

To live in an environment that has to be endured or ignored rather than enjoyed is to be diminished as a human being.

Sinclair Gauldie

Are Children Loosing their Natural Habitat?

Endangered species must be protected and saved so that future generations can experience their presence and value. Let's not allow the joys of being a child who can play in the mud, laugh and be joyful become endangered. One of the most important ways to help combat the threat to the joyfulness of childhood is to protect the habitats of children. Children spend long hours in early childhood programs, so there is great value in assuring that their environment is comfortable and encourages the natural fascination and



delight children find in the physical world. We need to stay away from the feel and look of institutional living. We as early childhood professionals need to ask ourselves-- How are we demonstrating that we respect and treasure childhood and the identity of the children in our care?



In his article, "What Kind of Place for Child Care in the 21st Century," Jim Greenman, senior vice president for education and program development at Bright Horizons Family Solutions, lists 10 qualities that characterize the kind of place he would like to see his grandchildren experience:

- ◆ A Great Place to Live: a non-institutional, welcoming place
- ◆ A Place of Beauty: A sensoryscape of taste and sensibility
- ◆ A Place that Promotes Strong Families
- ◆ A Community of Caring
- ◆ A Place for Learning Together
- ◆ A Safe Nurturing, Creative Environment Designed for Exploration and Learning
- ◆ A Place to Raise Competent, Responsible and Compassionate Children
- ◆ A Great Place to Work
- ◆ A Place In and Of the Wider World: A place connected to the natural world.



Resources on Environments:

On the Web:

http://www.brighthorizons.com/site/pages/What_DoTHEYDorr.pdf

<http://www.brighthorizons.com/site/pages/whatkindofplaceRR.pdf>

<http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200505>

<http://www.planeteearthplayscapes.com/articles.html>

www.ecetrainers.com

www.naturalearning.org

www.planeteearthplayscapes.com

<http://www.spacesforchildren.com/index.html>

Books

Greenman, Jim, *Caring Places, Learning Spaces*. Exchange press.

Isbell, Rebecca and Betty Exelby, *Early Learning Environments That Work*. Gryphon House.

Seefeld, Carol. *Creating Rooms of Wonder*. Gryphon House

Curtis, Deb and Margie Carter, *Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments*. Redleaf Press