



## DESIGNER NEWSLETTER

| VOL. V, ISSUE 1 | APRIL 2025 |

### Upcoming Designer Training - Summer 2025

The Texas Tech Coalition for Natural Learning is excited to announce the 5th annual Virtual OLEI Texas Designer Training! This training is designed for professionals who want to create outdoor learning environments that promote healthy eating, active play, and lifelong learning for children.

#### OLE Designer Training Summer 2025 \*VIRTUAL\*

Thursday, July 24, 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Friday, July 25, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

\*Must attend both days

Trained OLE Designers work with childcare centers to provide designs for outdoor learning environments that align with the OLEI Texas philosophy and best practice indicators. Participants who complete all parts of the training, including the course evaluation, will be eligible for 12-24 hours of Continuing Education Professional (CEU) Hours and can earn a microcredential and badge through Texas Tech, depending on the training option selected.

To apply for the training, please visit the Coalition for Natural Learning Website:

[https://www.depts.ttu.edu/hs/coalition\\_for\\_natural\\_learning/Resources/training\\_registration.php](https://www.depts.ttu.edu/hs/coalition_for_natural_learning/Resources/training_registration.php)

Scholarship Application:

[https://www.depts.ttu.edu/hs/coalition\\_for\\_natural\\_learning/Resources/Designer\\_Network/designer\\_scholarship\\_application.php](https://www.depts.ttu.edu/hs/coalition_for_natural_learning/Resources/Designer_Network/designer_scholarship_application.php)

For questions, please contact [kristi.gaines@ttu.edu](mailto:kristi.gaines@ttu.edu)

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**OLE!TEXAS**  
OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

\*OLEI Texas is an initiative of the Texas Department of State Health Services in partnership with other state agencies, universities, and organizations across Texas. For more information and a full partner listing, visit [dshs.texas.gov/ole](http://dshs.texas.gov/ole).



TEXAS TECH  
UNIVERSITY





"Designing  
outdoor  
learning  
environments is  
not just about  
creating spaces  
—it's about  
fostering  
connections,  
curiosity, and  
growth in  
children,"

FATEMEH DIANAT

## Welcome to our New Members

Please welcome the newest members of the Trained OLE Designer Network! These talented individuals completed the OLE! Designer Training Seminar in July 2024 and are now part of our growing community dedicated to creating healthier, more engaging outdoor learning environments for children.

- Arnold G. Jayoma Jr.
- Audrey Wilke
- Colleen Hook
- Danielle Ross
- Emma Sheets
- Fatemeh Dianat
- Hunter Lohse
- John Brush
- Kelsey Kleypas
- Lara Hall
- Leah Ford
- Lilia Duque
- Melissa Frei
- Michelle Pearson
- Mohadesehsadat Rahimi
- Rachel Bullard
- Ramon Suarez
- Stephanie Boudreaux
- Taylor Zavala
- Vickie Pullen
- Violet Kennedy
- Wren Conn



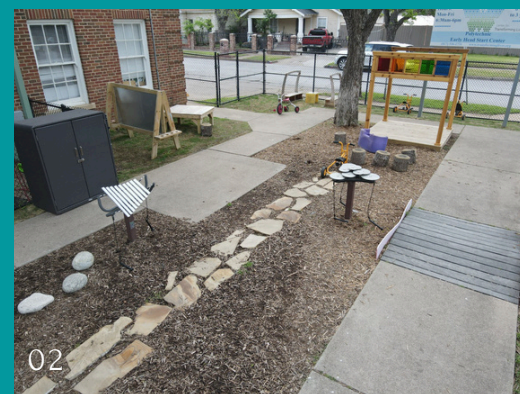
For more information visit official [OLE! Texas Website](#).



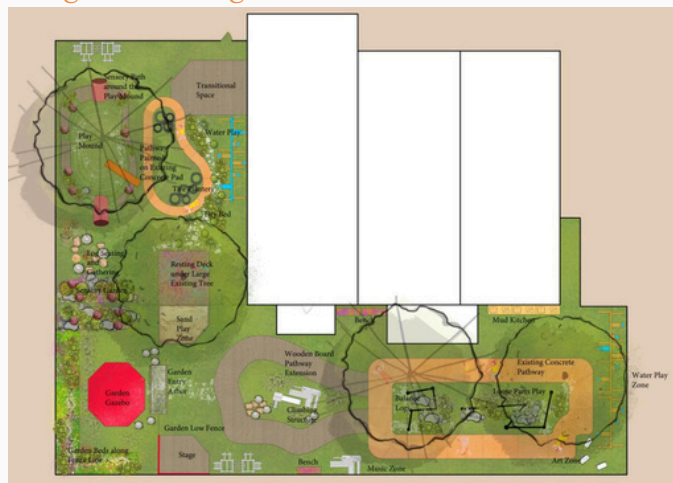


The CTL-Polytech Child Development Center in Fort Worth recently unveiled a transformative nature-based outdoor learning environment by collaborating with the Center for Transforming Lives (CTL), Texas Tech Coalition for Natural Learning, Linbeck Group, and Green Space Playgrounds.

A large backyard garden with a wooden pergola, a stone fire pit, a wooden table, and a large umbrella. The garden is bordered by a black metal fence and a road. The number 01 is visible in the bottom left corner.



## Final Design







## Expanding Nature-Based Learning to Rural Texas Communities

The Texas Tech Coalition for Natural Learning (CNL) team, in partnership with trained OLE! Designer Jared Horsford (Parkhill in Lubbock, TX) transformed the outdoor space at Abernathy Sunshine Academy into a dynamic OLE! Texas site. Surveys and focus groups with parents, educators, and children informed the design. The CNL team plans to expand the project to additional West Texas communities in the future.

For more information visit [Texas Tech Coalition for Natural Learning](https://www.texas-tech.edu/cnl)







## ChildCareGroup- Martin Luther King Jr. Center

DESIGNED BY GREEN SPACE PLAYGROUNDS

ChildCareGroup partnered with Green Space Playgrounds to reimagine the outdoor space at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Dallas, creating an OLE! Texas-inspired nature play environment. Along with their current traditional playground, this added space now offers the opportunity for programs to have a nature area for outdoor classrooms.

Project key elements

- Dual-Age Zones:
  - Infant/Toddler Area:
    - Sensory Gardens: Native plants and textured pathways for tactile exploration.
    - Nature Climbing Area: Low-risk logs and boulders for motor skill development.
  - Preschool Area:
    - Dry Creek Bed & Hand Pump: Encourages water play and STEM learning.
    - Rolling Hill: Promotes climbing, crawling, and imaginative adventures.
- Universal Design:
  - Ramps, platforms, and wide pathways ensure accessibility for children of all abilities.
- Climate Adaptations:
  - Shaded seating areas and drought-tolerant plants

"a multi-sensory strategy for children to have increased outside time and immediate connection with nature element"

GREEN SPACE  
PLAYGROUNDS





# Benefits of Outdoor Learning Environments on Child Development

RESEARCH BY DANIELLE CRAIG, NAZIA AFRIN TRINA, MUNTAZAR MONSUR, UMME TASNIMA HAQUE, GARRETT FARROW, MD ZAHID HASAN, FARTHA TASNIM, AND MOYIN SABAINAH AKINBOLA

A recent study led by researchers at Texas Tech University has shown that nature-based outdoor play and learning environments can significantly enhance the development of children under 3 years old.

Key Findings:

1. Sensory Play Boosts Brain Development:

- Children exposed to sensory-rich environments, such as sand, water, and sensory gardens, showed improved cognitive and motor skills.

2. Construction and Manipulation Foster Creativity:

- Providing loose parts like logs, blocks, and natural materials encourages creative play and problem-solving.

3. Art and Language Spaces Enhance Communication:

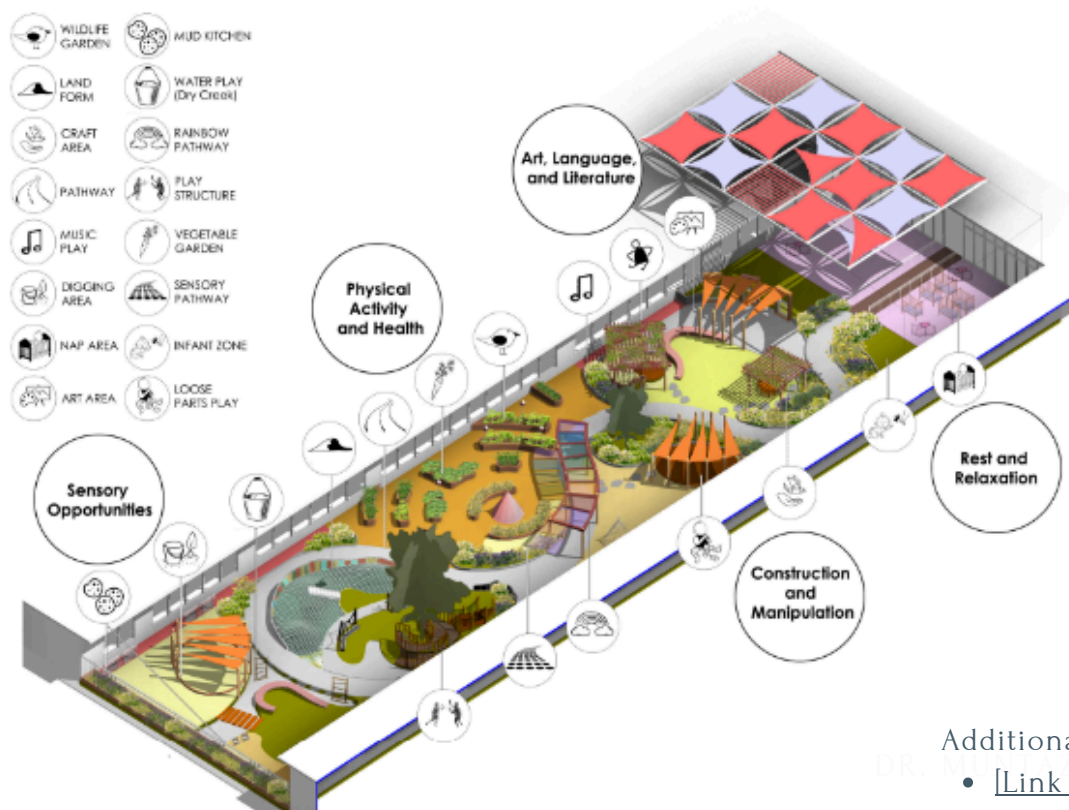
- Outdoor art activities and storytelling nooks support language development and self-expression.

4. Physical Activity Promotes Health:

- Spaces designed for movement, such as pathways, play structures, and natural landforms, encourage physical activity and coordination.

5. Rest and Relaxation Areas Support Emotional Well-Being:

- Quiet, shaded areas for relaxation help children recharge and develop self-regulation skills.



Additional Resources:

- [\[Link to the full study\]](#)