



Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space

Enhancing Secondary School Student Engagement and Connection

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Project Report

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Table of Contents

THE EVALUATION

Introducing the Project	2
Achieving Goals & Objectives	2
Successes & Challenges	4
Impacts & Data Analysis	7
Learning	13
What Worked / What Did Not Work	14
Making a Difference / The Literature	16
Project Sustainability	20
Leading Change	21
Skills / Knowledge Developed	22
Future Learning Needs	22

APPENDICES: THE RECORD

Proposal	25
Ethics Approval Letter	39
Research Instruments	40
Departmental Approval Letter	41
Dissemination Plan	43
Data Samples	47
Examples of Prototyping	48
References	54

Project Presentation: [Click here for YouTube link](#)

THE EVALUATION

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT

Selkirk Secondary School is located in Kimberley, on the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa nation, at the edge of the Rocky Mountains in the East Kootenay region of British Columbia. From its placement, there are expansive views of the nearby Purcell Mountains and the Columbia Valley Basin. Outdoor recreation and connection to nature are an important element to the lifestyle of many residents living in this progressive community. Within the relatively small and growing community, the high school offers a vibrant hub full of innovative ideas and pursuits that reflect 21st century learning.

Despite easy access to incredible outdoor opportunities and an increasing focus in helping to facilitate outdoor learning from both the provincial and regional level, Selkirk Secondary does not currently have an accessible outdoor learning space designed to help engage students through outdoor learning. Recognizing this need, this project set out to research the desire, viability and elements that would most be sought by all involved stakeholders in helping guide the establishment of any potential accessible outdoor learning space. I will share my design journey in discovering what captures stakeholders interest and vision in designing a sustainable outdoor learning space together.

ACHIEVING GOALS & OBJECTIVES

PROJECT GOALS☒ - The goals of this research project were to:

- . Explore the viability of establishing an outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary
- . Inquire as to what level of engagement relevant stakeholders are willing to participate in in order to help collaboratively create an outdoor learning space

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- . Explore options and examine the benefits of collaborative design in relation to the creation of an outdoor learning space
- . Question students and teachers as to what elements would be most beneficial to include in an outdoor ☒learning space in order to make outdoor learning enticing and effective
- . Organize feedback from students and teachers to reflect what helps facilitate outdoor learning from their varying perspectives
- . Tabulate results from interviews and questionnaires to help guide the design of an outdoor learning space

☒The objective of the research was to tabulate and reflect on the data of the project to clearly outline the viability, potential benefits and options for an outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary. Fifty students in grade eight and grade ten humanities classes at Selkirk Secondary, along with up to twenty teachers were requested to complete a survey, on paper or via an online questionnaire. As a collaborative initiative, these sample groups were selected as they are most likely to benefit from a potential outdoor learning space on site in the long term. Responses were tabulated and analyzed in order to draw out ideas, patterns, similarities and common visions.

In moving from the design to implementation phases, the objective was focused around providing feedback from surveys to school and senior district administration in order to help support the future development of an outdoor learning space. This concrete plan will be of benefit in preparing grant proposals and in obtaining community support for the proposed project. Ultimately, the hope was that the research could help provide all stakeholders a voice in co-creating an outdoor learning space that reflects their needs, is more accessible and increases outdoor learning opportunities.

☒The long-term success and sustainability of an outdoor learning space at a secondary school requires this well- established plan. The project was able to achieve these intended goals, adapting through the process in order to equip students and educators with relevant experiences that would provide more authentic feedback.

This research is meant to support the beginnings of this process by gaining insights into what helps facilitate outdoor learning and what elements would be of most benefit in an outdoor learning space. In reflecting on what I set out to do, I realize that in this project the journey will be as important as any learning space in the long term. I quickly learned that it is the outdoor learning culture that needs to be addressed, both in students and educators. An important focus became promoting outdoor learning culture. In bringing students out to nearby spaces and showing potential options for outdoor learning spaces, discussions surrounded what outdoor learning entails. This significant focus area refocused the goals and objects, as I noted the important step missing in conversations around outdoor learning spaces. With educators, discussions surrounded local options and sharing examples so that they had a reference point to share their visions through.

SUCSESSES & CHALLENGES

The evolution of the Selkirk Outdoor Learning Space as a collaboratively designed sustainable project has been met with many successes. The project proposal has been met with enthusiasm from all levels, including both junior and senior level students, teaching staff, educational assistants, school administration and senior district level administration. This has been reflected through engagement in the created surveys and feedback and discussions that followed outdoor learning experiences and group brainstorming sessions. The objective of the survey was to target fifty students yet sixty-five students responded, offering a greater sample size to draw design from. This is indicative of the level of interest within the student body and if the survey had been offered to more students there likely would be even greater interest.

Another success was providing students with opportunities to experience outdoor learning. This was met with great enthusiasm from the majority of students. It allowed them to understand and think differently while also inspiring myself and students with regard to the potential that outdoor learning holds.

Early in the process I was able to sit down with my senior district administration and school administration team. They demonstrated an interest and expressed support in helping bring this vision forward, especially in the engagement that can be brought forward by outdoor learning opportunities. This reinforces my districts commitment to outdoor learning. School administration was keen to receive feedback from the surveys, specifically with regard to whether students and staff preferred the vision of a mobile or established outdoor learning space. The success here was in initiating the project and finding support in designing a collaborative outdoor learning space for student engagement.

An important strength in promoting a collaborative vision was to use the creation of an outdoor learning space as a tool for furthering student engagement. Early experiments in empowering students through this process have demonstrated a greater level of student engagement. Prior to engaging grade ten humanities students in the student survey, they were offered the opportunity to prepare and present their year-end summative action projects outdoors. The level of student engagement and positive feedback spoke to the potential that such an opportunity presents. Collaboration was a significant success as interested staff members met for discussion sessions and vision sharing. Students transitioning from elementary to secondary are often met with a reduction in outdoor learning opportunities. Supporting student transitions through an outdoor learning space was a success in gaining understanding into the significant local benefits drawn from creating a space such as this. This collaboration supported the greater engagement of students, teachers, administrative support and district support. Curricular links were also explored by the diverse specializations of the collaborative team. Results from the surveys indicated a high level of support for greater opportunities for

outdoor learning and the creation of the established outdoor learning space within close proximity of the school. Please see Impact section for further information on survey results.

Challenges included a lack of comprehension from students with regard to what getting outside *for* learning entails. I quickly realized that before moving forward, I needed to inform them and educate students about outdoor learning. I realize the need to develop the culture around outdoor learning and engagement outdoors. For a long time students have been moving outdoors but we needed to reflect on how to go outside for effective learning. In order to obtain useful feedback with regard to elements that they would like to see incorporated into potential design, students needed to be given examples and time to foster their creativity. During initial phases in the design process, in moving outside, seating was identified as an important element to integrate into any outdoor learning space as it could help facilitate focus in learning outdoors. However, the vision surrounded what little they already knew or what was at their immediate disposal. They were unable to see beyond what was already present. For example, in a current accessible space where there are discarded cement barricades, they suggested more discarded cement barricades as further seating options rather than suggesting more natural alternatives.

I managed these challenges by shifting my focus and planning to respond to this. We paused, brainstormed together, shared examples of outdoor learning spaces, and moved to several local options. We drew from their past experiences, as many have experienced learning in outdoor spaces at the elementary or middle school levels. A primary focus in this was reinforcing the notion that moving outside should also incorporate learning outside.

The sustainability of the project is also an important challenge in the sense that long term thinking must be incorporated into any potential plan. Part of this challenge was trying to match my project timelines to

the process. It was important not to limit creativity or opportunities for collaboration because of tight timelines. In seeking to develop a long term plan for an outdoor learning space it was important to value the planning phase and recognize that as much as I wanted to put boots to the ground and physically create a space, this would not allow for the extensive feedback and collaboration the shared vision required. The long term payoff of spending the time to design an outdoor learning space supports a true reflection of the collaborative and sustainable goals of this project. This requires additional planning, particularly with regard to creating a space that requires minimal care and costs from the maintenance/ operations department. Maintenance and operations hold a significant role in the approval of such a project and including their feedback is essential in moving forward with any plans. Therefore, future planning must prioritize the creation of a low maintenance design that is optimal to all parties.

While generally supportive of the initiative, school administration has requested that in the research phase any language being used reflect the notion of ‘possibilities’ so as to not create a potential sense of false hope prior to full approval at all levels of the school district. This is due in part to the concern over a potential rebuild and not wanting to invest in a project that could potentially have a short term benefit. This level of retisense and its associated unknowns have the potential to compromise the commitment from the school, district administration, along with potential donors and volunteers.

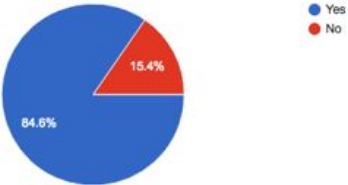
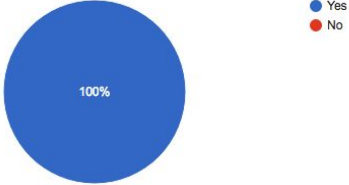
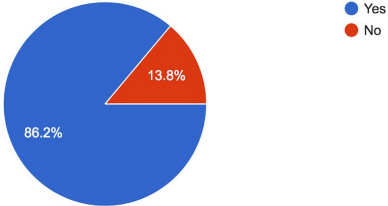
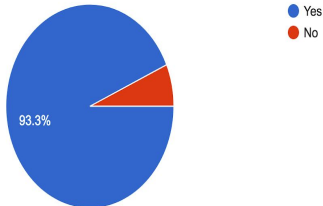
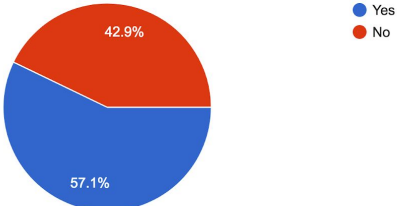
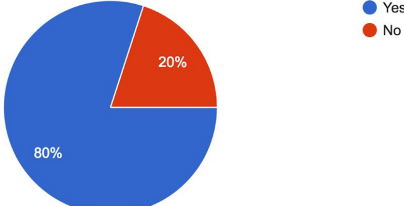
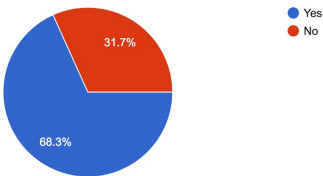
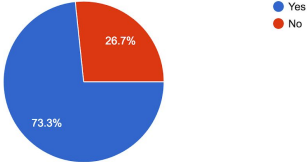
IMPACTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

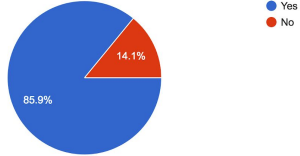
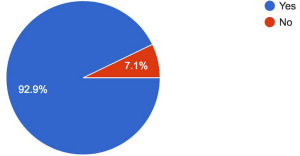
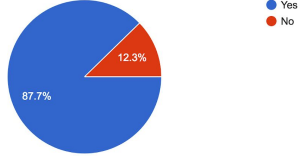
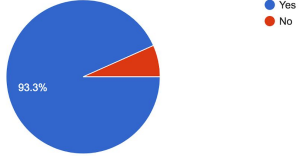
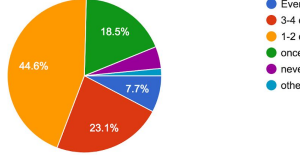
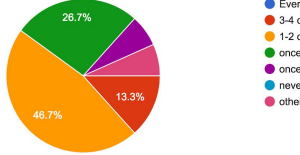
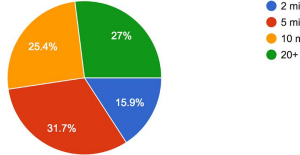
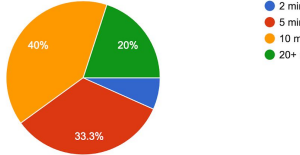
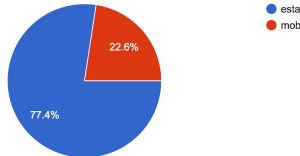
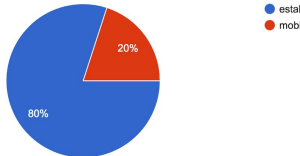
In visioning towards the future, the development of an accessible outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary has the potential to be the catalyst to help design a sustainable, living school, that puts outdoor learning at the forefront of design. Following a series of outdoor learning opportunities to provide and context and experience, students and staff were asked for feedback through a guided survey. Survey results provided valuable, positive feedback at all levels and a distinct desire for greater outdoor learning opportunities through

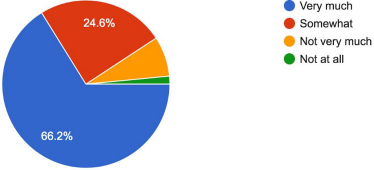
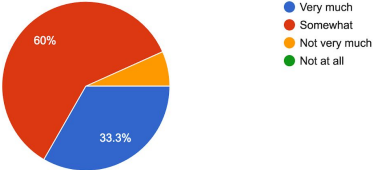
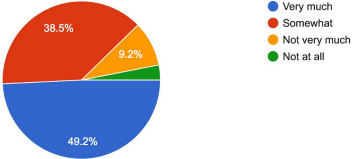
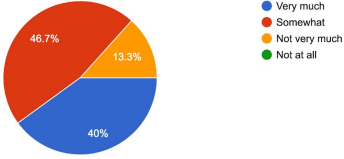
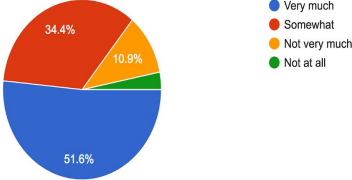
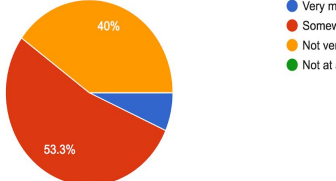
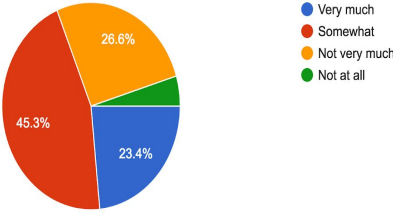
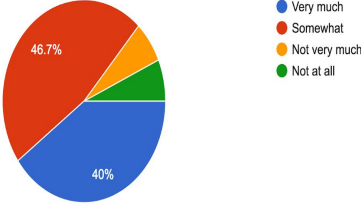
established spaces. Analysis of the data, illustrated a distinct desire from both students and teaching staff to increase the ability and frequency for outdoor learning opportunities. One hundred percent of teacher respondents and 84.6% of student respondents felt that having an outdoor learning space would improve the school (see page 9). A significant majority of students and teachers expressed how outdoor learning opportunities made lessons more enjoyable and increased their overall level of happiness and health. The majority of both teachers (46.7%) and students (44.6%) expressed an interest in going outside for learning one to two days per week. Of particular relevance with regard to school and district support in terms of resources was the feedback that strongly supported the creation of an established space (77.4% of students and 80% of teachers) over mobile spaces. Proximity and accessibility were highlighted as priorities with the majority of respondents favouring a space located within five to ten minutes walking distance. Feedback with regard to key elements will help in prioritizing features most desired in an established outdoor learning space.

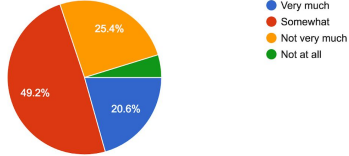
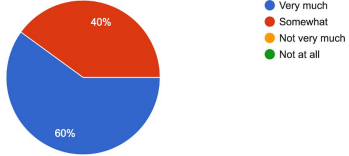
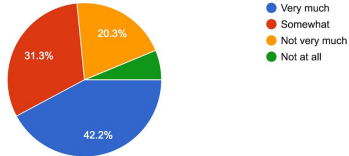
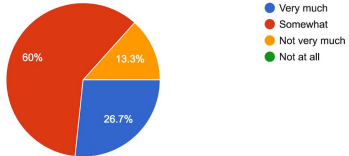
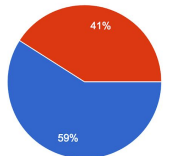
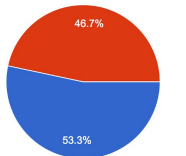
Ultimately the data from this survey along with responses shared during planning and brainstorming sessions will help in designing a sustainable space, that can promote and provide regular usage and enhance the opportunity for effective learning outdoors. Feedback and enthusiasm on the part of the various stakeholders will also help facilitate helping foster the required elements needed to help develop a greater culture of outdoor learning for both educators and students.



STUDENT RESPONSES	TEACHER RESPONSES												
Do you think having an outdoor learning space would improve our school? 65 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>84.6%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>15.4%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	84.6%	No	15.4%	Do you think having an outdoor learning space would improve our school? 15 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	100%	No	0%
Response	Percentage												
Yes	84.6%												
No	15.4%												
Response	Percentage												
Yes	100%												
No	0%												
Do you enjoy going outside for learning? 65 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>86.2%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>13.8%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	86.2%	No	13.8%	Are you interested in increasing outdoor learning opportunities in your teaching? 15 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>93.3%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>6.7%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	93.3%	No	6.7%
Response	Percentage												
Yes	86.2%												
No	13.8%												
Response	Percentage												
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No	6.7%												
Do you engage more with learning outdoors? 63 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>57.1%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>42.9%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	57.1%	No	42.9%	Do you feel you can teach your curriculum outdoors? 15 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>80%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>20%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	80%	No	20%
Response	Percentage												
Yes	57.1%												
No	42.9%												
Response	Percentage												
Yes	80%												
No	20%												
Do you feel you can get along better/ collaborate better with others outdoors? 63 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>68.3%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>31.7%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	68.3%	No	31.7%	Do you need support in identifying curriculum or developing lessons to use with your classes outdoors? 15 responses  <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Yes</td><td>73.3%</td></tr><tr><td>No</td><td>26.7%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	Yes	73.3%	No	26.7%
Response	Percentage												
Yes	68.3%												
No	31.7%												
Response	Percentage												
Yes	73.3%												
No	26.7%												

STUDENT RESPONSES	TEACHER RESPONSES
Does outdoor learning make learning/lessons more enjoyable? 64 responses  Yes No	Does teaching outdoors make lessons more enjoyable? 14 responses  Yes No
Do you feel happier and/or healthier learning outdoors? 65 responses  Yes No	Do you feel happier and/or healthier teaching outdoors? 15 responses  Yes No
How often would you like to have the opportunity for outdoor learning? 65 responses  Everyday 3-4 days a week 1-2 days a week once every 2 weeks never other	How often would you like to provide the opportunity for outdoor learning? 15 responses  Everyday 3-4 days a week 1-2 days a week once every 2 weeks once a month never other
How far from school are you willing to walk to access an outdoor learning space? 63 responses  2 minutes 5 minutes 10 minutes 20+ minutes	How far from school are you willing to walk to access an outdoor learning space? 15 responses  2 minutes 5 minutes 10 minutes 20+ minutes
Would you prefer an established outdoor learning space or a mobile learning space? 62 responses  established space mobile learning space	Would you prefer an established outdoor learning space or a mobile learning space? 15 responses  established space mobile learning space

STUDENT RESPONSES	TEACHER RESPONSES
How important are the following features?: Seating 65 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all	How important to you are the following features in an outdoor learning space?: Seating 15 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all
How important are the following features?: Shelter (rain, sun, wind, snow) 65 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all	How important to you are the following features?: Shelter (rain, sun, wind, snow) 15 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all
How important are the following features?: Writing surfaces (ex. tables) 64 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all	How important to you are the following features?: Writing surfaces (ex. tables) 15 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all
How important are the following features?: Trails/ access to trails 64 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all	How important to you are the following features?: Trails/ access to trails 15 responses  ● Very much ● Somewhat ● Not very much ● Not at all

STUDENT RESPONSES	TEACHER RESPONSES
How important are the following features?: a central learning space / space to gather as a whole class 63 responses  - Very much - Somewhat - Not very much - Not at all	How important to you are the following features?: a central learning space / space to gather as a whole class 15 responses  - Very much - Somewhat - Not very much - Not at all
How important are the following features?: independent learning space/ space to think, learn, work on your own 64 responses  - Very much - Somewhat - Not very much - Not at all	How important to you are the following features?: independent learning space/ space to think, learn, work on your own 15 responses  - Very much - Somewhat - Not very much - Not at all
Would you like to have your say and be a part of the planning process of a potential outdoor learning classroom? 61 responses  - Yes - No	Would you like to be a part of the planning process of a potential outdoor learning classroom? 15 responses  - Yes - No
What do you most appreciate about learning outdoors? 59 responses - fresh air - the sun - the fresh air - It's not a stuffy classroom. - that i can't get headaches from loudness - Just being outside and having fresh air. - The white noise - it's not crammed - wind and the temperature - how quiet it is - bird songs - the wilderness	What other elements would help you get outside for learning? 8 responses - more of an outdoor learning culture - time - nature based learning/experiential learning opportunities - students being prepared for all-weather conditions - admin support, professional development time - not sure - Better curricular connections - Just beyond viability of the school so it feels like you are in a different space, if possible

LEARNING

Design thinking has seen me adapt the seemingly simple task of creating a questionnaire that would provide data on how to best support outdoor learning to examining how to help create a school culture that promotes and values regular outdoor learning at the secondary level. It was important to recognize that all research carries with it an inherent bias and therefore continually question and view it from the macro lens of what is the overarching purpose of the study. Through the process I continually questioned whether it is to bring forward my vision of outdoor learning spaces, to satisfy/support the vision of our school administration and district with regard to meeting outdoor and place based learning objectives, or simply to support getting more students outdoors, regardless of the structure or form.

My true learning is that it is not really about the space, but if and how it is used. If a community is built around outdoor learning, and students feel safe to learn there, then this project meets my vision for success. The issue is much bigger than the space. It requires re-designing lessons and awakening teachers and students about how to learn curricular elements outside. For many this requires a philosophical shift. My learning here is that we have a responsibility to support students in this capacity. Student learning culture has mainly been supported indoors in Western education for generations. Shifting student perspectives around learning opportunities and engagement outdoors requires a focus in itself. While experimentation is important, creating positive outdoor experiences is key in helping guide teachers and students in this direction.

In order to effectively brainstorm ideas and put the questionnaire and project in context it became very evident that students must first experience outdoor learning in a variety of contexts. Supporting students to think beyond their norm required exposing students to a variety of lessons, in a variety of locations, and

embedding a variety of features so that they could vision the potential for an outdoor learning space and express what an ideal vision of outdoor learning looked most like to them.

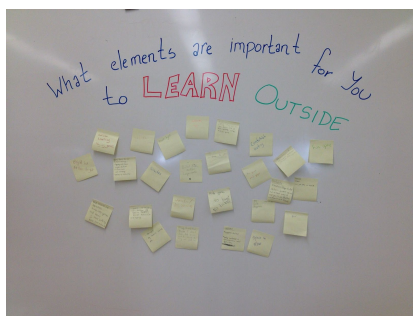
WHAT WORKED / WHAT DID NOT WORK

Research and feedback related to the creation of an outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary provided tangible data that clearly illustrates the perspectives, wants and needs of both teaching staff and students. This information will be particularly useful in seeking further support from school and district administration in order to help facilitate moving forward with this project as well as helping design a sustainable and collaboratively designed space.

Obtaining the data required multiple adaptations in order for the information to be both truly reflective of stakeholder interests and useful in helping design an optimal sustainable space. In order to enhance authenticity and relevance of responses, it was important to provide students with an opportunity to experience outdoor learning in a variety of different contexts. Furthermore, time was spent outdoors exploring and re-visiting sites that can or have been used for outdoor learning and feature elements, such as natural or created depressions that help facilitate seating and group learning.



Group brainstorming sessions, coupled with presentations on potential options helped create a vision and equip respondents with a better sense of what might be most important to them. Ultimately, engaging



students and empowering them to be a part of the process has resulted in a greater level of engagement and ownership. The hope is that this will persist as the project moves forward and that the power in being involved in this project will enhance overall student engagement in learning through an outdoor space. A far better vision as to how we can

best go about creating a collaboratively designed outdoor learning space that reflects the true needs and wants of all interested parties has emerged.



While profiling these spaces was somewhat effective in order to help illustrate potential elements, outdoor learning opportunities failed to effectively show all students the true power that learning in an outside environment can hold. Time limitations, unfamiliarity with the various spaces and logistics in creating an outdoor learning class culture prevented learning opportunities to truly delve into the power that spaces can hold in promoting place-based learning. Outdoor learning requires specific strategies and resources in order to extend learning to benefit from the natural environment and not merely teach class designed lessons in an outdoor space. Consequently when classes were placed in an unfamiliar environment for learning, student buy-in was harder to achieve and overall learning was not always achieved. Pushing students beyond their perceived

comfort zones for learning requires trust and experience. A certain level of focus is required to maximize the benefits. It was interesting to note that when asked which classes they would most like to spend time learning outdoors in, the majority of students only responded with classes which typically offer these opportunities. I suspect that with increased exposure to outdoor learning, students will feel more at ease in learning outdoors and transition to more effective learning throughout the curriculum. A related identified need is further professional development work to increase and support educator comfort in teaching in an outdoor space.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - THE LITERATURE

Differences made are evident in the literature review process. Momentum towards an outdoor learning community and culture has been created with strong support towards establishing an outdoor learning space. Interest is in part due to an extensive review of both the benefits as well as innovative existing spaces. Outdoor learning has been recognized and put to the forefront. There have been greater opportunities for this and research has demonstrated a strong promotion to enhance opportunities and engage learning through an established outdoor learning space. The human and more than human benefits to outdoor learning and nature based programming are far reaching and include improved learning, comprehension and retention of concepts, enhanced appreciation and comprehension of the outdoors and sustainability education, far reaching health benefits as well as deeper sustainability long term thinking and connections (Focus on Forests, ND).

The municipal government has increasingly embedded sustainability initiatives into my local town planning, and nature-based programming is an important focus in local elementary schools. Local organizations that strive to promote outdoor learning, including the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) and Wildsight, are well established with local elementary schools and their diverse programming is

familiar to students. As part of the newly released District Directions 2023, the Rocky Mountain School District (SD6) has committed their support towards “learning that is place-based, outdoors, and focused on environmental stewardship” (Rocky Mountain School District 6, 2019). I came to understand that this project is mostly about the connections made, benefits found, and engagement that this space can support. This is further supported by the newly re-designed British Columbia Curriculum, that recognizes the importance of cross-curricular learning and a greater focus on comprehending big ideas that reflect sustainability throughout the curriculum (Province of British Columbia, 2018). School aged students are spending more time indoors than in any other time in history. Research recognizes that this has become a public health concern (Largo-Wight et al., 2018). Along with learning outdoors comes a long list of health and learning benefits such as increased focus, self-regulation, increased concentration, increased immunity, and increased general health and well-being (Largo-Wight et al., 2018).

Due to a variety of reasons, opportunities for cross-curricular and outdoor learning are often less frequent at the secondary school level. In the face of apathy and lack of motivation often associated with teenage learning and societal resistance towards sustainable lifestyle shifts, modern neurophysiology studies examining the importance of emotions in learning have illustrated the strength of young people’s emotional commitment to the living world and the environment (Young, 2015). Meanwhile, project based learning, health and well-being are supported by outdoor learning. Increasing student engagement comes hand in hand with student involvement in their learning space. Gregory, and Kaufeldt describe the ‘seeking’ process, where engagement comes from the process, rather than outcomes (2015). It is therefore in the process that students must be involved throughout for deeper engagement in their future space. “When triggered, the seeking system generates enthusiasm excitement and anticipation...This expectancy feeling is entirely different from the pleasure of *consumption* that is felt when we have found the necessities to meet our needs. This seeking system

is believed to generate and sustain curiosity and motivation” (Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015, p. 40). The positive feedback loop that results from connections between positive psychology and sustainability suggests that an outdoor learning space is a key tool for engaging, fostering and expanding student empowerment (Largo-Wight et al., 2018). Inspiring deep learning that promotes health and well-being for all requires sustainably engaging students; motivating and inspiring students to want to engage in rigorous tasks (Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015). Engaging all relevant stakeholders in the design of an accessible outdoor learning space, within close proximity to the school that can be regularly accessed could provide relevant learning opportunities and participation towards solution based approaches for a sustainable future. In its many different cross-curricular forms, it also has the ability to enhance student motivation and offer a possible solution to what UNESCO identified in 2015 as a “global learning crisis” (O’Brien, 2016, p.206).

Outdoor learning spaces bring students closer to nature and offer benefits for mental health and well-being (Largo-Wight et al., 2018). Outdoor spaces bring a host of benefits for health such as improved cognitive function, mental stamina, focus, and relaxation (Bratman, Daily, Levy, & Gross (2015); Ulrich, (1983). As studies represented clear benefits, the next consideration towards creating a meaningful space is student engagement. Collaboration with students throughout the process has been found to be key in engagement. However the imagination needed to be fostered in order to extend ideas of what potential a space could offer. Here, the engagement factor was noticed as students became increasingly invested in their space. They were more open to moving outside for learning and quick to engage there. I noticed evidence that becoming part of the planning process improved engagement as I read in Gregory and Kaufeldt’s book, but I next wondered if learning engagement would be improved (2015). Research shows many examples depicting increased academic performance and critical and creative thinking skills. Beyond this, increased focus comes with a reduction in symptoms related to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder from being in nature. Along with greater

engagement in learning comes with decreased behaviours (Children & Nature Network, 2019). Additionally, indoor lessons subsequent to outdoor learning increases engagement, concentration, academic performance, and behaviours (Kuo, Browning, & Penner, 2018). Meaningful benefits far exceeded those of learning engagement as they promote approaches for sustainability education as well. Engagement in Indigenous ways of knowing, place-based learning, and stewardship are some of the additional benefits found in learning in an outdoor learning space (Children & Nature Network, 2019). Research shares how student involvement supports their comprehension, initiative and responses to important issues such as privatization, climate crisis, and environmental injustice (McRuer, Zethelius, 2017). With leadership, students are capable of creating strong connections to teachers and the space through creating their outdoor classroom. These ties often support them in extended their learning to other stewardship projects to support their area (DuBois, Krasny, Smith, 2018). Spaces that are repurposed, such as the proposed site of Selkirk Secondary's abandoned parking lot offer increases in active use, connection, and engagement with nature (Anderson, Ruggeri, Steemers, Huppert, 2017). As students gain awareness in their outdoor learning space they can appreciate the surrounding natural area and gain a desire to care for it (Anderson, Ruggeri, Steemers, Huppert, 2017).

Clear frameworks supporting the process and design in creating an outdoor learning space have also made a difference in this project. Developing a site in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders requires clear communication as to the process (LEAF, 2012). Strategies and guides for building an outdoor learning space support stakeholder imagination to be unlimited in achieving goals associated with the project. For all voices to be shared, it is important that the process is clearly defined so that they may imagine their roles (Anderson, Ruggeri, Steemers, Huppert, 2017). By offering this framework to my students and colleagues I guided them towards understanding what part they will play in the overall design. This is particularly meaningful in offering leadership opportunities to youth that are excited to bring their ideas to fruition.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

The Selkirk Outdoor Learning Space project has placed sustainability at the forefront of its design. Conceptually a key target of the project is to foster and value collaboration from all of those who may be involved in the creation and utilization of the space. As such, the project sought to collect feedback from students, staff and administrators so as to help develop a vision that reflected the hopes and dreams of all interested parties. In helping plan the creation of the project, the goal was to increase the level of engagement throughout the process of creating and eventually utilizing the space. The vision for the project should therefore not be of only one person, therefore ensuring its sustainability.

Promoting a space for outdoor learning inherently also provides an opportunity to connect with the land and profile sustainable initiatives. In creating an outdoor learning space the hope is to integrate design elements that reflect environmental consciousness and promote more sustainable practices. Examples include low maintenance landscaping features that require little or no irrigation, the inclusion of indigenous plant species, and design components that make effective use of natural light and offer natural protection from outdoor weather elements. The Aboriginal Education department at the school has expressed a keen interest in being a part of the project and offer their wisdom.

Helping develop an outdoor learning culture at the school requires both teachers and students to make important connections that reflect key elements in sustainability. An outdoor learning space has the potential to not only teach and promote low impact practices but to be used as a model to be drawn from for any potential overall school renovations or reconstruction. With outdoor and environmental learning increasingly present in school lessons and provincial curriculum, continued support and sustainable momentum for the project should be ensured.

LEADING CHANGE

Lessons learned in leading change surround communication, collaboration, and the importance of simplicity. Communication is key in promoting ideas in ways that will be encouraging rather than overwhelming to others. One important learning is to be a listener. I learned early in my design process not to allow my vision to blind me from the ideas of others. What others have to say is important, and visions can differ. That being said, they are often stronger together. Therefore, listening together is a key beginning point.

My senior administrator made it clear that the project would gain support through inclusive wording and a team approach. This was a powerful lesson in leading change locally. An added key component to my learning about leading change is to not allow negative feedback or impediments to sway my vision or belief in my project. In certain circumstances, once a vision is past a key point, those that may have been apprehensive will join. My local learning is in the power of collaboration. There are strong creative team members eager to share in projects on my staff and accessing their excitement has been a great learning.

Simplicity is a lesson I will carry forward to future projects. Projects can easily overwhelm others if they are not able to share in the initial vision and ideas. For example, there is great power in sharing stories over sharing statistics. Honoring story has been a great learning for me as I noticed how examples and stories gained attention more quickly and helped clarify understanding. My staff did not require fancy statistics as much as they needed examples of outdoor learning spaces or success stories to be shared.

SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED

Skills gained surround the ability to ask and refine questions that can deliver useful data to bring an authentic vision forward. Adapting questions and experiences accordingly to truly recognize the wants of students and stakeholders was a key skill developed. The ability to liaison between the varying parties that will support the vision will help it become a reality. To communicate effectively between senior and school administration and students was extremely important in ensuring that a clear vision for all was being established. Differences, whether they relate to finances, vision or maintenance concerns hold opportunity for creativity and solutions. It has been important through the process that the idea for this learning space reflect a sustainable approach that extends beyond just my vision.

I gained knowledge in the opportunities and benefits of an outdoor learning space. This knowledge acted as a reminder that outdoor learning is not only about space, but really about the culture. It does not matter if a space is fancy or complex, but if the culture is not there to access it, it is obsolete. Teachers need to be interested and confident in order to access it. Outdoor learning requires a certain level of routines and expectations, and my knowledge gained in engaging through outdoor learning while leading change in my school have been powerful. These skills and the knowledge gained will carry me in my process forward.

FUTURE LEARNING NEEDS

The skills and knowledge gained through the design thinking process surrounded wisdom that will carry me forward in my leadership skills as a whole. I hope to be more bold and take more risks. I see calculated risk

taking as a future learning need to practice. With practice, I can gain confidence in innovation. For innovation, I also hope to continue to be more willing to try, as opposed to being frustrated by setbacks.

One future learning need that I have valued in other great leaders is to remember to question the cultural norm. Habits are powerful so if I can be a part of re-formatting habits in my school it will feel deeply meaningful. I have learned that I should not allow my own vision and drive to blind me of other visions and ways of thinking. Lastly, I hope to not limit creativity, and always remember to value kindness through a project.

APPENDICES: THE RECORD

As much as I wanted to put boots to the ground and physically create a space, this would not allow for the extensive feedback and collaboration a shared vision requires.

PROPOSAL

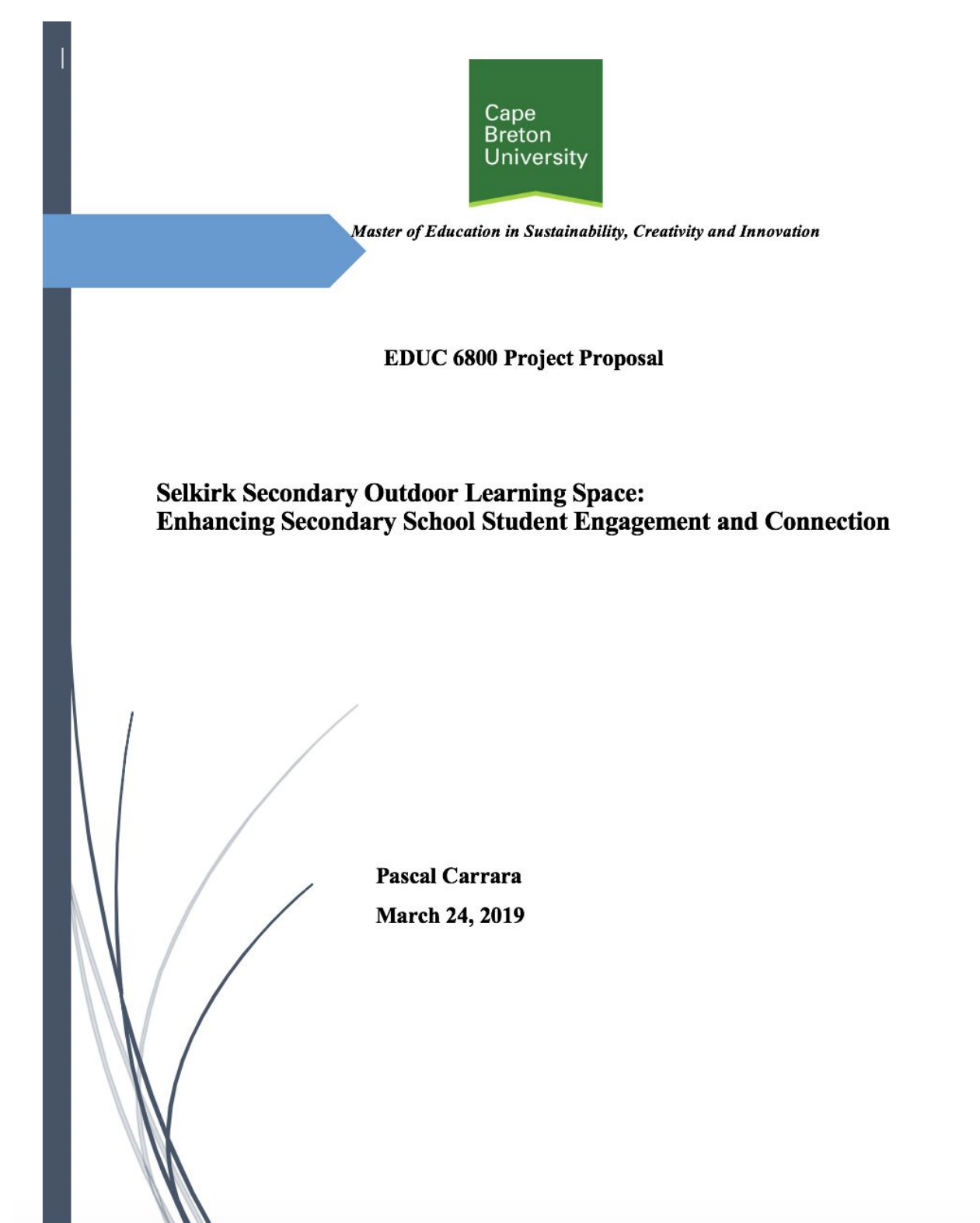


TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SUMMARY 2

- 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 2
- 1.2 DEFINING THE PROJECT 2
- 1.3 EVIDENCE OF COMPELLING NEEDS 2-3
- 1.4 CONSIDERING THE LITERATURE 3
- 1.5 MEETING GOALS AND COMPETENCIES FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY 3-4

CHAPTER 2: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 4

- 2.1 GOALS 4
- 2.2 OBJECTIVES 4-5

CHAPTER 3: BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS 5

- 3.1 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY 5
- 3.2 BARRIERS, CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES 5-6

CHAPTER 4: PROPOSED TIMELINES 6

- 4.1 TIMELINES AND METHODS 6-7
- 4.2 RESOURCES FOR GUIDANCE 7
- 4.3 COMMUNICATION AND EVALUATION 7
- 4.4 NEXT STEPS 7

APPENDICES 8

- A REFERENCES 8
- B BIBLIOGRAPHY OF POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FURTHER CONSULT 8-10
- C DISTRICT APPROVAL LETTER 10

Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space: Enhancing Secondary School Student Engagement and Connection

CHAPTER 1: PROJECT SUMMARY

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

How might we establish an accessible outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary School that will enhance student engagement and nature connection?

Creating an outdoor learning space that reflects these goals is a multi-step process. As such, the research questioning is scaffolded as follows:

- does an outdoor classroom make sense for our school?
- what elements are most sought out by educators and students that can make outdoor learning successful?
- how can the design process and implementation of such a project reflect a collaborative endeavor?
- how can this project enhance student engagement related to sustainability education?

1.2 DEFINING THE PROJECT

This project seeks to research the viability and elements that would be most sought after by all involved stakeholders in order to help guide the design of a potential outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary School. The long-term success and sustainability of an outdoor learning space at a secondary school requires a well-established plan that recognizes the importance of the design, varying options, funding, available resources, construction, implementation, maintenance and effective utilization of the space. This research is meant to support the beginnings of this process by gaining insights into what helps facilitate outdoor learning and what elements would be of most benefit in an outdoor learning space.

The success of this project depends on providing the multiple stakeholders an opportunity to share their thoughts and vision. A focus of the project will be to enhance ownership and connection to local place. Stakeholders include students, teachers, the aboriginal education department, school administration, the operations /maintenance department, and senior school district administration.

Initial feedback for this project will be requested from students and teachers through a thirteen-question interview, conversationally or via an email questionnaire. Participants will be explained the intent of the research and informed through a written letter of consent before taking part in the research.

Research will be used to write a final reflective project (Final Report) and to provide feedback to school and senior district administration in order to help support the future development of an outdoor learning space.

1.3 EVIDENCE OF COMPELLING NEEDS

Selkirk Secondary School is located in Kimberley, at the edge of the Rocky Mountains in the East Kootenay region of British Columbia. From its placement, there are expansive views of the nearby Purcell Mountains and the Columbia Valley Basin and direct access to the Lois Creek trail network. Outdoor recreation and connection to nature are an important element to the lifestyle of many residents living in this progressive community. The municipal government has increasingly embedded sustainability initiatives into the town plan, and nature-based programming is an important focus in local elementary schools. Local organizations that strive to promote outdoor learning, including the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) and Wildsight, are well established with local elementary schools and their diverse programming is familiar to students.

As part of the newly released District Directions 2023, the Rocky Mountain School District (SD6) has committed their support towards “learning that is place-based, outdoors, and focused on environmental stewardship” (Rocky Mountain School District 6, 2019). This is further supported by the newly re-designed British Columbia Curriculum, that recognizes the importance of cross-curricular learning and a greater focus on comprehending big ideas that reflect sustainability throughout the curriculum (Province of British Columbia, 2018).

The benefits to outdoor learning and nature based programming are far reaching and include improved learning, comprehension and retention of concepts, enhanced appreciation and comprehension of the outdoors and sustainability education and far reaching health benefits (Focus on Forests, ND).

Due to a variety of reasons, opportunities for cross-curricular and outdoor learning are often less frequent at the secondary school level. In the face of apathy and despair often associated with teenage learning and societal resistance towards sustainable lifestyle shifts, modern neurophysiology studies examining the importance of emotions in learning have illustrated the strength of young people’s emotional commitment to the living world and the environment (Young, 2015). Inspiring deep learning that promotes health and well-being for all requires

sustainably engaging students; motivating and inspiring students to want to engage in rigorous tasks (Gregory & Kaufeldt, 2015).

Engaging all relevant stakeholders in the design of an accessible outdoor learning space, within close proximity to the school that can be regularly accessed could provide relevant learning opportunities and participation towards solution based approaches for a sustainable future. In its many different cross-curricular forms, it also has the ability to enhance student motivation and offer a possible solution to what UNESCO identified in 2015 as a “global learning crisis” (O’Brien, 2016, p.206).

1.4 CONSIDERING THE LITERATURE

A variety of bodies of literature will help support the research related to this multi-disciplinary study. Specific focus on the benefits of outdoor learning, strategies and guides for building outdoor classrooms, approaches to Sustainability Education, student engagement, project based learning and health and well-being at the high school level help frame the study. The positive feedback loop that results from connections between positive psychology and sustainability will be explored as a tool for engaging, fostering and expanding student empowerment. See Appendices A and B.

While the interconnected nature of Sustainability Education provides a myriad of opportunities, its breadth and scope can render its application both daunting and challenging. Finding tangible applications in the form of existing projects and student led action projects has the potential to enhance the efficacy of this learning. Local and relevant examples along with already proposed projects will be explored to help foster ideas and apply their learnings.

Feedback from the questionnaires along with ensuing interviews from those who have previous or relevant experience with similar projects will help guide the reflection and recommendations written into the final reflective project.

1.5 MEETING GOALS AND COMPETENCIES FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Since the launch of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in 2005, educators have been increasingly looked upon in order to lead the integration of

health and sustainability issues in the curriculum (Sjerps-Jones, 2007). Sustainability Education (SE) is a key component integrated throughout British Columbia's New Curriculum.

The term 'sustainability' has increasingly become utilized in school course listings and district mission statements due to an increased demand and movement towards solution based K-12 education (Warner & Elser, 2015). Sustainability Education seeks to enrich understanding and proactive solution based thinking. Transitioning toward a more sustainable future requires expanding traditional curriculum and engaging students through programs that enable them to learn through the real world and create real change (Warner & Elser, 2015).

The benefits of this research have the potential to enhance connection to nature, connection between theoretical and practical curriculum and connection to place. This could create habit and behaviour changes that would positively benefit students, community and the planet. This research will ideally improve the strategies offered to students in their long-term sustainability management skills through the new B.C. curriculum. Furthermore, it may address a current void and provide a resource for secondary school educators seeking to effectively implement Sustainability Education into their practice.

CHAPTER 2: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 GOALS

The goals of this research project are as follows:

- Research the viability of establishing an outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary
- Question students and teachers as to what elements would be most beneficial to include in an outdoor learning space in order to make outdoor learning enticing and effective
- Organize feedback from students and teachers to reflect what helps facilitate outdoor learning from their varying perspectives
- Tabulate results from interviews and questionnaires to help guide the design of an outdoor learning space
- Inquire as to what level of engagement relevant stakeholders are willing to participate in in order to help collaboratively create an outdoor learning space

- Research options and share the benefits of collaborative design in relation to the creation of an outdoor learning space

The long-term success and sustainability of an outdoor learning space at a secondary school requires a well-established plan. This research is meant to support the beginnings of this process by gaining insights into what helps facilitate outdoor learning and what elements would be of most benefit in an outdoor learning space.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the research is to write a final reflective project that clearly outlines the viability, potential benefits, possibilities and options for an outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary. Up to 50 students in grade 8 and grade 10 humanities classes at Selkirk Secondary, along with up to 20 teachers will be requested to complete a thirteen-question interview, conversationally or via an email questionnaire. As a collaborative initiative, these sample groups have been selected as they are most likely to be able to participate and benefit from a potential outdoor learning space on site. Responses will be tabulated and analyzed in order to draw out ideas, patterns, similarities and common visions.

Feedback from surveys will be shared with school and senior district administration in order to help support the future development of an outdoor learning space. This concrete plan will also be of benefit in preparing grant proposals and in obtaining community support for the proposed project. Ultimately, it is hoped that the research will help provide all stakeholders a voice in co-creating an outdoor learning space that reflects their needs, is more accessible and increases outdoor learning opportunities.

CHAPTER 3: BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS

3.1 ANTICIPATED LIMITATIONS

Initiatives that have led to the design and construction of outdoor learning spaces and classrooms are increasingly commonplace. While there are commonalities that can help facilitate the building of such endeavours, each project brings with it its unique limitations. In seeking to make any possible outdoor learning spaces at Selkirk Secondary a collaborative endeavor, anticipated limitations to the research include the fact that both students and teachers may have limited experience and limited knowledge of the benefits and possibilities that can be achieved through outdoor learning. Receiving feedback related to the dreams and visions of a potential

outdoor learning space requires a certain level of experience with or understanding related to outdoor learning. Being able to express a practical vision may require further exposure to outdoor learning at the secondary level, beyond the traditional streams such as outdoor and physical education. Furthermore, it will be important to provide the opportunity for feedback from those who have more limited experience and comfort learning outdoors as this may provide the ideal opportunity to enable this learning for all.

As a voluntary survey that requires the completion and return of an Informed Letter of Consent, the results and data will be dependent on the number of completed forms. Ensuring student and staff buy-in and engagement will require both reminders and exposure to potential impacts of the survey.

In order for the data to be of most benefit, it is important to stream the response options on questionnaires so that results/ feedback can be compared. Formulating the questions to ensure that any biases are accounted for and acknowledged in the final reflective analysis is important. Finding a way to value any trends along with a range of potential varying perspectives or visions will be key to ensure the authenticity of the research.

The relatively short application and observation window may make for a difficult analysis of potential long-term impacts.

3.2 BARRIERS, CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES

In the document *Building Outdoor Classrooms: A guide for successful fundraising*, Focus on Forests (ND) list the top five reasons why outdoor classrooms fail as:

1. Lack of a maintenance plan and upkeep
2. Teachers unsure or unable to incorporate usage into lessons
3. Inadequate funding
4. Vandalism
5. School expansion or relocation

(Focus on Forest, ND, p.3)

Initial research, discussion with school administration, and feedback from mentors with related experience have echoed these similar primary concerns. Many of these elements are interdependent and hesitancy or resistance on the part of school and district administration in fully supporting a proposed outdoor learning classroom is partly due to the fact that the current high school is dated and has been slated for a re-build. An official timeline has yet to be determined. Investing and supporting a major structure is unlikely with so many uncertainties related to location and design of the high school itself.

In response to these concerns, barriers and constraints, research proposals and related elements have been adapted accordingly. Language that reflects the possibility of diverse models that support outdoor learning has been intentionally selected. Administration has requested that any research related to potential outdoor learning spaces not provide students and staff with false hope. As a collaborative vision, research is designed to help express what may best render outdoor learning accessible and including the potential for differing visions. This includes the possibility of facilitating access to resources that could enable portable outdoor learning spaces. The sustainability of any potential design will need to meet the policies and guidelines of the local school board. It is hoped that the recommendations from the research will help not only create a vision for what may work best but also help with the funding, resources made available, appropriate training and overall support.

CHAPTER 4: PROPOSED TIMELINES

4.1 TIMELINES AND METHODS

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

DATE	ACTIVITY
April 1, 2019 - June 30, 2019	· Project timeline
March 27 th to April 1 st	· Formalize interview and questionnaires in preparation for implementation · Decide on online questionnaire platform (Survey Monkey versus Google Forms) · Create questionnaires
April 1 – April 8 th	· Project introduction: Staff, Aboriginal Education department, and student orientations · Email to prospective staff participants and Aboriginal Education department · Distribution of Letter of Consent and any required paperwork to students and staff

April 8 th – April 12 th	· Student outdoor learning activities to promote merits of outdoor learning and support comprehension of interview questions · Letter of Consents returned by April 12th
April 15 – May 3 rd	· Project implementation: student interviews / questionnaires completed in class, staff interviews / questionnaires completed via online · All interviews / questionnaires completed and received by May 3rd
May 6 - June 7 th	· Compile data: Note trends, commonalities, differences of visions · Data analysis · Process data into report · Edit for submission to CBU and School District
June 7 th - June 30	· Create final report and PowerPoint presentation · Edit of Final Report and PowerPoint
June 30 th	· Final Report Submission

4.2 RESOURCES FOR GUIDANCE

A range of mentors and organizations have been sought out to help support me in the research for this project. With an increase in the presence of outdoor classrooms both within and beyond the local school district, a number of resources are available in order to draw on and learn from. Focus on Forests (ND) have created a very useful resource that outline important steps to take

into account. J.A Laird (SD6) is an elementary school in the region that is currently in the process of developing an accessible outdoor learning space that will help influence district decisions related to the development of such spaces. See Appendices A and B for a more detailed list of resources and references.

On site, Scott M. is a teacher who has previous experience as Principal at a local independent school where he helped coordinate the construction of a dynamic outdoor playground and learning space. Jenn M. runs the Outdoor Education Department and is eager to help share her vast knowledge, experience and enthusiasm to help develop such a project.

Both the Principal and Vice-Principal at the school have expressed interest in the project and offered to help with guidance, particularly related to School District Protocol that could help advance any proposed ideas.

As sustainability and environmental education have become a key component to the strategic plans in multiple school districts in the province, a range of resources have recently been expanded and developed. Locally, the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network (CBEEN) have a wide range of ever expanding resources and contacts that will help facilitate the implementation of the project. Provincially, the Environmental Education Provincial Specialists Association (EEPSA) have a network of resources available

4.3 COMMUNICATION AND EVALUATION

The progress of the project will be documented through the webpage <https://sustainableconnections.weebly.com/>. An outline of the project proposal / goals of the project, along with the analysis of survey results, observational notes and relevant, anonymous, student and staff feedback will be posted. Photos will help illustrate any activities related to the project delivery and highlight any potential location or design options. Updates will be shared within a week of the activities taking place (see Proposed Timeline). In addition to documenting the progress of the project for interested members and involved participants, the website could potentially be of benefit for any future grant proposals.

At the completion of the research, results and reflections will be shared through Cape Breton University as a Final Report.

4.4 NEXT STEPS

Following the completion of the Final Report with Cape Breton University, project results will be shared with school and senior district administration in order to help support the development of the outdoor learning space. Stakeholders who have not had an opportunity to share their vision, including the maintenance and operations department, will be approached to help formalize a more concrete vision based on the collaborative feedback and vision derived from

students and teachers. The potential design plans will also depend on contributions from local experts.

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D: DISTRICT APPROVAL FORM:

Submitted and awaiting response from School District.

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



CAPE BRETON
UNIVERSITY

8 April 2019

Pascal Carrara
Student, Education
Cape Breton University

Dear Pascal:

Re: Research Ethics File # **1819-113**

The application for the project entitled "**Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space: Enhancing Secondary School Student Engagement and Connection**" has been received and the Cape Breton University Research Ethics Board (CBU REB) has granted **approval** to this research project.

Ethics approvals are granted for a period of one (1) year. Principal researchers of ongoing projects are required to submit an annual report for review. Any change to an approved protocol must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. For more information, [visit our website](#).

Good luck with your research,

Dr. Kathy Snow
Assistant Professor, Education
Research Ethics Board Co-Chair
Signed on behalf of the CBU REB

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Teacher Survey- available at:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JqhTC7RHsEgyn_PGDOwBkfIMCIKOh-ZPEN9CFXPDCD4/

The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space-Staff Survey". The form has a header with a back arrow, a folder icon, a star icon, and a "SEND" button. Below the header, there are tabs for "QUESTIONS" and "RESPONSES" (15). The main content area has a title "Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space" and a subtitle "Teachers". The first question is "Are you interested in increasing outdoor learning opportunities in your teaching?" with radio button options "Yes" and "No". The second question is "Do you feel you can teach your curriculum outdoors?" with radio button options "Yes" and "No".

Student Survey - available at:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1iBV-9NNBBRA9VPGXsxue9qYlceejv9NuWV9uOifcPJo/>

The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space". The form has a header with a back arrow, a folder icon, a star icon, and a "SEND" button. Below the header, there are tabs for "QUESTIONS" and "RESPONSES" (65). The main content area has a title "Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space". The first question is "How far from school are you willing to walk to access an outdoor learning space?" with radio button options "2 minutes", "5 minutes", "10 minutes", and "20+ minutes". The second question is "Would you prefer an established outdoor learning space or a mobile learning space?" with radio button options "established space" and "mobile learning space". The third question is "What equipment would help enhance learning in a mobile space (clipboards, blankets, portable seats etc.)?" with a "Short answer text" input field.

DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL LETTER



Cape Breton University
Cape Breton University
P.O. Box 5300, 1250 Grand Lake Rd.
Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada B1P 6L2
www.cbu.ca

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: School District Letter of Approval

Please accept this letter requesting permission that my project *Selkirk Secondary Outdoor Learning Space: Enhancing Secondary School Student Engagement and Connection* be approved for research in School District #6. As a graduate student with Cape Breton University, my project work surrounds an interest in researching what could support secondary outdoor learning, including the possibility of an accessible outdoor learning space at Selkirk Secondary. This research will gain insights into what helps facilitate outdoor learning and the elements that would be of most benefit in any potential outdoor learning space.

Learning in an outdoor environment offers a dynamic means to engage students throughout the curriculum. Research for this project aims to examine what elements are most desired by students and educators in order to provide engaging and accessible spaces that help facilitate learning outside of classrooms. The success of this project depends on providing the multiple stakeholders an opportunity to share their thoughts and vision. A focus of the project will be to enhance ownership and connection to local place. Research will be used to write a final reflective project and to provide feedback as to what makes for an optimal outdoor learning environment.

An outdoor learning space could provide a myriad of cross-curricular and place-based learning opportunities related to nature connection, Aboriginal education, project-based learning, and sustainability education. Participants will be asked to respond to a thirteen-question interview, conversationally or via an email/ online questionnaire. Participants and parents/guardians will be explained the intent of the research and informed through a written letter of consent before taking part in the research.

Researcher – Pascal Carrara: Cape Breton University Email: pascal.carrara@sd6.bc.ca

Supervisor - Dr. Patrick Howard: Cape Breton University Email: Patrick_Howard@cbu.ca

I am requesting your signature as approval for this research to begin on April 1, 2019. If you should have any questions about this research process, please do not hesitate to contact me at pascal.carrara@sd6.bc.ca. Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,



Pascal Carrara

District Approval

I <u>Paul Carrieri</u> have been informed of the purpose of this research and approve of Pascal Carrara implementing this research in School District #6.	
Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Date: <u>April 1, 2019</u>
SD #6 Role: <u>Superintendent</u>	
Contact Information: <u>250-341-5317 paul.carrieri@sd6.bc.ca</u>	

DISSEMINATION PLAN

1

Dissemination Strategy PlanningPascal Carrara
May 4, 2019

1. What is the campaign purpose, the intended impact (benefit)?

The final stage of my project will prepare the information and suggestions compiled that are required for the implementation stage that I will take up next September along with my school team. This campaign is timed to this implementation stage.

As surveys will be complete and the recommendations will be organized and compiled, the purpose of this campaign is to 'sell' the school community and greater community on the plan to gain support towards implementation. The benefits surround the outcomes, to create an accessible outdoor learning space for Selkirk Secondary School.

2. Describe the primary target audiences for your campaign.

My school educators: This group will have offered feedback and expressed the desired outcomes of the outdoor space. The campaign will act as a reminder and guide the creating of the physical plan.

Local student population: This group will have offered feedback and will have experience in outdoor learning. Their desires will have been forwarded to the school administration. This campaign will act as a reminder and promotion of the real goal in creating the space.

My greater community: The campaign is aimed at this group specifically. They may have little or no knowledge of the plan and their experience, skills and knowledge will directly impact the quality and relevance of this space.

2

3. What specifically do you want your audiences to do? To know? To believe?

To do: To become involved according to their expertise in the creation of the outdoor classroom.

To know: To understand the benefits and returns of having this space as a learning environment.

To believe: To believe in the project as a collaborative community endeavour, the merits associated with greater opportunities for outdoor learning, and to believe in the expertise and appropriate feedback and involvement that each can bring.

4. What key messages do you want your campaign to communicate?

As the second guardian article describes, the message communicated must align with school goals, and communication must be two way. In my case, I will re-connect to my administration, as I speak on behalf of my entire school in promoting my project. The lines of communication must stay open so there no false hopes while every vision is heard as a whole team.

Key message: Join our team as we build an outdoor learning space for all to learn through.

I want my message to convey an inclusive, team-based approach so that all interested in being involved can find their place in the project. We need organizers, builders, movers and vision to support this project (to name a few) and I want the community to know that there is always room for their voice and expertise.

5. What communication channels will you use? Consider what is available to you. (public media, print, school/organization networks/resources, social media channels etc.) Be as specific as you can about ways you intend to use each channel you identify.

There has been a re-assessment by my administration with regard to the quantity of online presence that our school should have. In questioning how to manage appropriate student online presence, notably how to manage student cell phone use, administration has established a policy that students are no longer to bring cell phones to classes and are offering programming and education to support (and tackle) the issue of technology and media addiction. Technology addiction has been a recent area of professional development and serious problem in our youth (and children unfortunately). It would be hypocritical to ask them to use social media and guide them towards online supports other than through minimal, very structured and focused contact. Our school has reduced its social media feed, and I think that in looking for funding, we need to watch our connection to green resources as we may not have support to be promoting their company through their social media feeds. With all that being said, there is of course a place for it, I am simply looking to follow the direction of my community and explain why social media will not be used here.

The channels that I am accessing will be:

Networking: I plan on connecting through CBEEN, Columbia basin trust, as well as my school community expertise such as student shop classes. I will use the contacts I and my team have and build outwards from there. Approaching local businesses that can help support through financial and in-kind support will be part of the process (Tyee log homes, excavating services). I will also connect again with our local school district to ensure that maintenance in part of our team and steps. Demonstrating the link between district direction and outdoor learning is also encouraging with regard to potential services. We will also be presenting to our P.A.C. to invite them to the team.

Local Print: I will be connecting to community through our local news magazine, widely read by our greater community GoKimberley. A short, free article here will offer information and invite community support effectively when the time is right.

6. What permissions will you require? (model release forms, parental permissions, school/board permissions)

I will stay connected to my administration team and discuss all progress with them as we have agreed upon. They will be involved in any public correspondence and community engagement of any kind.

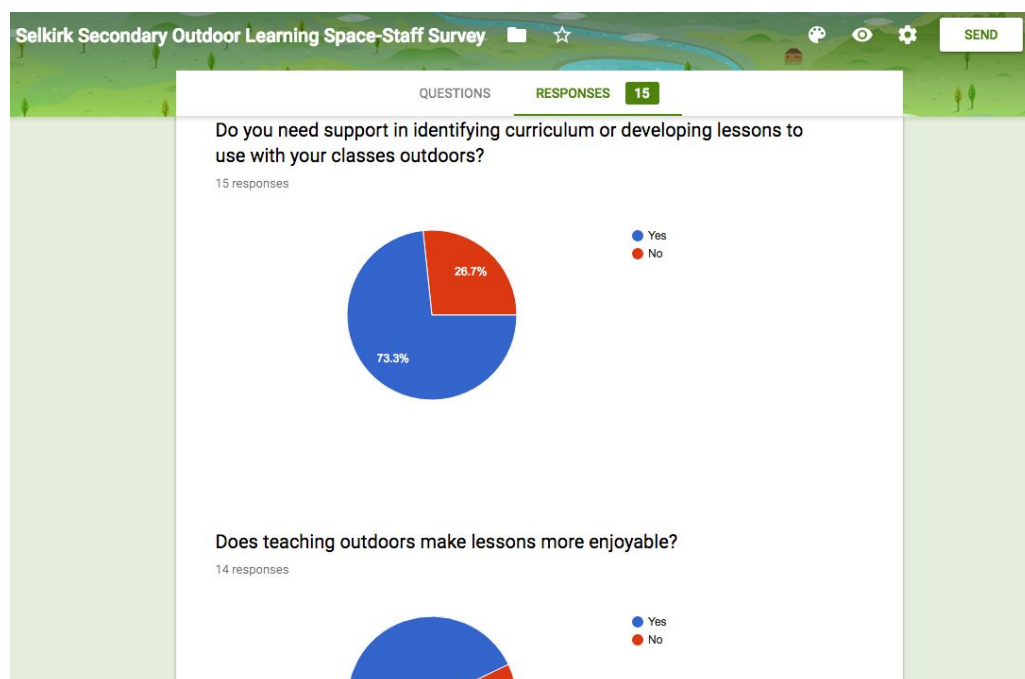
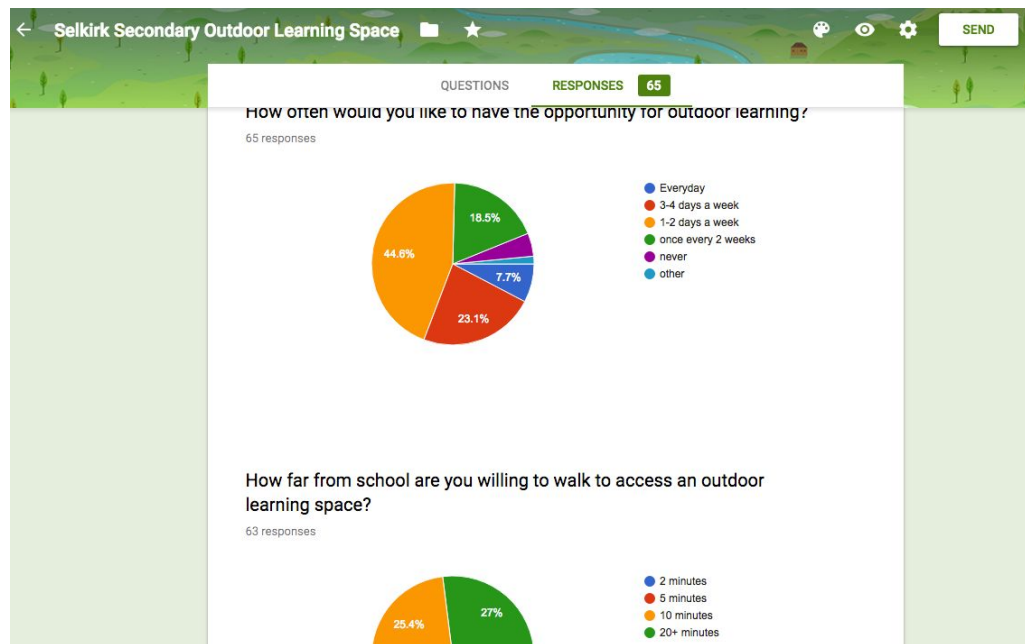
7. What creative strategy will you use? Consider highlights you will emphasize, scenes, sounds, images taglines, tone, overall impression to be achieved through graphic elements – text, colour, font, ect.

I will be working closely with our school leadership team to develop this area and to promote the researched information to gain support. Predicting this at this early stage will be a guess at best, but the information will be mainly promoted through local conversations, invitations, meetings and collaboration. Being creative in this regard is essential, so that research is promoted without overwhelming or losing the interest of key players. Therefore, creative strategies will likely surround the drawing of interested groups to the table. One creative method will be to invite parents to build support through them. They are already invested in their child's education and have many contacts through their own experience. Networking through this parent group (aside from the P.A.C. group) will be key. Bringing delicious food to every meeting will also be essential.

8. What costs, if any, may be associated with dissemination related strategies? What resources will you need to access? What may be available to help you achieve your strategies? (Consider both material and human)

No costs will be associated. This may change as new strategies emerge at the time of the campaign.

DATA SAMPLES (see Impacts and Data Analysis pages 9-12)



EXAMPLES OF PROTOTYPING

Phase 4: Experimentation - Create Prototypes

Pascal Carrara
April 14, 2019

Share photos of your prototypes here:

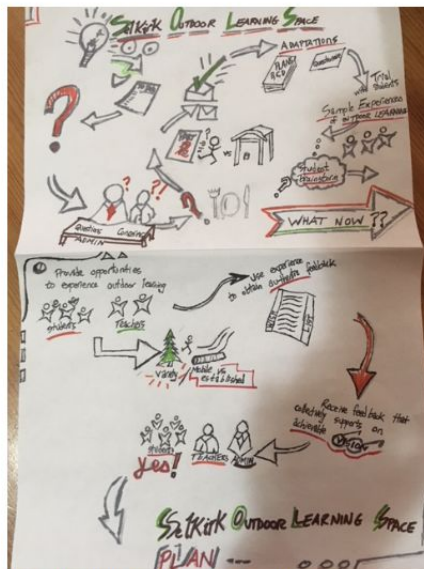


Figure 1: Sketchnote of the design process



Figure 2: Location of potential outdoor learning space

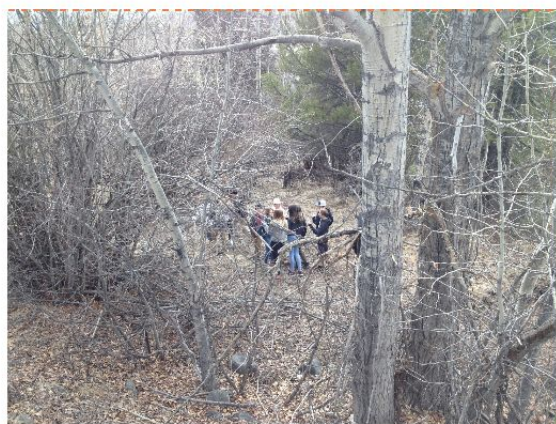


Figure 3: Students engaged in a curricular learning activity at a potential outdoor learning space site.

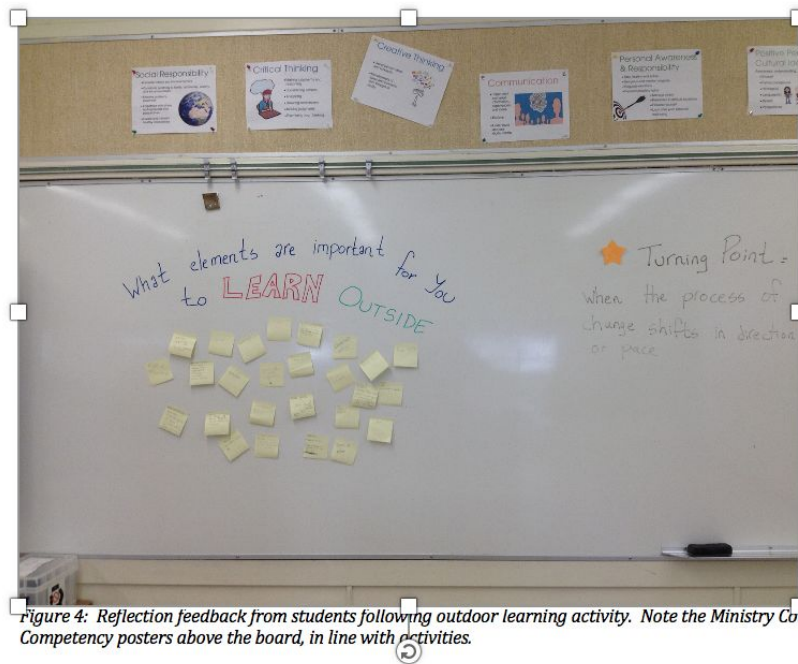


Figure 4: Reflection feedback from students following outdoor learning activity. Note the Ministry Core Competency posters above the board, in line with activities.

Get Feedback: What kind of feedback do you need to refine your idea? What is the most important question you want to ask? Are you trying to determine if people will participate in your idea? Use it?

How do I create a creative and innovative vision for something that doesn't already exist? Collaborators may not have experience or be able to visualize something that they have limited experience in imagining, and I am looking to support them in exploring this question.

The feedback that I have received to this point has been extremely valuable as it has offered insights and allowed me to adapt my project accordingly. For example, a potential school re-build or relocation has potentially shifted the focus towards a mobile option. This has translated into the research questioning needing to reflect possible and exploratory options rather than more concrete ones. Therefore, my most important question is: how I can most effectively obtain feedback from all involved parties that honors the real opportunities that exist?

I am certainly trying to decide how to encourage teachers to access this space, mobile or otherwise. "Take me outside for learning" has me thinking how I can encourage teachers to move their lessons outside. This is a challenge in secondary education and requires a cultural shift in this case.

Feedback goals:

- To most effectively obtain feedback from all involved parties in a way that honors the real opportunities that exist.
- How do I inspire creative options within the real opportunities that exist
- Embodying the priorities of creativity and innovation
- Maintaining this project as a collaborative effort where all parties are given an equal voice.

Select Feedback Participants: Who do you want to engage in the feedback process? Who will you learn most from?

This project is a collaborative effort. I am looking to engage:

- ✓ Students
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Administrators

Build a Question Guide: List any questions you may have about your idea. Think Specifically but also consider broad question; what motivates, people, their worries, concerns, hopes, aspirations.

- ✓ How to inspire creative options in a space that others are accustomed to seeing as an old parking lot?
- ✓ Administration has requested that the research does not offer false hope. Therefore, the questions have been adapted towards possible outcomes, rather than definitive ones. How do I continue to inspire hope and stimulate a vision beyond the theoretical?
- ✓ How do I promote the idea while motivating collaborators to move forwards in concrete ways?

Facilitate feedback – Take notes – Consider what the feedback is saying about what you should KEEP as part of your idea; INCREASE; DECREASE or STOP.

- Keep: vision and promoting outdoor learning. Keep many options available for establishing outdoor learning spaces.
- Increase: Outdoor learning time and opportunities. Related to the project, increasing outdoor lessons and examples will support what this entails so that it gives the research context.
- Decrease: Standard traditional lessons. Use this opportunity to develop and encourage innovative lessons. Outdoor time is not considered time off learning. Decrease pre-conceptions and keep an open mind for feedback and possibilities.

Integrate Feedback: Look back at your original goals for getting feedback. What have you learned? Based on your earlier learning and research from the ideation phase, do your ideas still hold true? What is most important? How might you improve your idea? How can you emphasize what was most well received about your prototype?

Reflections:

My original goals surrounded making outdoor learning more accessible for all and create an outdoor space in a specific location that I had in mind. I have learned that collaboration means listening and being invested in ideas that do not initially match my own. Through this process of listening, I am hearing new ideas that match my goals of accessibility but are completely different in space and location. My earlier ideas still hold true, but have adapted to meet the greater visions of stakeholders and focus more on the accessibility and less on designing a set location. It has always been about accessibility and that has not shifted. Stakeholder feedback has stayed consistent with this piece.

The most important goal now realistically is to receive further feedback that collectively supports an achievable vision. My project can be improved upon by finding outdoor learning activities that I can demonstrate to students and teachers that highlight the possibilities for learning outdoors (moving outside for reasons beyond recreation or brain breaks for example) learning *through* this experience. The idea itself has been well received, and the willingness to move learning outside and promote outside learning has matched my own goals. I have learning that the vision is not only coming from me, but from the visualizing shared through brainstorming experiences and discussion/meetings/sharing.

Identify What's Needed

List the materials that you will need to create your refine concept? Are these supplies available to you? Will you need to purchase? Seek donations? Funding?

Available:

N/A at this point in time in the project.

Need to Purchase/Fund

This will come after this project's phase and the design has been established.

Costs: (How much do you need?)

N/A at this time.

People: (Who can help you realize your project? Who is invested in supporting your concept? Can you identify champions for your idea?)

- Scott M.: Has experience in building outdoor classrooms and is an excellent resource on my staff team.
- Jonas H.: Colleague that is excited and looking to have access to take learning outside.
- Jenn M.: Colleague that is experienced in taking learning outside and is excited to promote this.

Sources: (How can I get funding for my idea?)

N/A at this point.

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