

Outdoor Learning in B.C. Schools – Volunteers Wanted for Working Group

The Outdoor Learning in B.C. Schools Working Group are seeking volunteers to assist with a research writing project that will look at the current state of outdoor learning in the province of British Columbia. The focus of the research will be to uncover the gaps and barriers facing B.C. schools and educators who are trying to implement outdoor learning best practices, to define what those practices are, and to determine what contributions landscape architects can provide. We are looking for volunteers to assist with an array of tasks, which include:

- Compilation information on the structure of schools in BC, review of regulatory provisions including funding mechanisms, review of provincial policies with respect to environmental learning, review of literature with respect to best nature-based outdoor learning and child development practices.
- Compiling a list of schools to send the survey to (including obtaining necessary permissions), disseminating the survey, and collection of the data.
- Representatives to assist with field visits and interviews.
- Grant writing.
- Report writing.

Please see the Project Description and Proposed Budget for a full description of the research writing project.

If you are interested in getting involved or have any resources or information you would like to share, please get in touch with our group via Sarah Thomas, the BCSLA Intern & Associate Representative at: bcslainternassociaterep@gmail.com. Contribution of your time to this effort may provide an opportunity to earn CE Credits.

Project Description: Outdoor Learning in BC Schools Working Group

Part A: Introduction

For purposes of this research, outdoor learning means the type of learning that occurs when children are provided access to an outdoor environment that allows for exploration of elements, endless possibilities for manipulation and discovery, and realization of one's place on the planet. This type of learning can take place in the woods, by a stream, or on a well-designed school campus and can lead to children understanding risk, developing the capacity for team building, and experiencing the joy of being in, and learning from, the natural world.

Our definition of outdoor learning is based upon our collective experiences and is informed by the definition of outdoor learning advanced by the Institute for Outdoor Learning (<https://www.outdoor-learning-research.org/Research/What-is-Outdoor-Learning>). We are a BCSLA member, BCSLA interns and an educator.

It is our belief that in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools in British Columbia expanded their capacity to provide their students with outdoor learning programs and environments. This expansion (and we do intend to confirm that such an expansion took place) offers an opportunity to study a variety of programs throughout the province; to answer our research questions (as set forth in Part B); to expand on our understanding of the features of outdoor learning environments as expressed in Figure 1 below; to determine which schools in the province of British Columbia are providing their students with opportunities for outdoor learning as described above; and to identify the practices which will allow for this type of learning to flourish in the province.

Features of Outdoor Learning Environments

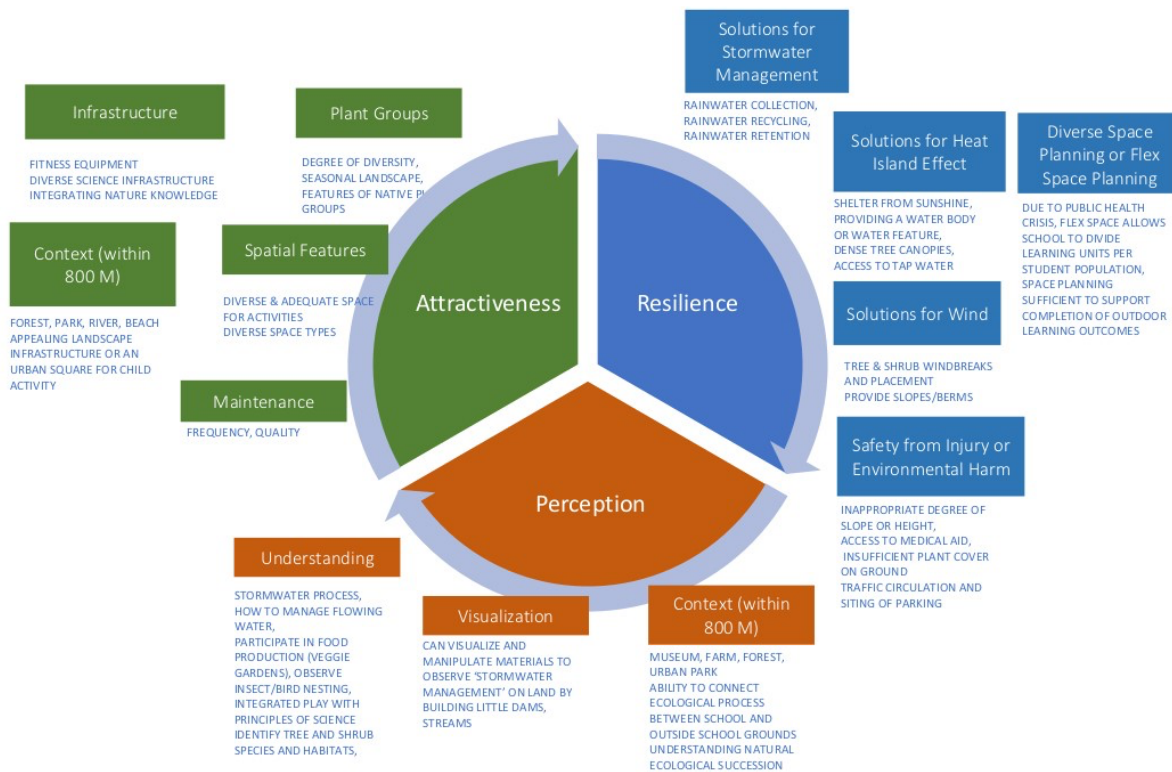


Figure 1

Part B: Focus of the Research /Research Questions:

Research Question:

What are the gaps and barriers facing B.C. schools and educators who are trying to implement outdoor learning best practices, how can those best practices be defined, and what contributions can landscape architects provide?

We intend to answer these and the following specific sub-questions using a variety of sources and methods as set forth in Section E (Research Methodologies). The questions highlight the information we hope to have at the completion of this research. Dissemination of an online survey, that will be directed to **Parent Groups (PG); Schools and Educators (SE); BCSLA Members**

(BCSLA); and Not for Profits (NPO), will be a critical tool in conducting this research. The below schematic drawing (*Figure 2*) illustrates the role we hope these stakeholder groups will play in moving this research forward and the strategies we intend to employ in capturing information from each group.

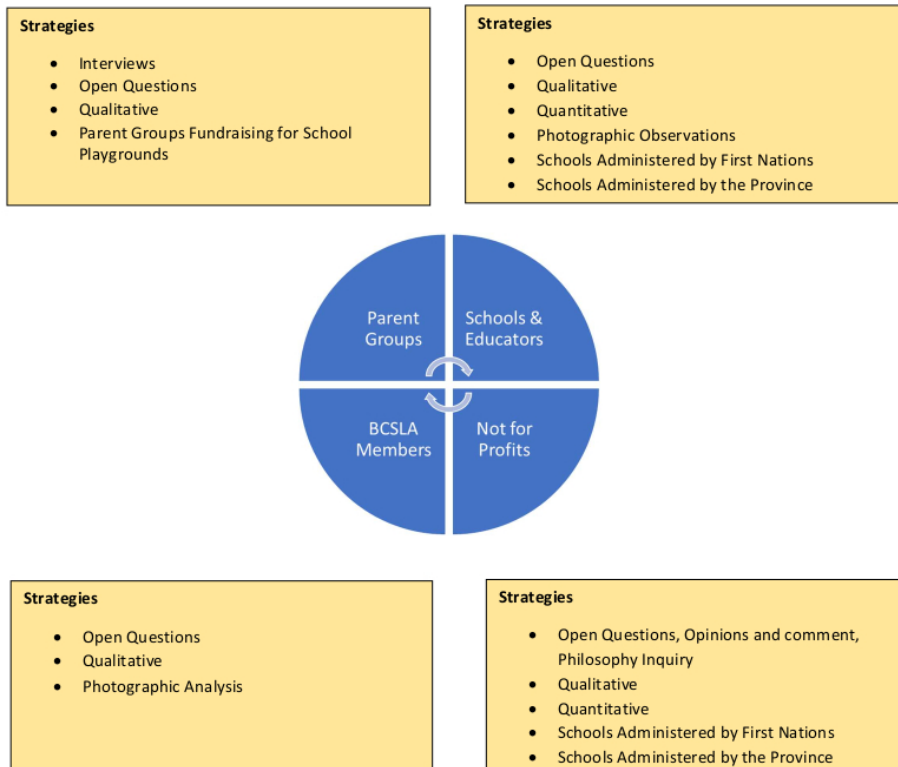


Figure 2

Sub Questions:

For the following series of questions, we expect to pose a question(s) to all four groups that will shed light on the applicable research question, and to particularize the question(s) for each group.

1. How do schools in British Columbia currently incorporate outdoor learning in their curricula?
2. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted outdoor learning programs and environments in BC?

3. To what extent do BC teachers take their students into natural areas and parks as part of their lesson plans?
4. What are the barriers and opportunities for expanding outdoor learning in BC school settings including whether funding is sufficient, whether teachers receive sufficient administrative support, and whether innovative design and siting of school campuses is possible under the current applicable regulations?
5. What are the best practices and leading-edge examples of outdoor learning environments and practices within the province, as well as nationally and internationally?
6. Should changes be made to how schools in the province are sited?
7. Which landscape characteristics are most likely to be beneficial for the psychological, physical, and cognitive growth of children with special attention to typologies that consider best sustainability practices?

For the following series of questions, we expect to pose a question(s) to the groups noted thereafter that will shed light on the applicable research question, and to particularize the question(s) for each group.

8. Are there disparities between and within school districts with regards to access to outdoor learning and the type of outdoor learning programs available? Question(s) to be addressed to the BCSLA and NPO groups. In general, we intend to pick a representative sample of schools across British Columbia including schools in both rural and urban areas and schools with varying demographics.

9. What changes to the standard design of a public school in the province may be necessary to facilitate outdoor learning? Question(s) to be addressed to the SE, BCSLA and NPO groups.

10. What changes to touchable environments and equipment may be necessary to further the health, safety and welfare of the students and staff as they move towards outdoor learning? Question(s) to be addressed to the SE and BCSLA groups.

11. To what extent do schools currently use landscape architects and other design professionals to facilitate outdoor learning? What changes to the relationships between design professionals and school districts will be needed to facilitate outdoor learning in BC schools? Question(s) to be addressed to the SE and BCSLA groups.

12. What can we learn about best outdoor learning practices from schools that are administered by First Nations communities? Question(s) to be addressed to the SE and NPO groups. We expect that schools administered by First Nations communities will be part of the SE group and will compare the answers of educators employed in First Nations administered schools with educators who are employed in schools that are administered by the province.

Part C: Proposed Completion Schedule:

Entire study (including dissemination of results) to take place from January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023, and in accordance with the specific time frames noted in each of the following phases. This schedule is premised upon:

- Our applying for the LACF Annual Grant by November of 2022. Grant to cover Phase 3 of our research.
- BC public school calendars, which are set by the individual districts.
<https://publicholidays.net/school-holidays/british-columbia/>

- The current state of pandemic restrictions in the province. Should an opportunity arise to visit schools and observe students we will try to be in a position to take advantage of that opportunity.

PHASE I: Taking the Pulse of the Province:

Timeline: January 1, 2022 – May 31, 2022.

- Compilation of information on the structure of schools in BC.
- Review of regulatory provisions including funding mechanisms.
- Review of provincial policies with respect to environmental learning.
- Review of literature with respect to outdoor learning and child development practices and/or connect to appropriate professionals.
- Compilation of list of districts and schools to visit and/or survey.
- Recruiting field representatives.
- Drafting survey tool.
- Disseminating surveys (including obtaining permission from school administrators / principals).
- Final decision on which schools to visit, who will visit them and who we will interview. If we are expecting to use University of British Columbia, School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (UBC SALA) students, we will provide lead time sufficient to obtain all necessary clearances and permissions.

PHASE II: Field Visits and Interviews

Timeline: June 1, 2022 – October 31, 2022.

- Setting up visits
- Setting up interview appointments.
- Visiting the schools.

PHASE III: Disseminating Our Findings

Timeline: November 1, 2022 - December 31, 2023

- Prepare a report based on the results of our research and publish the results on an appropriate website(s). The report should contain an abstract, introduction, methodologies, results, discussion, future possible research, and conclusions. The Bibliography should identify the literature we reviewed.
- Option to publish an article (or satellite reports) for Sitelines and/or another reputable magazine / journal.
- Publish a strategy document on an appropriate website(s) that can be used by BCSLA (CSLA) members and other design professionals, school administrators, educators, parent groups.
- Set up meetings with different design professionals and school educators that may be interested in discussing ideas.
- Presentation at BCSLA AGM and/or CSLA AGM conferences
- Option to create a short film for educational purposes on nature-based outdoor learning and the role Landscape Architects can play (Promotional tool).

Part D: Proposed Budget

Please see the accompanying cost estimate.

Part E: Research Methodologies

- Survey questionnaire(s).
- School Visits (to include each of the following whenever possible: site inventory, observation of students or photographic study by school personnel, photographing and diagramming of school grounds).
- Photo Review of successful cases of expanded outdoor learning.
- Literature Review, including case studies from other jurisdictions, academic articles, newspaper articles, magazine articles.
- Regulation Review, including rules governing design of schools, funding mechanisms, structure of the public school system, role of parents and parent associations.
- Demographic Review including analysis of raw census data and prepared maps and charts.
- Interviews with school personnel, parents, applicable designers (designers who were involved with the specific intervention and/or generally work on BC public schools).
- Conversations with and presentations by experts, including designers who specialize in creating educational environments and child development specialists.

Part F: Desired Potential Outcomes

- Development of closer ties between the educational, environmental and design communities.
- Equitable access to outdoor learning throughout British Columbia.
- An understanding of the role landscape architecture plays in designing opportunities for outdoor learning within the built and natural environment.

COST ESTIMATE

PERSONNEL

Phase I: Taking the Pulse of the Province

Timeline: January 1, 2022 – May 31, 2022

Task No. 1: Compilation of Information on the structure of schools in BC.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 20

Volunteer Hours: 15

Research Assistant Hours: 5 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 1 Total: \$150.00

Task No. 2: Review of regulatory provisions including funding mechanisms.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 35

Volunteer Hours: 35

Task No. 3: Review of provincial policies with respect to environmental learning.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 60

Volunteer Hours: 60

Task No. 4: Review of literature with respect to best nature-based outdoor learning and child development practices and/or connect to appropriate professionals.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 60

Volunteer Hours: 20

Research Assistant Hours: 40 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 4 Total: \$1200.00

Task No. 5: Compilation of list of districts and schools to visit and/or survey (possibly 25 schools in total).

Anticipated Number of Hours: 30

Volunteer Hours: 20

Research Assistant Hours: 10 @ \$30.00 per hour.

Task No. 5 Total: \$300.00

Task No. 6: Recruiting field representatives.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 6

Volunteer Hours: 6

Task No. 7: Drafting survey tool.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 35 hours

Volunteer Hours: 15

Research Assistant Hours/SALA student hours: 20 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 7 Total: \$600.00

Task No. 8: Disseminating surveys (including obtaining permission from school administrators/principals).

Anticipated Number of Hours: 5

Volunteer Hours: 5

Task No. 9: Final decision on which schools to visit, who will visit them and who will we interview. If we are expecting to use University of British Columbia, School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (UBC SALA) students, we will provide lead time sufficient to obtain all necessary clearances and permissions.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 5

Volunteer Hours: 5

Phase I Sub-total: \$2250.00

Phase II: Field Research

Timeline: May 1, 2022 - October 31, 2022

Task No. 10: Setting up visits and interview appointments. Per the project description, decisions still need to be made about whether we will be able to observe children.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 15

Volunteer Hours: 5

Research Assistant Hours: 10 @ \$30.00 per hour.

Task No. 10 total: \$300.00

Task No. 11: Visiting the schools (2 hours per school).

Anticipated Number of Hours: 50

Volunteer Hours: 20

Field Researcher(s) Hours: 30 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 11 total: \$900.00

Phase II Subtotal: \$1200.00

Phase III: Disseminating Our Findings

Timeline: November 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023

Task No. 12: Prepare a report based on the results of our research and publish the results on an appropriate website(s). The report should contain an abstract, introduction, methodologies, results, discussion, future possible research, and conclusions. The Bibliography should identify the literature we reviewed.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 60

Volunteer Hours: 40

Research Assistant Hours 20 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 12 total: \$600.00

Task No. 13: Option to publish an article (or satellite reports) for Sitelines and/or another reputable magazine/journal.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 30

Volunteer Hours: 30

Task No. 14: Publish a strategy document on an appropriate website that can be used by BCSLA (CSLA) members and other design professionals, school administrators, educators, parent groups.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 60

Volunteer Hours: 40

Research Assistant Hours: 20 @ \$30.00 per hour

Task No. 14 total: \$600.00

Task No. 15: Set up meetings with different design professionals and school educators that may be interested in discussing ideas.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 20

Volunteer Hours: 20

Task No. 16: Presentation at BCSLA AGM and/or CSLA AGM conferences.

Anticipated Number of Hours: 5

Volunteer Hours: 5

Task No. 17: A short film for education purposes on nature-based outdoor learning and the role Landscape Architects can play (promotional tool).

To be discussed upon completion of the research.

Phase III Subtotal: \$1200.00

EXPENSES:

Research: \$125.00

Meetings (graphics, coffee/tea/juices for participants) - \$50.00

Library Access, Internet/PDF costs of research publications online, and photocopying - \$75.00

Materials & Supplies: \$120.00

Pens, Pads, Color Markers – Sharpie Medium, 3 x Drawing Pads (120 18x21 sheets) - \$40.00

1 x Bond Paper Pad (40 18x24 sheets) - \$10.00

2 sets Col-Erase Colored Pencils - \$20.00

Postal, Courier, Photocopies - \$50.00

Printing Costs: One printer's estimate, total package of scanning and printing costs - \$4540.00*

Survey: Costs assuming 25 schools @ 50 survey documents per school

Survey is 15 pages back to front = 30 pages for printing purposes, letter size folded in half, 27 pgs. B/W + 3 colour

37,500 – rated for stock paper

QTY: 1,250 Surveys

School Plans: each school has two plans

School Plan copies assume 11x17 B/W

QTY: 50

One Report: Bound, 25 page, B/W @ two copies (team copy, copy for delivery)

Bound report, B/W, Letter size

QTY: 2

Brochures: 5 brochures per school, back and front, 125 brochures = 250 pages

Brochures, 11x17 (we fold), B/W

QTY: 125 Brochures

Envelopes: Possible mail out of surveys

Envelopes 5.75x9" assume 100 req.

(\$9.99/pack of 25)

*This estimate is based upon our using a printed survey. UBC should be able to offer us free access to Qualtrics' online survey platform depending on the role that UBC SALA students play in the design/management of the survey.

Travel Expenses: \$180.00

Bus, Gas, Mileage

300 km x .60/km

Honoraria for Speakers: \$300.00

(4 to 6 speakers)

\$50.00/speaker x 6

Expenses Sub-Total: 5,265.00.

TOTAL COST ESTIMATE: \$9,915.00