

# Flourishing in Nature

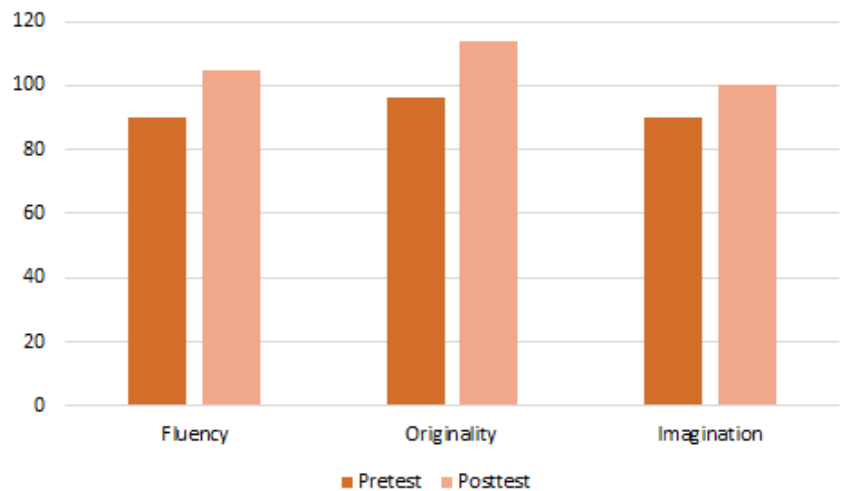
## Investigating the Impact of Nature Preschools on Young Children's Creative Thinking

**Overview.** Creative thinkers are active learners who recognize patterns, solve problems, combine information in new ways, challenge assumptions, make decisions and seek new ideas. **Creative thinking is valuable and necessary in society today and in the development of solutions to environmental issues.** However, there is growing concern that early childhood settings are being pressured to narrowly focus on academic skills, thus limiting opportunities for young children to develop creative thinking. **The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that a nature preschool experience has on the development of creative thinking in young children.** Eighty-six children from four nature preschools and one non-nature preschool participated in this study during the 2016-2017 school year. Three dimensions of creative thinking were assessed using the Thinking Creatively in Action and Movement (TCAM) test.



Image Credit: Wind Ridge Schoolhouse

### Results.



The results of the t-tests indicate significant growth ( $p < 0.001$ ) in all three dimensions of creative thinking for the nature preschool participants. In contrast, there was not a significant growth in fluency, originality, and imagination for the non-nature preschool participants.

**Conclusion.** Results suggest nature play may be positively influencing young children's creative thinking, beyond what might occur through attending a non-nature, play-based preschool. **These results help demonstrate that nature preschools and nature play can play a significant role in the development of valuable skills in young children and toward the development of citizens who are prepared to creatively solve environmental problems.**

