During the Green Thread workshop, I identified two outcomes (“big ideas”) from my Survey of Children’s Communication course (Com 260S) that I could connect to a sustainability concept. These course outcomes are:

1) **Identify environmental influences on children and adolescents’ communicative and social development.**

2) **Review and interpret current research on child and adolescent communication.**

My plan was to relate these course concepts to the sustainability concept of intergenerational thinking. I wanted my students to explore activities that a parent, educator, or day care provider could create to increase a child’s exposure to and understanding of nature. In addition, I wanted my students to explore the connection between children’s “natural” experiences and sensitivity to the environment as well as each other.

In past semesters, I have taught theories on emotional intelligence to my students. During the course of the 2009-2010 school year, I also led an emotional intelligence workshop with the teachers at my son’s school. This particular school teaches its students emotional intelligence, and mindfulness is a central part of this instruction. These experiences, as well as my experience with Green Thread, helped me see a connection between emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and sustainability.

Each month my son’s school has a “pizza day.” The goal of pizza day is to provide an opportunity for students to come together and contribute to the making of a pizza lunch for their families and school community. Equally important, the school uses the greater Missoula community to make this lunch (i.e. the pizza dough is not only donated by a local bakery but the pizza, after it is made, is brought back and baked there. In addition, the lunch takes place in a nearby kids club. My favorite part of pizza day is that each class takes a different role in creating the lunch (i.e. picking up the dough, creating the pizzas, writing thank you cards to outside volunteers, setting up the tables for lunch, etc.). Kids learn that regardless of their size, they play an important role in contributing to their community. In addition, at the beginning of lunch, the kids practice a few minutes of mindful eating. They are given things to think about during this time (e.g. the love and work that went into making the food and where the food comes from-the tomato vines, the wheat for the dough, etc.).

Thinking about mindfulness and its connection to emotional intelligence spurred me to attend a mindfulness in early childhood education workshop this summer. During the course of this workshop, I decided to do my own “mindful eating” activity with my children’s communication class. The following revisions to my course agenda include this activity:

- Identify mindfulness as a component of emotional intelligence.
- Explore mindfulness activities that provide primary experiences with a child’s natural environment.
- Discuss mindfulness in early childhood education with our guest speaker, a
preschool teacher who teaches mindfulness and emotional intelligence.

- Participate in a mindful eating activity.
- Read Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods*.

- Create an activity or lesson plan for children in their natural environments that helps them develop a sensitivity to or awareness of their environment.