Texas Children in Nature Network Visioning Lab
SPRING 2020

WHERE WE’VE BEEN

A Program of TPWD
- Loosely organized collection of regions
- Financially dependent on TPWD, limited fundraising
- Diffused vision with many areas of activity
- Role of regions vs state organizations not clearly defined
- Focused on regional groups as an organizing principal
- Equity is a part of all pillars, but particularly focused in access
- Anchored in informal education
- Overlap and confusion amongst programs and brands

WHERE WE ARE GOING

An Independent Network
- A powerful network that amplifies impact at the state level
- Financially independent w/ strong fundraising
- Focused on cultivating leadership and building capacity
- Mutually reinforcing relationship between state, regions and programs
- Focused on strategic goals and regions as organizing principals.
- Elevate equity in the outdoors as a central organizing principle
- Building innovative relationships with formal education and health care
- Working at state level to advocate for policy change

TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK BRAND FRAMEWORK

Personality/Culture Values
- Inclusive
- Optimistic
- Collaborative
- Research-based

Guiding Beliefs
- Connection to nature is a human right.
- We protect what we love.
- Nature heals the body, the mind and the spirit.
- In our diversity, we are stronger together.
- We are working on a solvable problem.
- We are nature.

Promise
- Nurture and mobilize leaders to increase equitable access and connection to nature

HOW WE DO IT:

CONVENE AND CONNECT Texans to ideas, inspiration, and one another
LEVERAGE the power of our network to AMPLIFY IMPACT
ADVOCATE for policy change
BUILD capacity to DEVELOP LEADERS

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE:

Annual Summit (Leadership Conference)
- Facilitating network conversations to explore key issues, share research + resources, and align communication
- Policy work and legislative support around strategic goals
- Professional development opportunities to train and elevate leaders at regional and local levels with a DEI lens

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TCINN IS

Powerful network amplifier
- Holistic perspective: Health, Education, Community
- Includes families and communities
- Diverse and inclusive
- Invested in leadership throughout the state
- Building capacity to expand impact

SIX WORD MEMOIRS

- Nature for everyone, found everywhere
- Texas experiences outbreak of children outdoors
- Throw open the doors; embrace nature
- Diversity in the enjoyment of nature
- Families regularly spending time in nature
- Cultivating abundance and equity for all
- Nature wins with us, in us

LAB PARTICIPANTS

Addie Broussard
Anne Muller
Andy Gerhart
Cindy Nguyen
Darcy Bontempo
Dustin Miller
Eddie McKenna
Erica Sanchez
Margaret Russell
Melody Alcazar
Molly Stevens
Monica Lopez Magee
Nancy Herron
Sandra Williams
Sarah Coles
Dr. Stephen Pont
Thea Platz
Trevor Hance

If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it.
- David Sobel

It’s powerful to think about network in a new way. It’s beyond a passive collection of people and about having the power to weave.

Weave/wév/ To unite in a coherent whole
Merriam-Webster
HAPPIER, HEALTHIER, SMARTER

Letter from the Board of Directors, Texas Children in Nature Network

We are so pleased to share the TCIN Strategic Plan with our community of partners, funders, and with other individuals and organizations who are committed to increasing nature in children’s lives. Our strategic plan is the result of more than 100 hours of discussion with dozens of leaders across Texas who are committed to our mission to ensure equitable access and connection to nature for all children in Texas. We are very grateful to those who have contributed their time and talent to this plan.

2020 has been the perfect year for both introspection and forward thinking, fueled by the reawakened understanding of the importance of nature in our lives. Yet the lack of access and connection to nature for many communities has also come sharply into focus during this time. It is in the light of these considerations that we have drafted our strategic plan.

After a decade of incubation, growth and invaluable support from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, we were ready to become a fully independent, non-profit organization. On January 1, 2021, Texas Children in Nature Network became an independent non-profit.

TCINN has always found its strength and resilience in its many partnerships across Texas, which is why our name now reflects the importance of our network of partners. We hope you will help support and shape our organization so that we can bring nature into the lives of all children across Texas. Please join us in the work ahead!

The Board of Directors
Texas Children in Nature Network

- TCINN has 8 regional collaboratives: Caprock, North Texas, Austin, San Antonio, Pineywoods, Houston, Coastal Bend and the Rio Grande Valley
- Texas currently houses three Cities Connecting Children to Nature communities and five OLE! Texas pilot cities

CASE STATEMENT

Texas has one of the fastest growing populations in the United States, now home to 10% of the nation’s school-aged children. For decades children have become increasingly disconnected from nature. The negative impact of this disconnect is profound, leading to physical and emotional health problems as well as a growing sense of isolation.

Easy access to nature is also complicated by a lack of public land in Texas, where only 5% of the land is open to the public. There are not enough safe outdoor spaces close to home for most Texas children, especially for children from economically disadvantaged families. There is also a vast body of research that supports that children who play and learn in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school.

Texas Children in Nature Network is committed to working on a solvable problem. We do this by strengthening and leveraging the work of over 600 state and local partners across Texas in equity, access to nature, better health outcomes, community development, outdoor education, and conservation.

With our partners and the support of donors and members, we are working to create equitable access and connection to nature for all the children in Texas.
TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK STRATEGIC PLAN

NETWORK
Leverage the power of a diverse network to amplify impact
Objective 1: Nurture and mobilize diverse Texas Children in Nature Network leadership
Objective 2: Share best practices and resources with our network partners across the state, including a high-energy compelling and content-rich annual Summit for Texas Children in Nature Network
Objective 3: Support local community leadership and sustainability through regional collaboratives and peer-to-peer learning
Objective 4: Create opportunities for diverse youth leadership across the state
Objective 5: Celebrate the diversity of Texas and history of our natural spaces through events and professional development
Objective 6: Reflect the diversity of our state (race/ethnicity, age, gender, discipline, LGBTQ+, geographic region) in our board, leadership team, and regional collaboratives

ACCESS TO NATURE
Increase the number of welcoming natural spaces accessible for all children
Objective 1: Work with statewide programs such as Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN), Green Schoolyards, and Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!) Texas to increase access and connection to nearby nature
Objective 2: Partner with the National Recreation and Park Association to advocate for the “10 Minute Walk” to a park campaign
Objective 3: Promote and support green spaces and partners organizations that foster equitable access and connection to nature and share success stories to encourage more organizations to do the same
Objective 4: Promote access to, and uses of, public and private land and waters for children in Texas
Objective 5: Share resources that support Universal Design (ADA Accessibility) as well as signage and virtual content in multiple languages and representative of multiple cultures

EDUCATION
Inspire educators to use outdoor classrooms and nature-based learning
Objective 1: Facilitate training and professional developments on outdoor classrooms and nature based learning for early childhood through collegiate educators
Objective 2: Support and advocate for the transition of traditional schoolyards into “Green Schoolyards” and “OLE! Texas” sites
Objective 3: Develop and promote “Green Play to Green Pay” programs for students together with our partners
Objective 4: Promote the integration of nature play as a tool to foster social, emotional and cognitive development
HEALTH
Engage the health community to use nature as a health strategy
Objective 1: Raise awareness that children who spend time in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school
Objective 2: Facilitate training and/or training tools together with health partners for use in professional development and community education settings about the health benefits of nature for children
Objective 3: Encourage outdoor education partners to facilitate nature-based experiences for health care professionals
Objective 4: Build relationships with health-related groups and professional associations

COMMUNITY
Encourage nature-based experiences through community organizations
Objective 1: Support strong regional collaboratives across the state to influence sustainable, effective and relevant action in local communities
Objective 2: Support Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN), Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE) Texas and family nature clubs, and seek replicable models for other Texas cities
Objective 3: Seek, engage and inspire new and diverse organizations both regionally and across the disciplines to encourage children and families to connect with nature
Objective 4: Develop strategic partnerships to welcome and support people of all ages, abilities, ethnicities/races, gender orientation and identification to connect with nature

POLICY
Advocate and promote state, regional and municipal level planning, policies, and funding to support outdoor play and learning
Objective 1: Seek out statewide planning and policy opportunities to increase the time children spend in nature during in and out of school time
Objective 2: Advocate for the integration of nature opportunities as a health strategy in health and child-care guidelines
Objective 3: Elevate the conversation around issues of environmental justice and the historic conditions which affect children’s ability to learn and play outdoors
Objective 4: Promote transportation and safety policies for nature access within urban and community planning
Objective 5: Advocate for public funding to support equitable access and connection to nature for all children in Texas

MARKETING
Raise awareness of and increase engagement in nature through consistent and unified communication
Objective 1: Raise awareness about the importance of time spent in nature
Objective 2: Promote research regarding the impact and benefits of nature and nature-based experiences
Objective 3: Promote equitable opportunities and connection with nature
Objective 4: Promote the work of our network and partners in engaging children in nature
Objective 5: Develop and maintain a consistent communications plan, including easy to use tool-kits for partners
Objective 6: Foster growth of our network through the use of outreach materials
THANK YOU TO OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PARTNERS

Addie Broussard · Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center · Austin, TX
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Brittany Johnson · Community Leader · Houston, TX
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Susan Rowe · Lubbock Lake Landmark · Lubbock, TX
Thea Plattz* · North East ISD · San Antonio, TX
Tanya Zastrow · Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center · Austin, TX

* · TCINN Board Member

Executive Director, Sarah Coles · scoles@texaschildreninnature.org
texaschildreninnature.org · 512-434-0815

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