

Position Statement on Education Outside the Classroom (EOtC)

Our K-12 BC curriculum encourages teachers to take classroom learning outdoors. To support reduced transmission of communicable disease, EOtC is recommended daily for all teachers and learners across the province

The Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association (EEPSA) supports BC Teachers in connecting their students to outdoor, environmental, and place-based learning. As excitement continues to grow around this work, more teachers are venturing outdoors. The educational community would benefit from reduced barriers and strategic funding.

WHAT WE KNOW

- Spending time outside is a part of our heritage & cultural identity
- Being outside is beneficial to the social, emotional, and physical health of both teachers and students
- Outdoor learning correlates with equitable and improved academic success
- The outdoors can be an inspirational and transformative learning environment
- Teaching is complex, and EOtC requires dynamic decision making skills specific to each region
- Teaching outdoors requires risk management that is appropriate, evidence-based, and reasonable
- Place-based learning is best experienced outdoors
- Misconceptions about perceived and actual risks create barriers for EOtC. Professional learning and mentorship builds confidence and capacity at school, district, and provincial levels

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider a 60 minute minimum for daily instructional time outdoors as a provincial mandate. This time could be aligned with curricular content areas. Multiple K-12 resources exist to support EOtC for teachers across the curriculum
- Maintain daily access to outdoor play and learning, despite inclement weather, including rain and snow
- Designate and prioritize funding to develop outdoor learning spaces on school grounds
- Include the experienced voices of practicing teachers in EOtC policy decisions at both district and provincial levels
- Provide professional learning, leadership, certification, and mentorship opportunities for both teachers and students to enhance access to outdoor play and learning during school hours
- Follow appropriate risk management practices for outdoor learning within school yards and local communities
- Support communities of practice that encourage time for reflective and emergent learning outdoors
- Build partnerships with local First Nations, and community organizations inform practice, build capacity and support change on a systems-based level

NEXT STEPS

We recommend the Ministry of Education strike a committee of teacher representatives from across the province to discuss these recommendations.

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