaving the Values that Sustain Us* (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1996), 2.

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of Dubai about the Global Art Project they had sent us. Our students read the messages of peace the children had written, and we hung each of them on a web of yarn. We then led the students on an Earth Walk, asking the living beings around us to share in the celebration of our school year (all words in boldface were composed by Carolyn Toben):

“As we come to the end of another year of cultivating love, gratitude, reverence and wonder, **what happens on the other side, on the side of the natural world**, as we strengthen our relationship to all beings... the bees and the flowers, the birds and the trees, the worms and the seeds? Soon we will begin our Earth Walk to find answers from these companions in nature who have taught us so much this year.”

We read a Native American elder story, which begins with these words: “Stand still. The trees ahead and the bushes beside you are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here...” and ends with, “if what a tree or bush does is lost on you, you are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows where you are. You must let it find you!”<sup>29</sup> We turned to the stand of trees behind us:

“Let’s ask the maple and pine trees, ‘After another year of enjoying your beauty, what can you tell the children?’ The trees are saying, ‘Thank you for your gifts of noticing; thank you for bringing us into a stronger relationship with the human world and allowing us to **teach patience** and determination and **trust in a time of great change on earth.**”

We read the Navajo prayer, “With Beauty Before Me, May I Walk,”<sup>30</sup> then walked silently to the garden. We invited students to slow their footsteps, in order to see this familiar place with fresh eyes and stopped at the entrance to the garden, where we have wondered at the birds and their nests, and practiced reverence with the ants and the bees and the worms, for this is their home and we are their guests, and felt gratitude for the gifts of food from the plants:

“Let’s ask the birds, bees, worms and seeds, after another year of working in the garden, noticing and making new connections with the natural world, ‘what can you tell us?’ They are all saying, ‘We appreciate your **beholding the gifts of beauty we bring to the world**. Our beauty is a **reflection of the beauty** you carry **within yourselves.**”

Our two graduating sixth-graders stood in front of the garden. Extended-day students held hands and formed a ring around them, then lower-elementary students formed the next ring, and upper-elementary students and teachers formed the final ring. Graham and Max read “The Summer Day” by Mary Oliver.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Native American elder story rendered into modern English by David Wagoner in David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1996), 261-63.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Cornell, Navajo prayer in *Listening to Nature: How to Deepen Your Awareness of Nature* (Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2014), 34.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Oliver, “The Summer Day,” In *New and Selected Poems Vol. 1* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 94.

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Then we looked to the meadow that surrounds the garden to ask the flowers and tall grasses, spiders and grasshoppers:

“What can you tell us, at the end of another year of deep noticing?’ They are saying, “We are grateful for **your willingness to see the incredible diversity in the world**, as you have **noticed** our **uniqueness**. We **now feel a deeper, more intimate relationship** with you.”

Before walking silently along the meadow to our Peace Pole, we read Thich Nhat Hanh’s poem, “Peace is Every Step”.<sup>32</sup> Holding the beauty that surrounded us in our hearts, we walked silently to the Peace Pole for a Meditation Circle. When we reached the Peace Pole, which stands at the heart of our school and reflects our love for each other and for all beings, we formed a circle around it:

“Yesterday, I saw a red-tailed hawk fly over the top of the Peace Pole and I became very quiet as we **beheld each other in utter stillness**. I asked her, ‘What shall I tell the children after all they have given this year?’ She replied, “**Tell them we are grateful . . . all of us everywhere, for the simple gift of recognition that we are . . . all of us . . . a communion of subjects on this earth**. Tell them that the same spirit that lives inside them lives inside every living thing.’ As I walked on, I heard the doves’ message which said, even before I could ask, “**Tell them to continue to listen always to the sacred voices of the earth.**”

We ended our ceremony with a Loving-Kindness Meditation, in which we sent messages of peace and love, respectively, to ourselves; to our families; to our friends, classmates and teachers; to someone in school or a sibling with whom we had conflict or difficulty; to all beings on Earth and all beings in the Universe. We ended with everyone to whom we had sent love sending their love back to us.<sup>33</sup> The children’s faces reflected deep love, serenity and reverence as they repeated the messages of peace. There was a palpable feeling of unity and forgiveness in our circle. We teachers, too, celebrated the openness we felt for each other and the opportunity for healing.

Back in the classroom the lower-elementary students shared some of their thoughts and expressed feelings of joy and peace and a desire to be more caring to others and to the Earth. Their words reflected a deepening of the inner capacities we had worked to cultivate all throughout the year, conveying a new level of understanding that we are truly a communion of subjects on this Earth:

“You can never really be alone.”

“If you love beauty, beauty will love you.”

“Show humility to others and have reverence for all beings.”

“Love grows on nature and nature grows on love.”

“To see the beauty in nature you must love, and to love you must see the beauty in nature.”

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<sup>32</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1991), ix.

<sup>33</sup> The Loving-Kindness Meditation for Kids from GoZen.com.

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An upper-elementary student wrote a poem in her journal in response to the ceremony, showing her own deepening presence to the Earth:

May every creature big and small  
Help us understand love, peace  
and be grateful for what is around us  
like teachers, animals, plants, friends, family  
and Mother Earth.  
Let your emotional feelings  
soak into the Earth  
and the Earth will be thankful, like you.  
Let love be bigger than rain  
and let peace be bigger than war. (Polina, age 11)

### Conclusion

John Snyder's observations parallel the words of Thomas Berry that seemed to resonate most deeply with our students and served as a meditative mantra throughout the year, "Only by dealing with the difficulty does the creativity come forth."<sup>34</sup>

"There is a very important sense in which children are in the world to make mistakes. Their job is to fail and to fail as often and as quickly as they can, because it is through this kind of trial and error that learning comes. Dr. Montessori understood this very well, and she famously said in *The Absorbent Mind* that we must all, 'cultivate a friendly feeling towards error, to treat it as a companion inseparable from our lives, as something having a purpose, which it truly has.'"<sup>35</sup>

Although throughout history we humans have made grave mistakes with our treatment of each other and of the Earth and all its beings, we understand that to eliminate difficulty would serve to eliminate the beauty. Our work with the children during the past two years of our participation in CEINW's Inner Life program has served to renew our commitment to the message of hope for a future in which humans and the Earth in all its manifestations may enjoy a mutually enhancing relationship, echoed in Montessori's own words:

"The child who has felt a strong love for his surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 56.

<sup>35</sup> John R. Snyder, "Two Dimensions of Trust" (This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. Website address is ordinarypersonslife.com, 2013), 2.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1972), 68-69.

Thomas Berry also reminds us that:

“The greatest of human discoveries in the future will be the discovery of human intimacy with all those other modes of being that live with us on this planet, inspire our art and literature, reveal that numinous world whence all things come into being, and with which we exchange the very substance of life.”<sup>37</sup>

As teachers and students at Greenville Montessori School have reached the end of one small part of our journey together, we feel inspired to continue deepening our connection to the Earth and immerse ourselves in its beauty. As we tasted ripe mulberries fresh from the tree at our end-of-year picnic, we were reminded of Montessori’s words:

“The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.”<sup>38</sup>

Maria Montessori’s understanding of the importance of the natural world in the child’s inner development is clear in many of her writings. In the following quotation, which appears on a number of Montessori school websites across the country, Montessori points to the natural world as the prepared environment par excellence:

“There is no description, no image in any book that is capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all the life to be found around them, in a real forest. Something emanates from those trees which **speaks to the soul**, something no book, no museum is capable of giving. The wood reveals that it is not only the trees that exist, but a **whole, inter-related collection of lives**. And this earth, this climate, this **cosmic power** are necessary for the development of all these lives. The myriads of lives around the trees, the majesty, the variety are things one must hunt for, and which no one can bring into the school. How often is the soul of man—especially that of the child—deprived because one does not put him in contact with nature.”<sup>39</sup>

We are grateful for the spiritual renewal that our work with CEINW has provided, as we continue to strengthen our ties to each other and to the land that surrounds us. As we walk out of our classrooms into the natural world, the grassy meadows and fields of cotton become our floor, the forests of pine trees our walls, and the deep blue sky our ceiling.

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 149.

<sup>38</sup> Maria Montessori, <http://www.dailymontessori.com/maria-montessori-quotes/>

<sup>39</sup> Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1976), 35.

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**Heather Koch**, originally from Madison, Ohio and a graduate of Ohio State University, is a wife and mother of four sons. She is a seventeen-year teacher at Greenville Montessori School in North Carolina where she works with nine to twelve year olds. Her work with the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World reflects a desire to greater understand, observe and share the beauty of the universe with her students. Heather is a graduate of the Center's Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program, class of 2016.

**Andrea Reed** is the lower-elementary teacher at Greenville Montessori School. She is AMS-credentialed (Elementary I and II) and has taught both lower- and upper-elementary for over 10 years. Before teaching in Montessori classrooms, she completed a graduate degree at the University of New Mexico with an emphasis in child development and taught psychology at the university level. She and her husband enjoy time in nature, which they attribute to childhoods spent roaming the outdoors. Andrea is a graduate of the Center's Inner Life of the Child in Nature Program, class of 2016.



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# Programs for Adults

## Re-Imagining Montessori's Great Lessons in the Light of Thomas Berry

October 16, 2016

Part I

Montessori's First Three Great Lessons:

The Universe Story, The Coming of Life on Earth, and Early Humans

October 30, 2016

Part II

Montessori's Last Two Great Lessons:

A Cosmic Story of Writing and Literature and A Cosmic Story of Math

Time: 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Place: Treehouse, Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road

Whitsett, NC 27377

Cost: \$60 per program (handouts included)

Thomas Berry was somewhat amazed when he discovered the work of Maria Montessori, particularly her views on cosmic education. He is said to have called his colleague, mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme, on the phone with great enthusiasm when he first discovered her work.

Montessori developed her thoughts on cosmic education while interned in Kodaikanal, India, during World War II. It was there, in the context of the natural world and Eastern wisdom traditions, that she had time to reflect and form her recognitions about the essential unities of humanity, life and universe.

Montessori, like Thomas Berry, presented a picture of a universe unfolding in time. She expanded the teaching of history to include the history of the universe and set human history within this great cosmic story. She understood that the question, "Who am I?" can only be meaningfully answered in terms of the child's "cosmic task," or sense of purpose within the larger whole.

In the Spring of 2005, The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World invited Montessori educators from throughout the state of North Carolina to an all-day retreat to explore the relationship between the vision of Thomas Berry and Maria Montessori's cosmic education. Over the past eleven years, we have worked with over 14 Montessori schools to deepen this natural connection.

Now, this interweaving reaches a new fulfillment in the work of Montessori educators **Andrea Reed** and **Heather Koch**, "Re-imagining Montessori's Great Lessons in the Light of Thomas Berry." Andrea and Heather first encountered the work of the Center at a Montessori conference in the Fall of 2013. Since then, within the context of the Center's programs for educators, they have immersed themselves in Thomas Berry's vision and have brought new language to a deepening of Montessori's Great Lessons.

Approved by the American Montessori Society for Continuing Professional Development  
Register online at <http://www.beholdnature.org/montessori.php>

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## Presence to Living Earth in Autumn: Words from Thomas Berry

Date: Sunday, October 23, 2016

Time: 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Place: The Treehouse, Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Rd.

Whitsett, NC 27377

Cost: \$50

Register online at

<http://www.beholdnature.org/livingearth.php>



In our “Presence to Living Earth in Autumn” program, Andrew Levitt will take us, through storytelling, on a journey with Thomas Berry as he discerns the calling of his life. All the words you will hear are Thomas’ own, drawn from an autobiographical essay, poems and excerpts from Thomas Berry’s published writings. We will listen as Thomas reflects on his life from his childhood days through his days in the monastery. Looking back, Thomas writes: “As I see it now, I was appealing ultimately to the wilderness, even perhaps to the lost wilderness, as the source of my support, but even more to the wilderness within the deep recesses of my own being. The destiny of the other living beings was also my own destiny.” Inspired by these words from Thomas Berry, we will go on guided solo walks on Timberlake Trails and return to share our experiences in a circle of hospitality and welcome.

**Andrew Levitt** holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. Andrew performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years and then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. Andrew co-created a performance piece, “The Meadow Across the Creek: Words from Thomas Berry” for the Thomas Berry Centennial and is the author of *All the Scattered Leaves of the Universe: Journey and Vision in Dante’s Divine Comedy and the Work of Thomas Berry*. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a clown doctor in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital.

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# Thomas Berry and Dante's Divine Comedy: The Journey and the Vision

A Talk by Andrew Levitt

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Thursday, November 10, 2016

Well Spring Retirement Community Auditorium

4100 Well Spring Drive

Greensboro, NC 27410

Free and open to the public



*All the Scattered Leaves of the Universe: The Journey and the Vision* by Andrew Levitt is a book about wisdom and transformation of the soul for the sake of the world. It evolved in a four-part series of presentations at the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World in Greensboro, NC. With only initial knowledge that Thomas Berry frequently carried a copy of *The Divine Comedy* with him and that he recommended to his students that they read Dante before engaging his own work, the series set out to explore how Dante's medieval poem might have influenced Thomas Berry's understanding of the Great Work in the Twentieth Century. How could Dante's expression of the tensions of the Medieval World and his vision of a narrowly contained cosmos inform understanding of the contemporary crisis of the planet within an expanding universe? As this book makes clear, to answer that question it is necessary to listen carefully to the dialogue Thomas Berry and Dante held across the centuries. Attention reveals the integral relation of the two, which expands appreciation and understanding of each and demonstrates that together they can guide the soul through transformation to communion with all Being in service to the world.

**Andrew Levitt** holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. Andrew performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years and then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a clown doctor in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital.

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## The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice

“The destiny of the children and the planet is going to depend on us  
to respond to their deeper mode of being.”

~ Thomas Berry



photo by Lissa Gotwals

The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice program, class of 2016-2018

A two-year co-research program for educators, therapists, parents, naturalists, health care providers  
and others with children and young adults in their care.

From 2000-2009, The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World worked closely with eco-theologian Thomas Berry to re-imagine the child’s relationship with the natural world, guided by his deep wisdom and understanding that “only a sense of the sacred will save us.”

The Inner Life of the Child in Nature program unfolds over the course of two years. In the first year, we focus on “Presence” – on the cultivation of inner capacities in children, young adults and ourselves that bring us into a bond of intimacy with the natural world. In the second year, we focus on “Practice” – on new ways of being and working in the world.

We create a meaningful context for our programs by paying close attention to the rhythm of the day. Retreats begin with a moment of silence intended to quiet the mind and create a field of receptivity for the group. Every retreat includes solo time in the natural world, time for reflection and sharing, the fellowship of shared meals at lunch, and presentations related to the theme at hand.

The program calls for deep inner work on the part of participants as well as a commitment to attend every retreat during the first year of the program. Between retreats, participants engage in a weekly practice of presence to the natural world and reflective engagement with selected readings.

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**Dates:** Day Retreats will be held from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm on Saturday, November 12, 2016, February 4, 2017 and April 1, 2017 and on Tuesday/Wednesday, June 27-28, 2017. The second year includes informal gatherings on Sunday afternoons, October 15, 2017 and February 25, 2018 and a graduation retreat on Sunday, June 24, 2018 from 2:00 – 8:00 pm.

**Cost:** \$750 for the two-year program (includes materials, lunch and individual consultations).

**Place:** Timberlake Earth Sanctuary, 1501 Rock Creek Dairy Rd, Whitsett, NC.

### Faculty

Director, **Peggy Whalen-Levitt**, has been with the Center since its beginnings in 2000. Working closely with Center Founder Carolyn Toben and cultural historian Thomas Berry, Peggy has been deeply engaged in the formation of a work for adults and children, based in intuitive, imaginal and contemplative ways of knowing, that recovers the inner vision of a society in harmony with nature. She holds a Ph.D. in Language in Education from the University of Pennsylvania, where she co-created a graduate Course of Study in Childhood Imagination. She has written widely on aesthetic communication in childhood and is the editor of *Chrysalis*, the Center journal, and *Only the Sacred: Transforming Education in the Twenty-first Century*, a *Chrysalis* reader. Peggy coordinates the “The Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice program.”

Director of Children’s Programs, **Sandy Bisdee**, completed her Association Montessori International (AMI) Teaching Certificate in 1979. A born naturalist and Native American flute player, Sandy has developed the Center’s eco-contemplative practices for children since 2005. She completed her certification in the North Carolina Environmental Education Certification Program in 2009. Sandy brings to her work a lifetime of loving children and of loving the earth and of finding ways to bring the two together!

**Andrew Levitt** holds a BA in English from Yale University and a PhD in Folklore from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a mime with Marcel Marceau and with Paul J. Curtis at The American Mime Theatre. Andrew performed and taught mime professionally for over thirty years and then helped found the high school at the Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, NC where he taught Humanities and directed theater for seven years. Andrew co-created a performance piece, “The Meadow Across the Creek: Words from Thomas Berry” for the Thomas Berry Centennial in 2014 and is the author of *All the Scattered Leaves of the Universe: Journey and Vision in Dante’s Divine Comedy and the Work of Thomas Berry*, published by the Center in the Fall of 2015. As Dr. Merryandrew, he currently works as a clown doctor in the Pediatric unit at Moses Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, NC.

**Colette Segalla** holds a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute in California and is a practicing therapist in Raleigh, NC. Before returning to graduate school, Colette was an AMI certified Montessori teacher in a lower elementary classroom of six-to-nine year old children. The work of Steiner and Montessori has contributed to her current Jungian-based exploration of children’s spirituality and how a relationship with the natural world contributes to the child’s spiritual development. Colette is the author of *I am You, You are Me: The Interrelatedness of Self, Spirituality, and the Natural World in Childhood*, published by the Center in the Fall of 2015.

To read more about the program and download an application go to <http://www.beholdnature.org/ilcn.php>

Applications are reviewed on a rolling admissions basis



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## Enlivenment Series

Dates: Sunday Afternoons

January 29, 2017, February 19, 2017, March 5, 2017 and March 19, 2017

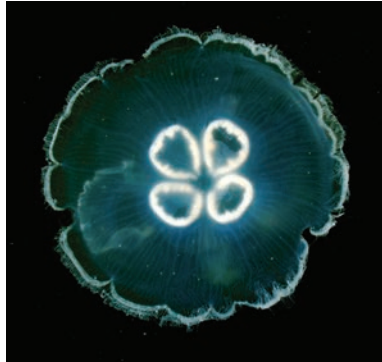
Time: 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Place: The Treehouse, Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Rd.

Whitsett, NC 27377

Cost: \$50 per session



“Poetic ecology...reconciles the science of life with the experience of being alive, and therefore with what we see and what we love. From its viewpoint, as in gazing into the face of another human being, the whole of nature becomes a ‘Thou.’”

~ Andreas Weber, *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling and the Metamorphosis of Science*

At the Center this year, we have become aware of the work of German biologist, Andreas Weber, a leader in the emerging field of poetic ecology. We immediately recognized the deep resonance between Weber’s writings and the work of Thomas Berry, who mentored the work of the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World from 2000 until his death in 2009. Weber’s book *Aliveness* or *Enlivenment* is now being translated from the German into English for the first time and is the forerunner of his book *The Biology of Wonder: Aliveness, Feeling and the Metamorphosis of Science* that was translated into English in 2016.

Andreas proposes a new living science – an invitation to welcome aliveness and feeling back into the scientific realm. He suggests that “the chill, abstract languages of the sciences place a barrier between us and the aboriginal feeling of life. Aliveness remains inaccessible and incomprehensible to “objective” science in the way it defines itself today.”

In our Enlivenment Series we will explore the resonance of Weber’s and Berry’s work through a series of conversations with science educators who are graduates of the Center’s Inner Life of the Child in Nature program and who will speak of their own work in restoring aliveness and feeling back into how we know the natural world:

Each session of the series will begin with an introduction that integrates the wisdom of Andreas Weber with the wisdom of Thomas Berry, led by Center Director Peggy Whalen-Levitt.



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In **Session 1** on January 29<sup>th</sup> we will explore contemplative ecology, poetic ecology and eco-contemplative practices that enable us to move beyond “objectivity” into an experience of ourselves as intimately united with the livingness of all things.

Session Facilitators: Peggy Whalen-Levitt and Eric McDuffie

In **Session 2** on February 19<sup>th</sup> we will consider the subjectivity of the teacher and remember the moments of enlivenment in our lives that brought us to our work as science educators. How might we nurture enlivenment within ourselves and bring it to our teaching?

Session Facilitators: Peggy Whalen-Levitt and Nicki Cagle

In **Session 3** on March 5<sup>th</sup> we will consider connectedness to nature and how we might include elements in our teaching that address children’s subjective and feeling responses to the natural world, such as time for reflection and free exploration.

Session Facilitators: Peggy Whalen-Levitt and Linda Tugurian

In **Session 4** on March 19<sup>th</sup> we will consider enlivenment on the middle school level. How might we move from experiencing ourselves as objective and distanced spectators of the natural world to feeling ourselves as intimate and enlivened participants within the natural world?

Session Facilitators: Peggy Whalen-Levitt and Sonja Younger

Presenter Bios:

**Nicki Cagle** holds a PhD in Ecology and is on the faculty of Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment where she teaches courses in natural history and environmental education. She also is the Director of the Duke Environmental Science Summer Program, a college-preparation and environmental science experience for talented, underserved local high school students.

**Eric McDuffie** is working on his PhD in Environmental Studies at Antioch University New England and teaches middle and high school science in Orange County. He holds a Master of Environmental Management degree from Duke University’s Leadership Program at the Nicholas School of the Environment. Eric is on the editorial staff of *Whole Terrain*.

**Linda Tugurian** holds a PhD in Science Education and is a District Science Specialist at Durham Public Schools. Linda’s dissertation, *An Exploratory Investigation of Children’s Connectedness with the Natural World*, includes research with children who experienced the Center’s Awakening to Nature Program. Linda’s article, “Children’s Environmental Identity and the Elementary Science Classroom,” is forthcoming in *The Journal of Environmental Education*.

**Peggy Whalen-Levitt**, PhD, serves as the Director of The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, where she has been deeply engaged in the formation of a work for adults and children based in Thomas Berry’s recognition that the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. Peggy is the editor of *Chrysalis*, the Center’s journal, and *Only the Sacred: Transforming Education in the Twenty-first Century*.

**Sonja Younger** is a veteran science educator whose experience with adolescents over the last 25 years continues to inspire her. Her work is rooted in an early relationship with the New England rocky intertidal ecology, and by particularly reverent teaching that created space for this relationship to flourish. Sonja has a vision for developing classroom community that honors and values a heart connection as integral to the study of life science.

Register online at <http://www.beholdnature.org/enlivenment.php>

# Programs for Children and Families

To register or reserve dates for our children's programs go to  
<http://www.beholdnature.org/programsforchildren.php>

## Families of the Forest

November 13, 2016

1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Group size: maximum 24

Cost: \$15 per person

The ever-accelerating pace of change is leading families to a hurried existence that separates them from their connection to the Earth. Join us for this family day at the earth sanctuary where we will gather around the fire circle, go on a guided earth walk and share our experiences from the day.

## Awakening to Nature

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades K-5, maximum 24 children

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

The Center's "Awakening to Nature" programs are intended to foster reverence for the natural world, develop the inner capacity to attend to the world around you, and create a deep, personal connection with nature. The programs bring the inner lives of children into a new relationship with the beauty, wonder and intimacy of the natural world.

"Awakening to Nature" programs begin in a circle where children are invited to slow down and make themselves at home in nature. Guided earth walks follow, led by experienced Earth Guides, with groups of 8 children. The small size of the group and the "beholding" practices of the Center enable the children to enter into a living and loving relationship with the natural world. Throughout the changing seasons, children are invited to enter into silence and experience the fullness of each moment – to take in the sounds, the smells, the feel of the air, the colors and movements of the world around them.

Children then return to the circle where they enjoy a bag lunch together. The day ends with a heartwarming circle of reflection. The rhythm of the day enables the children to assimilate their experiences and to enter into community together as they share what touched them about the day.

We are happy to adapt this program to the differing developmental needs of children in grades Kindergarten-5.

We especially like to work with schools year after year so that the children can have sustained and meaningful connections with the natural world over time. From the returning children who have experienced our program over the course of several years, we have learned how one day spent in our program has lived in their memories and in their hearts for a whole year in between visits. They remember the peaceful sounds of the Native American Flute, the relationships with various creatures that they have encountered, the beauty of nature, and our practices, especially our Behold practice. We have also learned how much the children appreciate being in an atmosphere of peace and quiet.

## Empathetic Listening

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades 4-8 (maximum 24 children)

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

Our children live in a fast-paced, competitive and high-tech world, in a culture where continuous partial attention and multi-tasking are becoming the norm. Are we losing our ability to truly listen to each other? Do we carry an attitude of respect that allows us to listen to the meaning and feeling that come through another's words?

The “Empathetic Listening” program engages children in a practice of deep listening to each other and to the natural world. The program begins with an introduction to empathetic listening, a way of listening that creates mutual understanding, trust and respect. Can we learn to listen without judgement? Can we listen without interrupting? Can we reflect back what we think we have heard? Can we sense the feelings behind the words? These are some of the practices that children have an opportunity to explore together in pre-selected pairs.

During the second half of the program, the children are invited to listen deeply to the natural world during a solo writing time in their own special sit spot within a beautiful earth sanctuary. They are invited to become still, to deeply notice the place where they are sitting. What makes this particular landscape special and unique? What are you hearing in your special place? What might nature reveal to you? In the rare experience of silence, a voice begins to emerge, their own, inspired by the wonders of nature.

Our highly experienced staff members carry an attitude of deep respect for all life. We seek always to embody new ways of listening to nature and to each other, ways that are respectful, reverential and relational.

## The Poetry of Nature

9:30 am – 1:30 pm

Place: Timberlake Earth Sanctuary

1501 Rock Creek Dairy Road, Whitsett, NC

Grades 6 – 12 (maximum 24 children)

Cost: \$250 per class (bring a bag lunch)

“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things.”

~ Mary Oliver

Poetry is a language of deep seeing that reveals dimensions of the world inaccessible to discursive thought, and so it is to poetry that we turn for our programs for middle school and high school students. Our Poetry of Nature program is a passage through three landscapes in the natural world where students listen to a poem, are asked to be fully present to the place, the moment and the feelings and images that arise within them. At each site, students are invited to find a solo spot, enter into a practice of presence, and record their inner experiences through guided writing practices. The poems and landscapes are carefully chosen to resonate with one another. The day culminates in a poetry reading after lunch where each contribution is deeply connected to the student's experience in nature and to his/her inner life. The students read poems, ask questions, and share reflections on the day and on their sense of belonging to the natural world. This program taps a deep wellspring within young adults that rarely is accessed at school.



**Please consider becoming a Friend of the Center** by making a donation today. All Friends of the Center receive two issues of our newsletter, *Chrysalis*, per year. To donate online, go to our website at [www.beholdnature.org](http://www.beholdnature.org) or send your check, payable to CEINW, to:

CEINW  
P. O. Box 41108  
Greensboro, NC 27404

We deeply appreciate your support of our work!

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