

PITCH DECK

Outdoor Play. and Learning. in Schools

THRIVE
OUTSIDE





Key Concepts

- 01 Why outdoor play & learning?
- 02 What is outdoor play & learning?
- 03 Who is involved?
- 04 The role of the educator
- 05 Where does it happen?
- 06 When does it happen?
- 07 How to get started

A group of children in winter clothing are sitting on a large log in a wooded area. One child in the foreground is wearing a colorful plaid jacket and a pink hat with a bow, with their hand raised. Another child next to them is wearing a pink patterned jacket and a pink hat. A third child is wearing a light blue jacket. In the background, other children and an adult are visible, along with a large rock wall featuring graffiti. The scene is outdoors in a forest setting.

Why Outdoor Play and Learning?

Why Outdoor Play & Learning?

Overwhelmingly research has demonstrated the benefits of nature programming and nature involvement in the lives of young children.

Benefits include:

- Improved wellbeing, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills
- Reduced stress and increased development of protective factors associated with resilience (1)
- Greater developmental growth and personal initiative (2)
- Overall signs of increased happiness, better physical health outcomes, and greater creativity (3)

There is a growing body of research which indicates that many Canadian children do not experience healthy levels of physical activity, sleep, and screen time (4). This in turn has contributed to **a growing awareness of the role and importance of nature and forest experiences across our Canadian education sector.**

Why Outdoor Play & Learning?

Being outdoors is safer during COVID-19.

- In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, health authorities across the country and around the world are recommending outdoor spaces as the safest place for social interaction (5).
- This is primarily due to the natural ventilation provided by air currents which rapidly dilute virus droplets while also providing more space to maintain proper social distancing protocols (6).
- In addition to this, physical activity – a cornerstone of active outdoor play – is a key factor in the prevention of any virus, including COVID-19 (7).
- There is also evidence that Vitamin-D – gained from exposure to sunlight – can mitigate the symptoms of COVID-19 (8).
- In a time of increased mental health issues among children, access to the outdoors can help mitigate some of the negative effects of stress and anxiety (9).



What is Outdoor Play & Learning?



**Outdoor play &
learning is...**

**Child-led,
educator
supported,
unstructured
play on and with
the Land.**

What is Play?

Play is what children and youth do when they follow their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way, and for their own reasons (5).

Play is:

- **FREELY CHOSEN** (a child chooses when, if and how to play)
- **INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED** (a child plays because they are motivated internally to do so)
- **PERSONALLY-DIRECTED** (a child individually and/or collectively directs their own play)

Outdoor play takes place in a very broad continuum of spaces that include urban, rural, suburban, and wilderness settings (Outdoor Play Canada Glossary of Terms, 2017).



The Play-Based Learning Continuum

Child Directed

Teacher Directed



Source: www.playlearninglab.ca/types-of-play-based-learning

Free Play Can Look Like...





Who is Involved?

Who is Involved?

Children

- Play
- Learn
- Experience joy and wonder

Educators

- Trust that the land will provide provocations and elicit learning opportunities
- Build trust with parents
- Communicate learning and health value of outdoor play
- Communicate value of appropriate risk taking
- Communicate about risk-benefit procedures as a way of building trust

Parents & Caregivers

- Ensure that children are properly equipped with clothing that makes outdoor play comfortable and enjoyable
- Build trust with children so parents can feel comfortable with children leading their own play

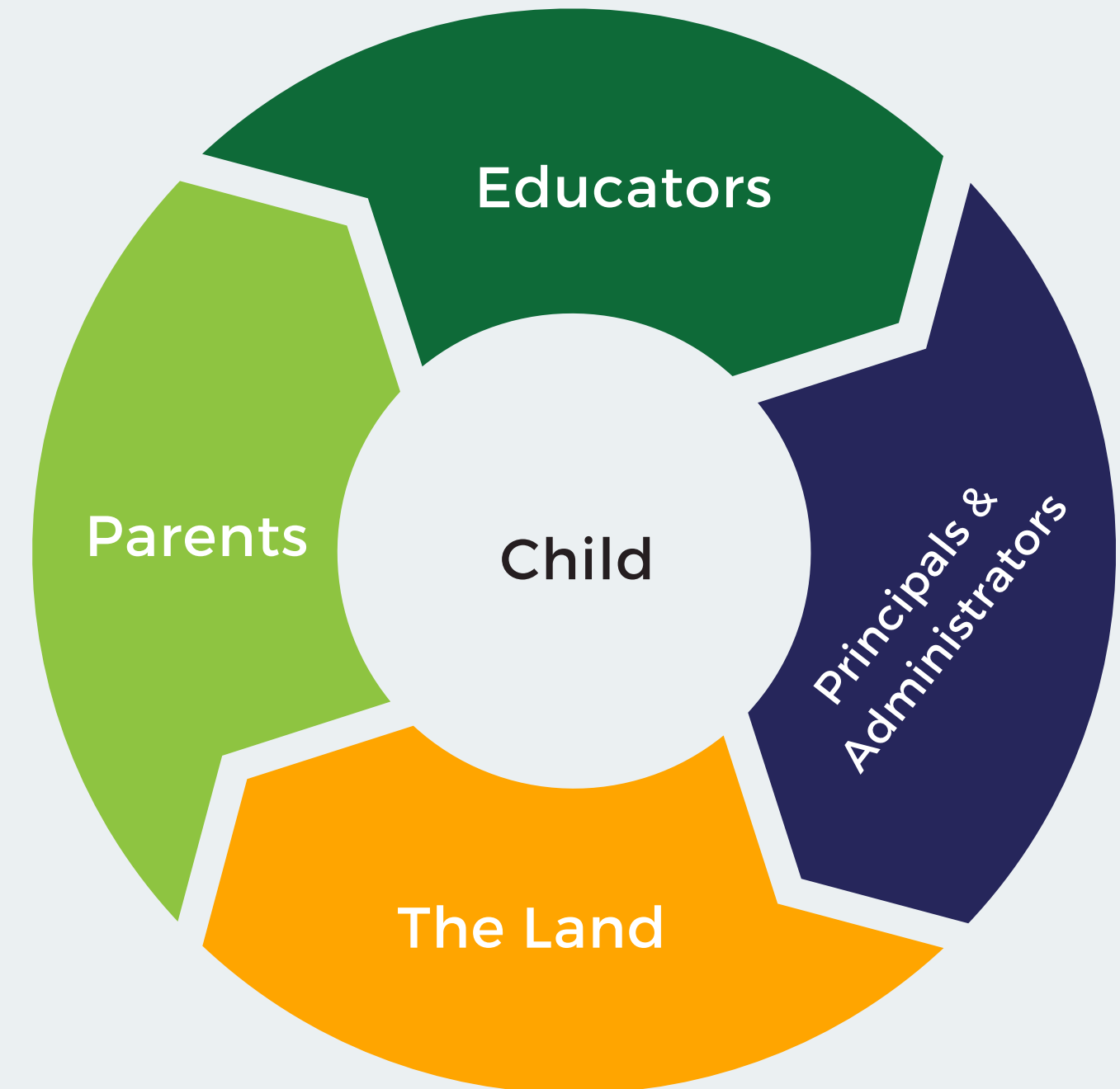
Who is Involved?

Principals & Administrators

- Develop trust with educators they support
- Ensure educators are supported and receive proper training on outdoor play and learning
- Are aware challenges and try to resource educators
- Are able to communicate value of outdoor play and champion it

The Land

- Takes care of us and offers rich learning opportunities



A photograph of a teacher and a group of children in a snowy forest. The teacher, wearing a purple beanie and glasses, is sitting on the left, holding an open book titled 'Shi-shi-etko' by Nicola I. Campbell and Kim LaFave. The book's cover features a colorful illustration of autumn leaves and a small figure. A group of about ten children, dressed in winter gear like hats, scarves, and snow jackets, are sitting on the snow-covered ground around the teacher, looking at the book. The background shows a dense forest of thin trees with snow on the ground and branches.

The Role of the Educator

The Role of the Educator

- Observe
- Ask questions
- Narrate
- Document
- Make curriculum connections
- Engage in responsive and emergent planning
- Offer tools and resources
- Navigate risk





Where Does It Happen?

Where Does It Happen?

Anywhere and everywhere!



Schoolyard



Sidewalk or Parking Lot



Tiny Patch of Grass

A group of children are building a shelter made of sticks in a snowy forest. One child is inside the shelter, while others are outside. The background shows a line of bare trees and a snow-covered ground.

When Does It Happen?

When Does It Happen?

Anytime and in all weather!

Spring



Summer



Fall



Winter



Even in winter? Yes!



<https://childnature.ca/meeting-people-where-they-are-at-in-the-winter/>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/04/parenting/kids-winter-play-outside.html>

A photograph of a young child and an adult walking on a large, weathered log in a forest. The child, on the left, is wearing a bright yellow hooded sweatshirt, dark blue pants, and blue rain boots with red and white accents. The adult, on the right, is wearing grey jeans and bright blue rain boots. The adult's hand is holding the child's hand, guiding them. The background shows a forest floor with dry leaves and tree trunks.

How to Get Started

How to Get Started

- **GO OUTSIDE AND LET KIDS PLAY!**
- **REFER TO THRIVE OUTSIDE RESOURCES** (Learn more about risky play, how to make curriculum connections and more with this free resource hub: www.childnature.ca/thriveoutside)
- **TAKE A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COURSE** (The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada offers a Forest and Nature School Practitioners Course: www.childnature.ca/forest-school-canada)



Connect with Us

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