The Nature of Teaching: Connecting K-5 Teachers and Students with Nature

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The Nature of Teaching (TNT) is an extension program that provides resources and professional development for K-5 teachers to connect their students with nature. Teachers can find standards-based lesson plans, videos, and other educational materials on the website purdue.edu/nature. All resources are free to use, pilot-tested, and expert-reviewed. Topics addressed in these resources include wildlife, health and wellness, and food waste. The Nature of Teaching also offers professional development workshops for teachers to experience the lesson activities and collaborate with other teachers and extension professionals on ways they can implement the lessons in their classrooms. These workshops offer teachers professional development points and stipends upon the condition that they complete an evaluation of the workshop, and implement at least one lesson in their classroom. In this way, we collect feedback and ensure that new users are implementing our lessons. In addition to the engagement focus that TNT has with teachers, there is also a service learning component to the program. Many resources available through the Nature of Teaching have been developed by undergraduate and graduate Purdue students who have participated in the FNR 498 Service Learning Course. Through this course, Purdue students were able to develop and pilot test lesson plans with classrooms in local elementary schools. Students in this course were required to reflect on each of their weekly teaching experiences, to learn and become better teachers.