

With Jennifer Hegan and Helene Fleury



General best practices for outdoor education

- I. Be aware of your expectations
- 2. Allow for "feelings of firsts" and state of flow
- 3. Tell inside, do (and be) outside
- 4. Know your space
- 5. Routines
- 6. Helpers
- 7. Safety first
- 8. Pre-visits





I. EXPECTATIONS

Managing outdoor learning starts with managing our expectations

- No time for prep?
- No helpers?
- No budget?

You can still make outdoor learning happen!



3.TELL INSIDE

DO OUTSIDE

BEFORE

- New vocabulary
- Work groups/buddies/challenges or missions
- Overview of what will be done outside
- Outdoor behaviour rules
- Materials, equipment to bring (magnifying glasses, bum pads, clip boards, pencils, field guides)
- Bathroom break

AFTER

- Integrate findings, record observations and data
- Place artifacts on display table
- Use journal to reflect on the experience

- Review outdoor behaviour rules
- Address potential hazards
- Identify clear boundaries
- Teach facts, knowledge
- Demonstrate and help practice skills
- Model and help develop positive attitudes
- Explain values (conservation, leave no trace)



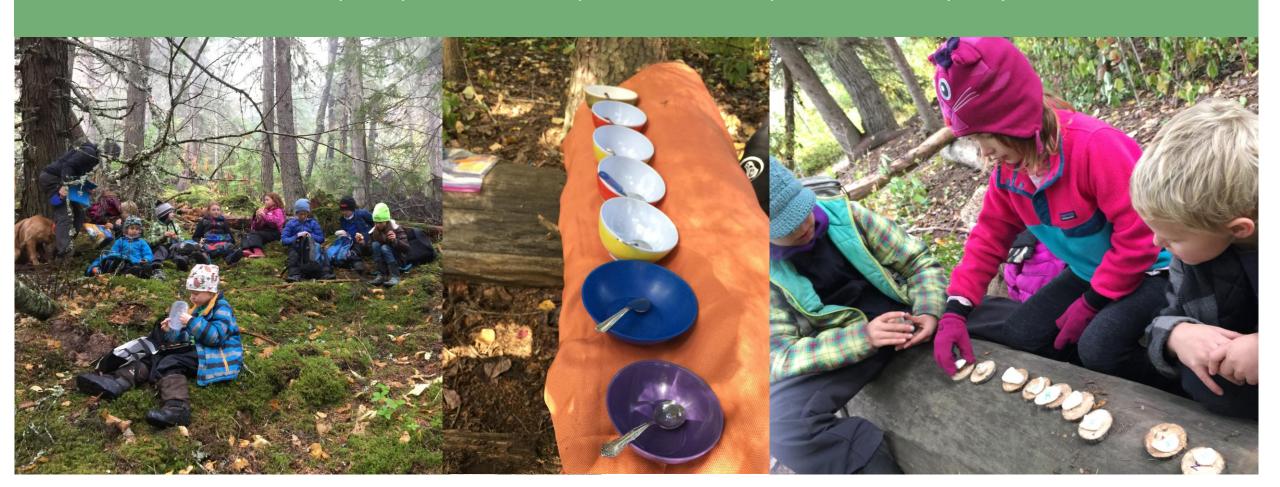
4. KNOW YOUR SPACE (Garden)

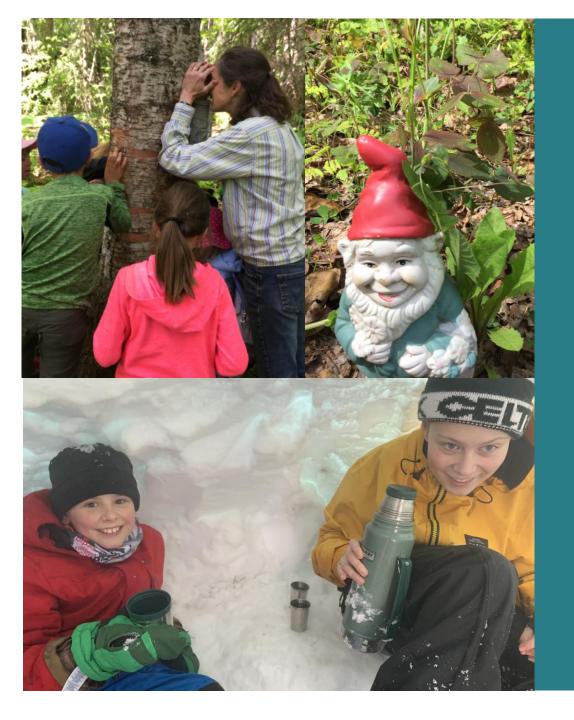
- Garden beds are needed for produce, flowers, fruit, grazing
- Garden beds are also needed for playing, digging, insect discovery and unstructured gardening
- Area for buckets, tools, supplies
- Re-group area for next instructions
- Shade



4. KNOW YOUR SPACE (Forest)

- Hills Amphitheatre
- Stumps, fallen trees & rocks seating, writing and balancing
- Moss sit spots
- Conifer clumps natural shelter; Spacing of trees tarp shelters, hammocks
- Branches, rocks, leaves, spruce/pinecones loose parts for math, compare/contrast, art, poetry/haikus





5. ROUTINES

To help get us outside regularly

- Welcome Circle: rules, boundaries, plan of the hour/day
- Sit spot: contemplation, observation, tummy, back, art
- Roles: scribe, caboose, tea makers, supplies carriers
- Simpler activities:
 - measuring plant growth, snow depth
 - sensory exploration, plant smelling
 - soil sifting, soil temperature
 - looking for insects, digging for treasures
 - colour swatches
- Games, Read aloud, Art
- Journaling
- Teatime
- Leave no trace checklist
- Closing circle (gratitude, 3 things that surprised you)



6. HELPERS

Parents, Grand-parents, EAs, community groups, DF0, ministry of forests, ministry of environment, meteorology, mining/rock experts, retired teachers and more!

- For optimal small group learning
- For tasks that require concentration (like planting seeds!)
- To help manage distractions
- For stations or activities that necessitate more supervision

But, remember that nature is your helper in unstructured learning. Use natural objects and spaces to your advantage!



7. SAFETY FIRST

- Allergies
- Boundaries
- Sandwich/train formation
- Natural hazards:
 water, slippery roots, branches,
 thistle/nettle/devil's club
- Poisonous plants
- Dangerous mammals
- How to use tools
- Regrouping signal









8. PRE-VISITS

Time consuming but essential and worthwhile!

- Parking bus, parent helpers
- Trail closure
- Snow
- Uprooted or fallen trees
- Sit spots
- Toilet area
- Snack areas
- Shelter
- Regroup areas

SCHOOL GARDEN SUCCESSES

- 1. Small group gardening can be a calming, satisfying activity, empowering students with new or improved skills.
- 2. Larger seeds for smaller fingers: chard, beets, peas, beans, radish, calendula & nasturtium flowers, potatoes, garlic
- 3. Seedlings cost more but are worth it.
- 4. Most successful plants: potatoes, beets, nasturtiums, kale, herbs, radishes, beans, Asian green mixes, chard, broccoli, kolrabi
- 5. Plant flower seedlings early shows that garden is being used for growing
- 6. Rotate groups from classroom or parallel self-directed activities such as:
 - Gross motor skill activities like buckets & shovels, digging, pulling old plants,
 - Making soil in buckets (and then watering!)
 - Digging for worm and insects collecting and 'caring' for them making a home
 - Chalk drawing beside garden

GOOD TO GO BACKPACK

- Cell phone
- First aid kit
- Flagging tape
- Whistle
- Bandana (for eye covering, for bugs, to tie things, to hide objects, for sun protection)
- Colour swatches
- Survival items (fire starter, tinder, rope, knife, emergency blanket)
- Toilet paper, trowel, lighter
- Field guide
- Ziplock bags for collecting, for picking up unfortunate garbage
- Measuring tape
- Bum pad

In a different bag/box/wagon:

- Clipboards/pencils
- Magnifying glass
- Small art supplies Watercolour/paintbrushes, charcoal for tree rubbing

SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL ADMINSTRATION AND PACS

- Garden trained EAs
- District-shared garden and outdoor learner support position
- More garden boxes to incorporate 'play' area
- \$ for seedlings, tools, buckets
- \$ for bussing
- Outdoor clothes/footwear bank
- Outdoor kits (WildBC, Groundbreakers)
- Grant applications (help from PAC, admin)

RESOURCES

- Each Other! Our emails: fleuryhma@gmail.com, jheganwork@gmail.com
- Megan Zeni, a BC based outdoor educator specializing in gardens and the value of play and learning: https://meganzeni.com/teaching-prep-outside/
- HCTF Education (WildBC) great support for BC Teachers and outdoor learning

See: https://www.hctfeducation.ca/lessons/teacher-tips-and-tricks/

Lesson plans with Curriculum links and Competencies already described and applied:

Such as: https://www.hctfeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Grade4-Water_Matters.pdf
https://www.hctfeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PlaceBasedLearning-Grade1.pdf

- The well-known Get Outdoors manual is now a free download at https://www.hctfeducation.ca/product/get-outdoors/
- Books:

Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8, Herbert W. Broda Sharing Nature with Children, Joseph Cornell A Year of Forest School, Jane Worroll & Peter Houghton A Forest Days Handbook, Eliza Minnucci

