



Institute for Outdoor Learning
Forest School Special Interest Group (FS SIG)
Newsletter – Issue 6, Spring 2011

Dear FS SIG Members - The FS SIG committee hope you are enjoying the spring sunshine and spending lots of time in the woods! There's lots of Forest School News to keep you up to date with!

National Governing Body Update:

Governance for Forest School - more progress

For many years those involved with FS have 'chewed the fat' over how we ensure quality Forest School practise. Last year many of you will have participated in the consultation the IOL Forest School SIG conducted about the possibility of establishing a National Governing Body for FS. The summary for the results of this are on the IOL FS SIG website (<http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=104>) As a result of the overwhelming support from the consultation (80% fully supporting, 15% undecided and 5% not supporting the move) we have employed a development officer, Erica Wellings (see her biog below or on the website (<http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=104>) to further explore putting together a professional body that may represent FS and maintain standards of both training and delivery of Forest School. The SIG managed to secure funds from the Ernest Cook Trust and the Forestry Commission topped up with SIG monies from the 2010 summer conference for IOL to employ Erica part time for a year. Her main job will be to further consult the main stakeholders in FS, including organisations such as FEI, local co-ordinators, Forest School Wales, The Trainers Network, Forestry Commission, local authorities, NGO's, FS practitioners, awarding bodies, other governing bodies in the outdoor industry (and more) to see what will be the best structure for a professional FS body and the key aims/jobs for such a body. Erica will then formulate a business plan that will build on the findings of her consultation to establish the body and suggest/search for funding streams for both the body and the delivery of FS.

So far it is early days but the key themes emerging are;

- there is a need for national occupational standards,
- some standardisation of the training (all those qualified FS practitioners – don't panic your qualification will still be valid!)
- streamlining of governance
- a need for ONE point of contact for people to find out about FS and access sharing of practise.

Erica is being given direction by a steering group that is made up of IOL FSSIG members and members of the Forest School Trainers Network GB, including representatives from Wales, Scotland and England. Minutes of the steering group meetings are on the IOL SIG website.

Meet Erica! A Brief Biography



Erica Wellings is a training and management professional, with many years experience, gained within the Further Education sector. In recent years her work has concentrated on motivating and developing students in the vocational sector, with an emphasis on practical learning. This has also involved a great deal of time working with young people with behavioural issues and at risk of exclusion from mainstream education.

For the last five years Erica has been working as a consultant and project manager on a national educational programme on behalf of the Edge Foundation which is committed to raising the status of practical learning. As a part of this work, Erica established and managed two Learner Forums of young people aged between 14-24 in the North East and North West and worked on many national initiatives for Edge.

Erica advises and trains colleges and schools nationally in areas such as retention and achievement, active and differentiated learning and curriculum development. She is retained by the Learning and Skills Network as a consultant.

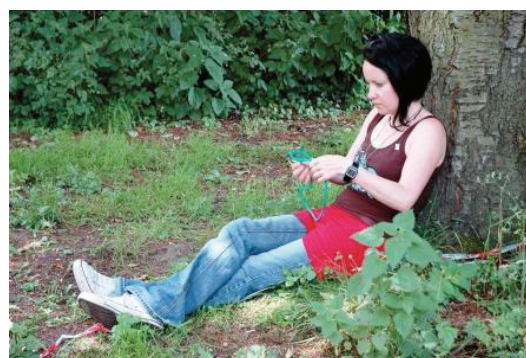
She developed an interest in Forest Schools five years ago as her young son was showing signs of disengagement at school due to dyspraxia and undertook the level 4 Forest Leaders course at the University of Central Lancashire. From there she and a partner set up Eden Forest School www.edenforsetschool.co.uk working across North Cumbria.

'FS for the 21st Century' IOL FS SIG Conference 2011

The second IOL FS SIG conference is planned for **Saturday 8th October 2011** – at **Liddington Hall, Swindon**. The keynote speakers are to be;

- **Sue Palmer** – Writer and presenter, best known for her books 'Toxic Childhood' and '21st century boys'
- **Sara Knight** – Member of IOL FS SIG committee, lecturer at Anglian Ruskin University and author of 'Forest Schools and Outdoor Play in the Early Years'

The day will be packed full of workshops and seminars provided by the FS community for the FS community – themes will include tool use & maintenance, challenging behaviour and FS, campfire cooking, involving parents at FS, Arts and FS, Spirituality and many more. The IOL FS SIG AGM will also take place over lunchtime during the conference.



Further information about the conference and how to book your place will be emailed to IOL FS SIG members in the near future – so please watch this space!

IOL FS SIG AGM:

Thank you to all those IOL FS SIG members who attended the IOL FS SIG AGM on Saturday 13th December at Roehampton University, London. 11 members of the current committee (including the executive members) were re-elected and Nick Ward was voted in to fill the vacant post – a big welcome goes out to Nick! The current committee members (IOL FS SIG Committee are required to be current IOL members and FSSIG members) are;

- Chair – Jenny Doyle
- Treasurer – Alice Savery
- Secretary – Mike Flinn
- Communications – Louise Ambrose
- Elected Members;
 - Jon Cree
 - Susannah Podmore
 - Sarah Blackwell
 - Sara Knight
 - Jenny Creese
 - Rowena Kenny
 - Clair Hobson
 - Nick Ward



The morning consisted of a workshop around knife and tool legislation and good FS practice – led by Liz Knowles from Muddy Faces. The afternoon CPD workshops were on the FS QuIF and Tool maintenance and techniques. Many Thanks to the workshop leaders – Liz Witton, Susannah Podmore and the Oxfordshire FS team.

To make it convenient for IOL FS SIG members this year's AGM will take place over lunchtime at the IOL FS SIG Conference – on Saturday 8th October 2011 (please see above article). **Further details to be announced soon but you can now pre-register to attend by contacting fiona@outdoor-learning.org**

The National Curriculum Review

Many of us have been concerned about ensuring the sustainability of Forest School provision in the light of the cuts affecting every part of the education, social and health systems. One way to help was to contribute to the National Curriculum Review being undertaken by the Department for Education.

There has been a link on the IOL website and in IOL newsletters for everyone to contribute if they felt strongly that children and young people should be outside for parts of their learning. The cynical will say that we will be marginalised anyway, but if we don't try to affect outcomes we only have ourselves to blame. We can be encouraged by the fact that there are three members of the recent Cambridge Primary Review group (www.primaryreview.org.uk) on the consultation panel. The head of the review, Robin Alexander, wrote a nice article for The Guardian Tuesday 15th March 2011 (www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/mar/15/national-curriculum-ministerial-meddling?INTCMP=SRCH).

Go to www.education.gov.uk/consultations and click on National Curriculum Review – Call for Evidence. It closed on **14th April**.

Book Reviews from Sara Knight:

I would like to recommend two new books to you. Both are published by Sage, and available from the IOL bookshop at discount rates for IOL members:

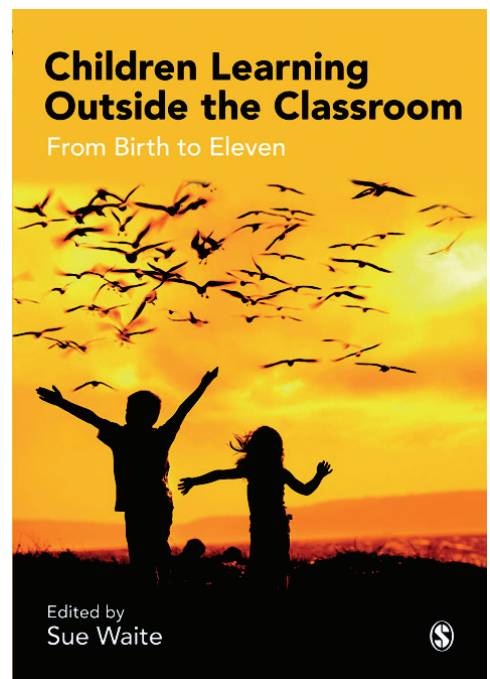


The first is my own, "*Risk and Adventure in Early Years Outdoor Play: Lessons from Forest School*". It is aimed at practitioners who may be feeling nervous about enabling their children to take chances and learn to manage risks, by looking at what that means in practice for very young children. It is full of ideas with supportive text to encourage and develop practice. If you have any nervous colleagues in early years settings, give them a copy.

Knight, S., 2011, "*Risk and Adventure in Early Years Outdoor Play: Lessons from Forest School*", London: Sage. IOL member price £18.80. £21.79 non member price. (both incl postage).

The other book is "*Children Learning Outside the Classroom: from birth to eleven*". It is edited by Sue Waite, well known as an expert in the field, and a Research Fellow at the University of Plymouth. It is about all aspects of outdoor experiences, with fifteen well researched and referenced chapters. The book has more academic depth than mine, and will be very useful for students as well as practitioners. If you are looking for explanations of why and how, and justifications of what and when, then this is for you.

Waite, S. (edt), 2011, "*Children Learning Outside the Classroom: from birth to eleven*", London: Sage. IOL member price £20.49. £23.79 non member price (both incl postage).



NEWS

FOREST SELL OFF

IOL are putting news items re the Forest Sell Off on the main IOL website in the news modules and also onto the IOL Facebook and Twitter pages.

- <http://www.outdoor-learning.org>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/IOL-Outdoor-Learning-Professionals/162708693780725?v>
- <http://twitter.com/#!/IOLOutdoorProfs>

Dates for your Diary 2010:

- 10-12th May 2011 – ‘*Branching Out in Shropshire; Developing, disseminating and celebrating Forest School*’ Conference
<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/schools.nsf/open/E800819EC9B43A67802575450054B50C>
- 7th – 8th June 2011 – International Conference ‘*Engaging boys in Education*’ in Perthshire, Scotland
<http://mindstretchersltd.camp8.org/Default.aspx?pagelId=415194&eventId=152411&EventViewMode=EventDetails>
- 8th October 2011 – *FS in the 21st Century – IOL Forest School SIG Conference* – Swindon, Details TBA and updates will be on the IOL website as and when we send them on. You can pre-register now to attend. Once fully announced you will also be able to book and pay online on the IOL website in ‘IOL EVENTS’.
- DON’T FORGET.... IOL Events can be booked online here:
<http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=127&EventTypelId=4>

Contact the FS SIG committee:

If you would like to contact the FS SIG committee to share ideas, or ask questions please email us directly at:

forestschools@outdoor-learning.org