

Dear SD …

We are the Salish Sea chapter of the Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA). We are a group of teachers from school districts 61, 62, 63 and 64, working together to help support and engage outdoor environmental education. The Covid-19 pandemic has created challenges for education and many educators are wanting to do more of their teaching outside. We are hearing from teachers and parents who are concerned about the ventilation systems in the schools and who have safety concerns surrounding cohort numbers and the lack of social distancing within the buildings. As Doctor Henry says, “Fewer faces and bigger spaces” is what is required to allow our school systems to stay safe.  What better way to find a bigger space with better ventilation and a healthy vitamin-giving, germ-killing environment than to take your class outside?

Our Salish Sea EEPSA chapter would like to help you develop good systems to support teachers, staff, parents and students to get the most out of their education in a safe and healthy way, outdoors. We have lifelong environmental educators in our midst, and we have developed many strategies and resources for delivering lessons outside.  We would love to share these ideas more widely. If you are planning (and we hope you are) to spend money to provide teachers with tools and infrastructure to help take students out of the classroom more, then please let us help you review those items so the money is spent on tools that will be useful to teachers. For example, outdoor seating and covered areas (both temporary and permanent), extra clothing stashes (boots & raingear) that can be checked out and providing tools such as backpacks or buckets with learning materials and safety gear for teachers or students are two things that are top of mind for us as educators.

We are also working to provide professional development, resource documents and materials to help support teachers, including:

* Top ten tips for getting students outside
* Demos and examples of teacher backpack kits or student materials (ie waterproof buckets)
* Activities to do in the school yard, or in your local community or park for all ages
* Risk management tips and making a school-based outdoor safety plan
* Links to outside organizations that have even more ideas!

As an executive, we would like to have a conversation with you about items to be purchased, plans to develop further, and best practices for outdoor education.  We would like to work with you to make sure the resources and systems are in place that are needed at this time.  We are ready with our solutions. Please contact us at salishseaeepsa@gmail.com or through our personal school emails to begin a conversation of how we can support you during these unprecedented times.

Warm regards,

Salish Sea EEPSA Executive

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