



Dear North Carolina Children and Nature Coalition Partner,

We hope to see you at the 2013 North Carolina Children and Nature (NCCAN!) Conference March 7th at the Schiele Museum of Natural History in Gastonia, NC.

At the last NCCAN! Conference, many of you asked for more time to network and more time to talk to each other about the opportunities and challenges that matter most to you. This year's Grassroots Gathering will provide both!

A significant portion of the Gathering will provide the time and space for each of us to explore the topics that we are most passionate about with other participants. We will accomplish this by using a variation on Open Space Technology (OST) tailored to fit within the time frame and physical space of this year's Gathering. Open Space is essentially a format that allows groups to self organize and tap into the collective intelligence. For more information, see the OST overview on the following page.

Several of the NCCAN! Leadership Team were lucky enough to participate in this same format during the recent Children & Nature Network Grassroots Gathering this past August at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. These seemed to work very well so we wanted to try it here in North Carolina.

Everyone who registers for the 2013 NCCAN! Conference will be asked:

What are the issues and opportunities around our theme - All Children Need Nature -for which you have real passion and will take genuine responsibility?

Once you register, you'll receive a survey (or will send an email) where you can indicate the topic(s) YOU want to talk about, *not what you think others should talk about.*

The following are some of the example topics: Education, Improving Children's Health through Nature, Recreation, Natural Cultural Capacity, Engaging Youth in the Built Environment, Expanding the Reach of Family Nature Clubs. We look forward to hearing what you are passionate about.

GOAL: discussion + brainstorming + creativity = ACTION

Sincerely,

NCCAN! Leadership Team

Open Space Technology – “Capturing the Collective Intelligence”

Open Space is essentially a format that allows groups to self organize and tap into the collective intelligence. Here are a few details about this technology/process as described in Wikipedia.

Highly scalable and adaptable, Open Space Technology has been used in meetings of 5 to 2,100 people. The approach is most distinctive for its initial lack of an agenda, which sets the stage for the meeting's participants to create the agenda for themselves.

Principles of Open Space Technology (OST):

1. Whoever comes is the right group.
2. When it starts is the right time.
3. Wherever it happens is the right place.
4. Whatever happens is what should have happened.
5. When it's over, it's over... unless you'd passionately like to continue it.

OST's Law of 2 Feet – if you want to participate in a different conversation, you have 2 feet, participants can move to another group at any time during the OLT sessions.

Ideal conditions:

- Ideas are worth talking about.
- Ideas are highly complex.
- There is diversity in perspective & skills.
- There is a real need, value, and timeliness.
- The environment is safe and nutrient---rich.

OST Outcomes:

- The ideas that are most important get discussed.
- The ideas discussed are discussed by those most capable.
- The ideas and recommendations will be documented and shared.
- Participants will feel engaged and empowered by the process.

Process:

1. Idea/discussion and topic creation
2. Grouping and prioritization
3. Schedule and logistics
4. Group Discussions
 - a. Facilitator – *the “invisible leader”*
 - b. Exchange of ideas
 - c. Documentation
5. Share action plans/next steps

