

ROOTED

A seasonal newsletter from
Surrey Ecological Educators of District 36



President's Message

BY ALISON LESLIE

SEED36 Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you rested and ready to take on a new school year. Over the past three years, our little LSA (local specialist association) has grown in passion and interest. We have more and more teachers wanting ideas, support and resources on their journey to implementing outdoor learning. Our role as an LSA is to support educators and advocate for investment in outdoor learning priorities. We represent teachers in elementary and at the high school level, bringing an array of different viewpoints and experiences with us.

During the 2019/2020 school year, we had the opportunity to work with district aboriginal helping teachers, learning ways to decolonize our outdoor spaces and embed indigenous ways of knowing. SEED36 looks forward to continuing this relationship and value how much the First Peoples Principals of Learning weaves into environmental and ecological education. We also participated in the C2C conference in October as well as the Cross-border Conference in February. Both conferences were filled with positive conversations and reflected an increasing interest in environmental stewardship and outdoor education practices.

Our school year ended with the Covid-19 pandemic and a shift to distance learning. On the advice of Dr. Bonnie Henry, spending time outdoors is a way to help slow the spread of the virus; this includes teaching our students outdoors when possible. Her advice has fueled interest and inquiry from teachers throughout our district. They come with questions, concerns and curiosity. Moving forward, our group has an important role to play in providing support to our colleagues. Further, we wish to advocate as a collective the need for policies, resources and materials that bring equity to outdoor learning opportunities for students and educators.

Our commitment to the practice of outdoor learning lies in the benefits to both teachers and students. We see curricular engagement, creative and critical thinking for students and in ourselves, experience a new lens for viewing emergent and interdisciplinary curricula. When we provide opportunities for students to connect with and learn from a place, their sense of stewardship grows and, with time, can build an investment and duty of care to our natural spaces.

I know we are in an uncertain time, but we, as outdoor educators have the chance to ease that uncertainty through our experience and knowledge. Collaboration, mentorship and communication are crucial in helping both teachers, administrators, and other colleagues understand and participate in the work we do.

I hope you all have a successful startup in September.

Alison Leslie, SEED36 President, Grade 1/2 teacher at East Kensington Elementary

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“Never doubt that a group of
thoughtful, committed citizens can
change the world; indeed, it is the
only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead



STARTING STRONG: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESS

BY CHERYL LECLERC

- Determine your "why"- support your choice to take students outdoors with evidence of its benefits. Look to the work of Richard Louv, and the Children in Nature Alliance of Canada. Use this knowledge to guide conversations with administrators and parents.
- Determine when outdoor learning fits best into your week.
- Where will your learning take place? What are the safety considerations of this space? What meeting area would be best for the delivery of instructions and lesson closure?
- What connections exist between the curriculum and the opportunities of your schoolgrounds? Where do you see connections to math, science, art, social studies, ELA...You will need to spend time in the place to see its affordances.
- How will you manage?- Students need to understand that different places have different rules and outdoor learning is a time to focus and follow through. Be clear and consistent with expectations and the necessity for all to follow the group plan.
- Who can you collaborate with on these initiatives? How will they support the class and how can you help them be prepared?

Cheryl Leclerc teaches kindergarten at East Kensington Elementary.



Taking Learning Outside

BY AMY WILDER

So you are ready to take your learning outdoors but are not sure how to get started? Here is a general structure that we use every time we visit a natural space on our school grounds or off-site. This structure helps to organize our time together and keeps the children safe while learning outside. We always take it slow in September, practice our group signals and explore boundaries until we feel confident our learners are ready to engage in other learning activities with more complex learning intentions.

Class Conversation: Gather inside with your class to discuss the learning intentions, signals, general safety and boundaries. This is the time to develop a class agreement about expectations, safe play and respect for nature. It is important to discuss how learning outdoors is different than time spent at recess, lunch and extra playground time.

Find a Gathering Spot: Look around the school grounds for a place to call 'home base.' This space will be where you begin and end your time outdoors. It's recommended that this place have a landmark like a tree, bench, stump or large rock. Consider your connection to this place and how it might connect to your learners and your school community. How will you incorporate a land acknowledgement of this place?

Head Outside: Gather at your home base, acknowledge the land, and practice your signals and boundaries. A signal will indicate when your class needs to return to the gathering place. It could be an animal call, a drum, tambourine, wind chime – anything that makes enough noise to reach the edges of the boundaries. We recommend defining boundaries that can be seen from your gathering spot but incorporate enough area for your learners to engage in exploration.

Play Games / Learning Activity: Play games to help familiarize your learners with the boundaries and signals. Walk the boundaries together and locate landmarks that indicate the edges. Play short games that have your class moving to the edges and gathering again with the signal. Scavenger hunts or directional games are a great start.

Gather & Reflect: With your chosen signal, bring your group back together at home base to reflect, share gratitude and/or document your group learning. Think and plan for ways to bring your learning back into the classroom and make plans for your next visit. Take it slow. Use all your senses to connect to the land you are learning on. Observe what your learners are intrigued by and make plans to visit again!

Amy Wilder teaches Grade 2/3 at Sullivan Elementary.



A Place to Start: Fresh Air Fridays

BY: DIANA BREBECK

I spent a great deal of my childhood outside, and have always noticed nature. I see the ladybug on a leaf, know the feel of an oval rock in my hand, the taste of a sun-warmed blackberry. As a mother, I have thrilled in sharing this “noticing” with my boys. As a teacher, I have always wanted to share it with my students as well. But how and when?

The life of a teacher is a tricky one: so many great ideas, so little time. “I really should...”, “It would be great to...”. Sound familiar? But, sometimes, you just have to do it (as they say). So I did. I started with just the beginnings of a plan in mind. Here are some of the things I learned:

1. Pick a day and stick to it. I made Fresh Air Fridays a part of my schedule, just like math or P.E., and I tried to honour that time as best I could. My students came not only to expect it but to welcome it. They learned to dress for the weather because we went out rain or shine, and if there was a pro-d day or holiday, my students complained so much, we sometimes had a Fresh Air Thursday instead.

2. Get a partner. Much like going to the gym, you need someone to give you a push on those days when you’re not feeling it. My partner was my grade group colleague, and we motivated each other and shared in the planning of activities. Early on, we realized that 59 students were just too many, so we often split the students up (in different ways to keep it interesting) when we were outside. Sometimes we both did the same activity and then shared as a group at the end, sometimes we did different activities and rotated the students partway through. Some of our ideas were our own, some we found online. There really is a wealth of ideas out there.

3. Have a routine. At first, our students were a bit wild when we took them out. They thought it was free time or an extra recess. By starting each Fresh Air Friday the same way, we let students know that it was time to tune in and be mindful. We always started (and ended) our Fresh Air Fridays with a few deep breaths. Then we took a silent (haha) walk around the school, using our senses to experience nature. After our walk, we would stand in a circle, and each share something we noticed. The students quickly learned that they were accountable for noticing something. Sometimes we focused on a particular sense or asked the students to think of nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. We used this initial walk not only as a way to get the students noticing but also as a way to build vocabulary, something much needed with the high ELL population at my school.

4. Give yourself time. Time is something we all need more of. We get so caught up in the curriculum; we think we don’t have time to fit in anything new. Give you and your students this time. I promise you; it is worthwhile. Connecting your students to nature has so many benefits, including but not limited to: building confidence, promoting responsibility, reducing stress, and improving creativity. (from <https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>)

Some of the activities we did on our Fresh Air Fridays tied perfectly with the curriculum; some were a stretch. Some I will do again, some I won’t. But I felt that those 85 minutes every Friday morning was time well spent. When my students ran up to me excited to show me a leaf or a rock or bent to smell a flower, it made my heart full. I had helped them to notice.

Diana Brebeck teaches Grade 4 at Green Timbers Elementary

OUR NEW LOGO!



The collective of SEED36 gives thanks to the talents of Monika Stahlstrom for her vision and design of our new logo!

How to join SEED36

Go to
[HTTPS://BCTF.CA/PSA/JOIN.A
SPX](https://bctf.ca/psa/join.a.spx)

Login to your myBCTF account & subscribe to EEPSA (Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association).

Your subscription supports outdoor learning initiatives in SD 36 and gets you access to Green Teacher Digital Magazine, and Rooted, SEED36's seasonal newsletter. The cost can be recuperated from your Pro-D allotment through the STA.



High School Students & Outdoor Education

BY MARLEY STEWART

It is never too late to create positive outdoor experiences for older students. Creating pro-environmental and positive land-based attitudes in high school students is a powerful way of making future sustainability-minded citizens. Outdoor learning and traditional ecological knowing can be integrated into almost every subject in grades 8-12. The current pandemic has amplified our need to get outside with our students and the social/emotional and physical benefits that nature can provide. The following are some ideas and links to help get you started:

Community Mapping – This project fosters a deeper understanding of place through multiple perspectives and can be used and adapted for Humanities and Social Studies classrooms from grades 8-11. An excellent way to use place and experiential education to teach the five themes of geography is to learn mapping skills and a perfect way for students to get outside and reimagine their own communities safely.

You can find more about Community Mapping on the TEACHBC website and Resources 4 Rethinking - <https://teachbcd.bctf.ca/download/122?filename=community-mapping-secondary.pdf>
<http://resources4rethinking.ca/media/CommunityMapping.1.pdf>

Deep Time Walk – This is a fantastic walking curriculum project that gets senior students to understand the concept of Deep Time while walking the 4.6km that represents the geological time scale. This outdoor activity has been very successful in my Physical Geography 12 class. When doing other activities along our 4.6km route, they remember, “Hey Ms. Stewart every time I run the trail I remember ‘where’ the atmosphere was created.” or “it’s a long walk through time!”. It can be used in all sorts of ways and applies to the Science and Social Science curriculums. Deep Time Walk also has an app that can be downloaded and used for free so students can participate two meters apart or on their own if being taught online. Check out the following links for the official website and other teacher experiences using this walking curriculum concept.

- <https://www.deeptimewalk.org>
- <http://www.educationthatinspires.ca/2017/09/27/deep-time-walk-a-powerful-tool-to-connect-with-lifes-story/>

Marley Stewart teaches Grades 10-12 social studies & geography at Fleetwood Park Secondary.

Seasonal Connections: Ideas for Exploration



"This group was working on patterning and one decided to measure how many footsteps it took to get to the end. They were also counting the leaves."

- Christine Syms teaches K/1 at William Watson Elementary.

"We are always on the lookout for creatures that live on our school grounds, even the smallest ones. These become a great opportunity to learn about respecting our environment. We also learn about the creature and its many connections to this place that we share."

- Christine Syms
Photos late Sept. 2019



Children created a song and dance for their Cedar tree to celebrate their appreciation for the gifts it provides this connects to the First People's Principles of Learning as "Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)."

- Lora Sarchet & Niki Leech teach Grade 1/2 at Sullivan Elementary.





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Learning Gardens for Highschool

BY MARLEY STEWART

There is a growing number of school garden success stories in our district. North Surrey Secondary’s garden sponsor and former SEED36 president, Drew Landry, has been an integral part of streamlining the processes of applying for and fostering student leadership in the school garden. Without this help, we would not see the number and interest grow. Thank you!

Fleetwood Park Secondary is in its second year of using an established school garden. This space is an outdoor classroom utilized by multiple departments and is an excellent learning space for kitchen gardening, and traditional ecological knowledge. We currently have 12 self-watering, above-ground planters that are shared amongst six different departments. Our Visual Arts department has had success growing ornamental squash, pumpkin and corn for their still life unit. Home Economics had students' plant, tend and harvest a variety of vegetables and herbs, and with their crop offered a free farm to table event last fall. The BASES department is using the garden for their Life Skills program, and the list goes on.

If you are interested in starting your own school garden, the surrey district and many dedicated teachers have created a series of helpful resources. Make your way to the SEED36 TEAMS page, and you will find all of the garden resource and garden funding options file.

New Resources from Surrey Parks Stewards!

BY CHERYL LECLERC

With more and more teachers inquiring about outdoor learning opportunities, Surrey Parks Stewards, Bree and Chantelle have been busy collaborating with SD 36 teachers to support this movement! Their new website and ‘Know Before You Go’ resources seek to share best practices for teaching outdoors in local parks.

Other exciting resources include:

- guidelines for sustainability
- student awareness-building activities that help set expectations, guide observations and engagement
- resources for curricular connections to urban forestry topics and local species

Many thanks to Bree and Chantelle for their collaboration and guidance to support outdoor learning in local parks. Check out their hard work at:

<https://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/31702.aspx>

