

PUBLIC CARE FOR KINDERGARTENS

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At the beginning of the XXI century people are starting to become more involved with the world of artificial objects and structures, virtual social networks, thus disconnecting from their perception of Nature as the foundation of existence. Aside from various environmental disasters, disconnect from nature is a direct threat for the development and socialization of preschool children. It is fairly obvious that before school the child is growing and acquiring natural abilities to feed, move and communicate, and grown-ups who are around provide more or less competent help. However, conventional wisdom has a much worse perception about the importance of nature experiences and discussing them with mentors for the child's mental development. According to Moscow experts, 65% of children entering first grade have speech development problems. But then, it is the connection of speech development and mental development starting at the age of 2 that leads to the level of intellectual development that distinguishes humans from other inhabitants of Earth!

In 2011 the Exploring Nature with Children refresher course was launched in MSU [<http://kids.genebee.msu.ru>]. This course was taken by the staff of Moscow kindergarten №1820, who in 2009-2012 lead a successful experiment "Kindergarten as a model of environmental culture" with the help of MSU scholars. Especially it proved how profoundly the speech and mental development of modern city children is affected by introducing them to environmental culture through custom designed guidebooks that include pictures, short stories and tests.

Another important conclusion of our experiment is a necessity of kindergarten facilities and territory effectively functioning as a development environment. It is the full-scale development environment that makes a fundamental difference between kindergarten and home education! Lately there is a tendency of covering kindergarten territories with tile and artificial structures. Officials making these decisions probably have little idea about how important the direct connection to nature is for the mental development of children. However, the depletion of natural environment on kindergarten territories inevitably leads to the underdevelopment of speech, and, consequently, mental functions in children. To prevent such consequences it is necessary to provide kindergartens with the support of an informed community at all cost.