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**Pre-K 4 SA Tapping Natural Resources For Learning: Acclaimed Landscape Architect Robin Moore, Natural Learning Initiative to Design Outdoor Play Places for Pre-K 4 SA Students, Teachers**

*Moore to lead panel on “bringing school outside again” with education experts at Pre-K 4 SA North Center Oct. 28*

**San Antonio, TX-** Pre-K 4 SA is partnering with North Carolina State University’s (NCSU) College of Design, Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) to design and create outdoor learning spaces that facilitate direct, hands-on engagement with nature and promote physical activity that serves as a model for the state.

Acclaimed landscape architect and NCSU Professor of Landscape Architecture, Robin Moore, founded Natural Learning Initiative in 2000 to reconnect kids and families to their natural environment hoping to increase physical activity, reduce childhood obesity rates and redirect learning from ‘electronics’ back to the outdoors.

“Four-year-olds inspect everything. They look at the shapes of tree leaves, watch bees pollinate flowers and caterpillars crawl across grass. They ask why the sky is blue, and what makes dirt smell funny,” said Pre-K 4 SA North Center Director Sandy Weser, a proponent for natural learning environments who led the development of the outdoor learning program at Pre-K 4 SA North Center.

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“Nature connects us all, and provides the best “classroom” for our young learners. Having one of the most renowned experts in landscape design and nature learning environments help us further develop our program, and share his insights with San Antonio educators and key stakeholders, is an honor,” said Weser.

Moore is designing the natural outdoor play area at the Pre-K 4 SA North Center to be used as model for the remaining Pre-K 4 SA centers, and other San Antonio schools. He will also be leading a professional learning course for educators on incorporating natural play into curriculum, and will be leading a panel discussion with San Antonio outdoor education experts on “bringing school outside again” on Friday, October 28 from 4-5:30 p.m.

“Pre-K 4 SA is about what is best for our young learners,” said Pre-K 4 SA CEO Sarah Baray. “Finding innovative methods to inspire and engage our kids is a core belief among our master teachers and staff, and was a principle for developing the outdoor learning program at the North Center. With NLI partnership, we will be able to provide natural learning environments at all of our centers.”

In September, Pre-K 4 SA released independent study results on student achievement and growth, showing Pre-K 4 SA students who trailed the national norm at the beginning of the school year exceeded the national norm in cognitive, literary and mathematics at the end of the school year. Physical education was the only outcome for which students demonstrated a need for improvement.

Pre-K 4 SA secured a grant through the USAA Philanthropic Giving Program that provided the opportunity to partner with NSCU and NLI to pursue outdoor learning initiatives.

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### **About Pre-K 4 SA:**

Pre-K 4 SA is a full-day pre-kindergarten program for 4-year-olds living in the City of San Antonio. Pre-K 4 SA is free for qualifying students and also accepts tuition-paying students. The school day begins at 8 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Before- and after-school care is also available at no additional charge from 7:15 to 8 a.m., and from 3 to 6 p.m. Breakfast, lunch and two snacks are included and free transportation is available to all students. Pre-K 4 SA has four Education Centers located throughout the city: North Education Center, 3635 Medical Dr.; South Education Center, 7031 S. New Braunfels Ave.; East Education Center, 5230 Eisenhower Rd.; and West Education Center, 1235 Enrique M. Barrera Memorial Parkway. The Pre-K 4 SA Professional Development program provides early childhood educators in San Antonio with complementary best teaching skills and practices in pre-kindergarten through third grade in order to exceed state-mandated student learning outcomes while focusing on the whole child. Visit [www.prek4sa.com](http://www.prek4sa.com) for more information.

The [Natural Learning Initiative](#) (NLI) was co-founded in 2000 by Professor Robin Moore and Dr. Nilda Cosco, as a design assistance, action research, professional development, and evidence-based information dissemination center, at the College of Design, NC State University. NLI professional staff includes a landscape architect, two landscape design associates, a graphic designer, a postdoctoral research scholar, software programmer, and project coordinator. The team also includes two doctoral students, four landscape architecture graduate design assistants, and two garden trainers. Professional fields include landscape architecture, horticultural science, applied arts, architecture, urban design, computer science, and psychology. Since founding, NLI has contributed evidence-based expertise in design for childhood play and learning to projects with top US landscape architecture practices, including MVVA, OLIN, Andropogon, SWA, Ten Eyck, and MIG.