

# LEARNING in the OUTDOORS

## IN THE PLAYGROUND

### TOOLKIT 2



# TEACHER TOOLKIT SCHEDULE

Outdoors Victoria, in partnership with the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER Victoria), Environment Education Victoria (EEV), Geography Teachers Association (GTAV) and Parks Victoria (Parks Vic) will produce 15 Teacher Toolkits between 2018 and 2020. These toolkits will be delivered to the following order:

## 2018

- 1 Introduction to Outdoor Learning
- 2 Outdoor Learning in the Play Ground
- 3 Outdoor Learning in Water-Based Environments

## 2019

- 4 Outdoor Learning in Physical Education\*
- 5 Outdoor Learning in Art\*
- 6 Outdoor Learning in Geography\*
- 7 Outdoor Learning in Science\*
- 8 Outdoor Learning in Mathematics\*
- 9 Outdoor Learning in Urban Environments\*

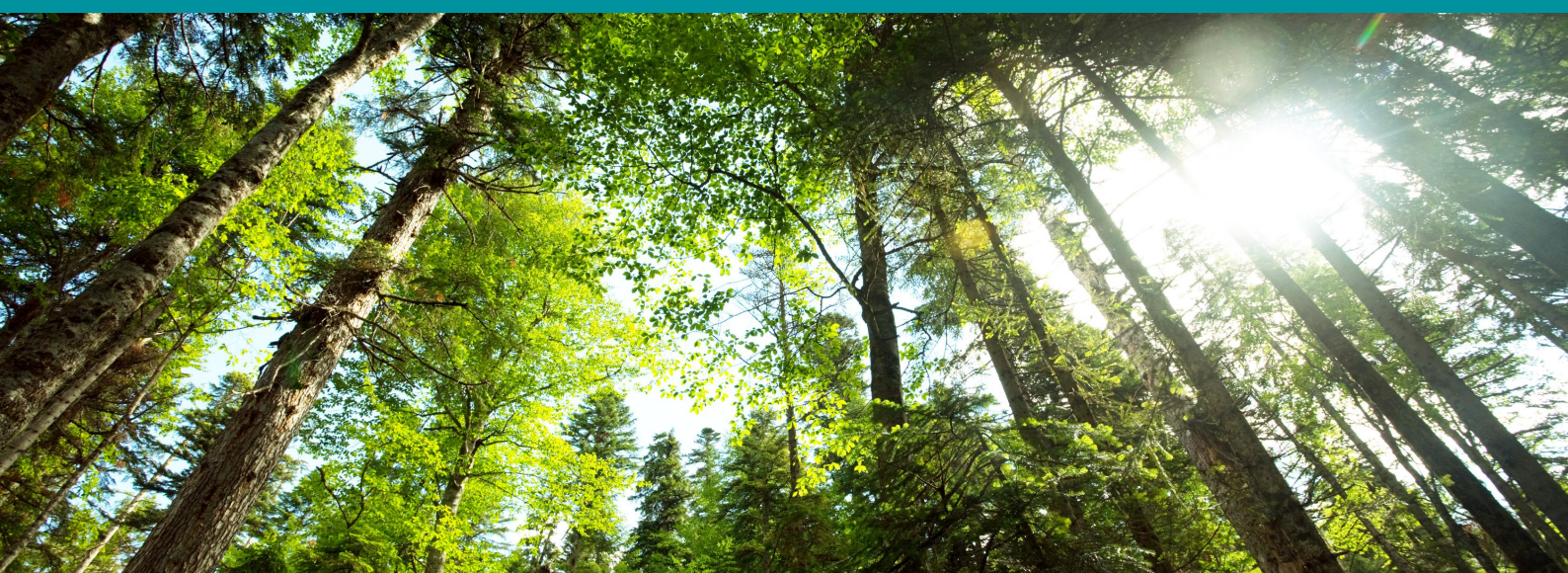
In 2020 a further six teacher toolkits will be created upon further consultation, if you would like to be involved in this process please use the contact details located on the last page of the document.

Please note the teacher toolkits will be constantly updated as emerging trends, activities and projects are created over the coming years. Videos and 360VR experiences are expected to be placed throughout the teacher toolkits above. These updates will occur within the FUSE Website.

Outdoors Victoria, in partnership with ACHPER (Victoria), EEV, GTAV and Parks Victoria, is always interested in finding out what is occurring in the outdoors in your school.

If you are proud of a new program you have implemented or would like to be involved in /contribute to any of the Teacher Toolkits, contact any of the above organisations (Contact details are provided on the final page of this document)

Outdoors Victoria, in partnership with ACHPER (Victoria), GTAV, EEV and Parks Victoria, respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and their Elders past and present, for the important and enduring role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples play in Australia regarding the land, water and sky used for learning in the Outdoors.



# LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS

## IN THE PLAYGROUND

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This Teacher Toolkit is offered as a framework for developing your own curriculum specific ideas and activities for Outdoor Learning. It is quite flexible and should be adapted to suit your needs. Remember to note the benefits of Outdoor Learning in your teaching area, and to provide tips wherever you can for embedding Outdoor Learning into the curriculum. Include relevant research, case studies and examples that might assist teachers. Teacher Toolkit 1 Benefits of Outdoor Learning presents research that will help you argue the case for taking students out of the classroom.



# Benefits of Outdoor Learning in the playground

This teacher toolkit will be looking at opportunities to integrate Outdoor Learning into your everyday activities without leaving the school ground. There are many opportunities to embed Outdoor Learning into your classroom teaching, but they are seldom taken for a variety of reasons, including a lack of knowledge of opportunities available, an apprehension of taking students outdoors, and an already crowded curriculum.

In this teaching toolkit we show a range of activities that you can do in the school ground with minimal and inexpensive equipment. We hope this toolkit helps you develop knowledge of practical ways to include Outdoor Learning into your class and create your own exciting activities and experiences.

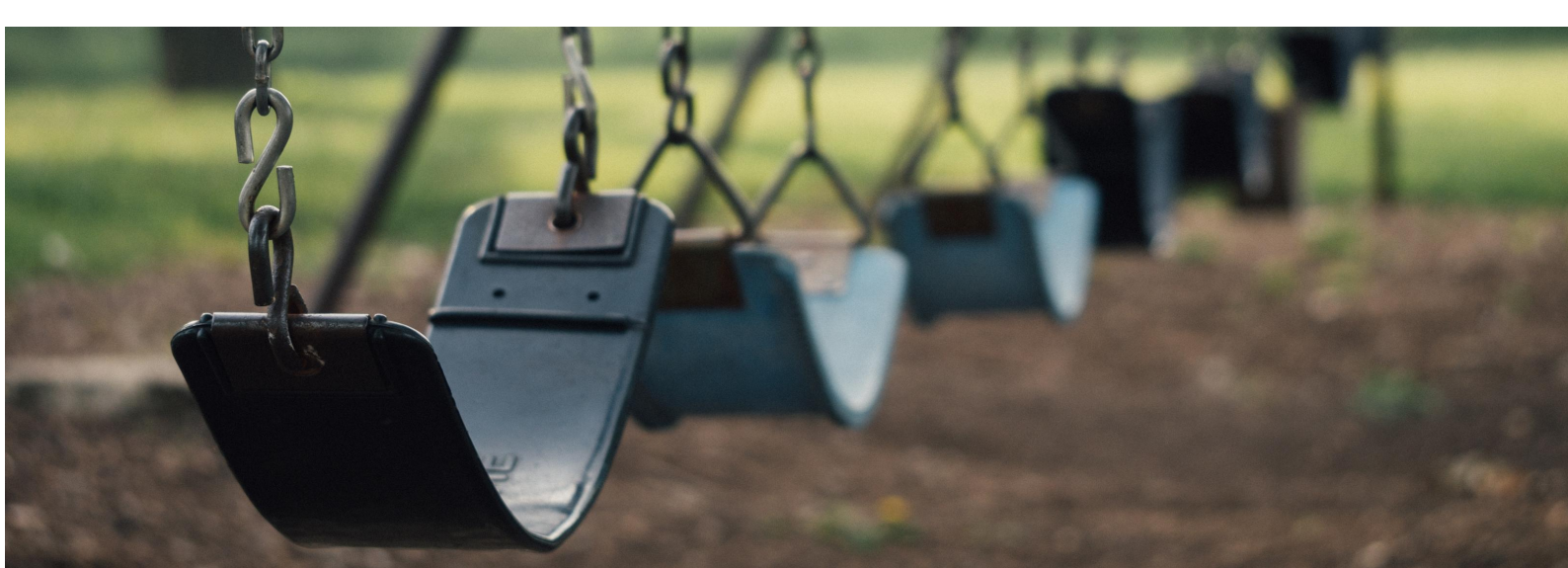
Outdoor Learning is only limited by your imagination. It does not have to always be activities that are adventure based. It can just be reading a book in the outdoors or guided exploration.

One of the recent initiatives in Outdoor Learning is the creation of “Outdoor Classroom Day” which in 2018 saw 300,000 children take part in Outdoor Learning, much of it within the school grounds. More than 2,500 schools and early learning centres participated. (<https://outdoorclassroomday.com.au/>)

Research shows embedding Outdoor Learning has a range of benefits.

- assists recovery from mental fatigue
- improves and restores concentration
- increases healing for patients and has recuperative qualities (school benefit?)
- enhances positive outlook on life
- assists ability to cope
- assists with recovery from stress, illness and injury and
- improves productivity.

*(Maller, et al, 2008, P.75)*





# Redesigning your playground

To encourage more Outdoor Learning in your school, consider redesigning your playground or open space to promote and facilitate that learning.

As stated by [Plymouth \(2008\)](#):

“ ... Schools found that grounds needed to be thought about differently - as spaces for teaching - rather than just for playtime and sport. Schools found a mixture of spaces for different purposes was important. Teachers used some spaces for investigation and/or inspiration, others for practical activity and yet others for reflecting on or summarising work. Playgrounds and tarmac spaces, although not part of the natural environment, were also important for teachers new to outdoor learning to develop their confidence and outdoor practice close to the school and as spaces for group demonstration and/or discussion ... ”

One school within this study found;

“ ... One school field ‘...wasn’t previously being used a great deal ... discussions turned to the outdoor space, with simple idea being suggested just to get the children outside. The ideas subsequently got bigger and bigger - a pond, a growing space, a greenhouse and so on. The children were really excited about these proposals and came up with their own ideas...’ (Headteacher) ... ”

[Boston Schoolyard Initiative \(BSI\)](#), was first introduced in 1995 to transform “barren asphalt into lots of dynamic centres for recreation, learning and community life”. During this time BSI have revitalized 88 schoolyards, reached 30,000 children and reclaimed 130 acres of asphalt. Out of these principals it was reported that schoolyards that had been revitalized and lead to an increase of physical activity (in 100% of schools), improved student behaviour (63.2%) and improved relationships with parents and community (73.7%).

When looking at the crucial elements of playgrounds and school space they need to promote physical activity, encourage social interaction, support creativity and problem solving, encourage interaction with nature ([Wood, Martin, 2010](#)). Furthermore, it is suggested by Wood, Martin, 2010 that effective playgrounds and school grounds should:

- encourage interaction and socialization,
- be highly accessible and cater for a variety of demographics and backgrounds,
- provide risk and challenge, however, are safe and free of hazards,
- have pleasing aesthetics,
- simulate children’s imagination and creativity and,
- include space for active play.

# Redesigning your playground Cont.

In the book [Asphalt to Ecosystems by Sharon Gamson Danks \(2010\)](#), it is recommended when setting up your school ground to focus more on Outdoor Learning. It has been found that using a participatory approach has been very effective.

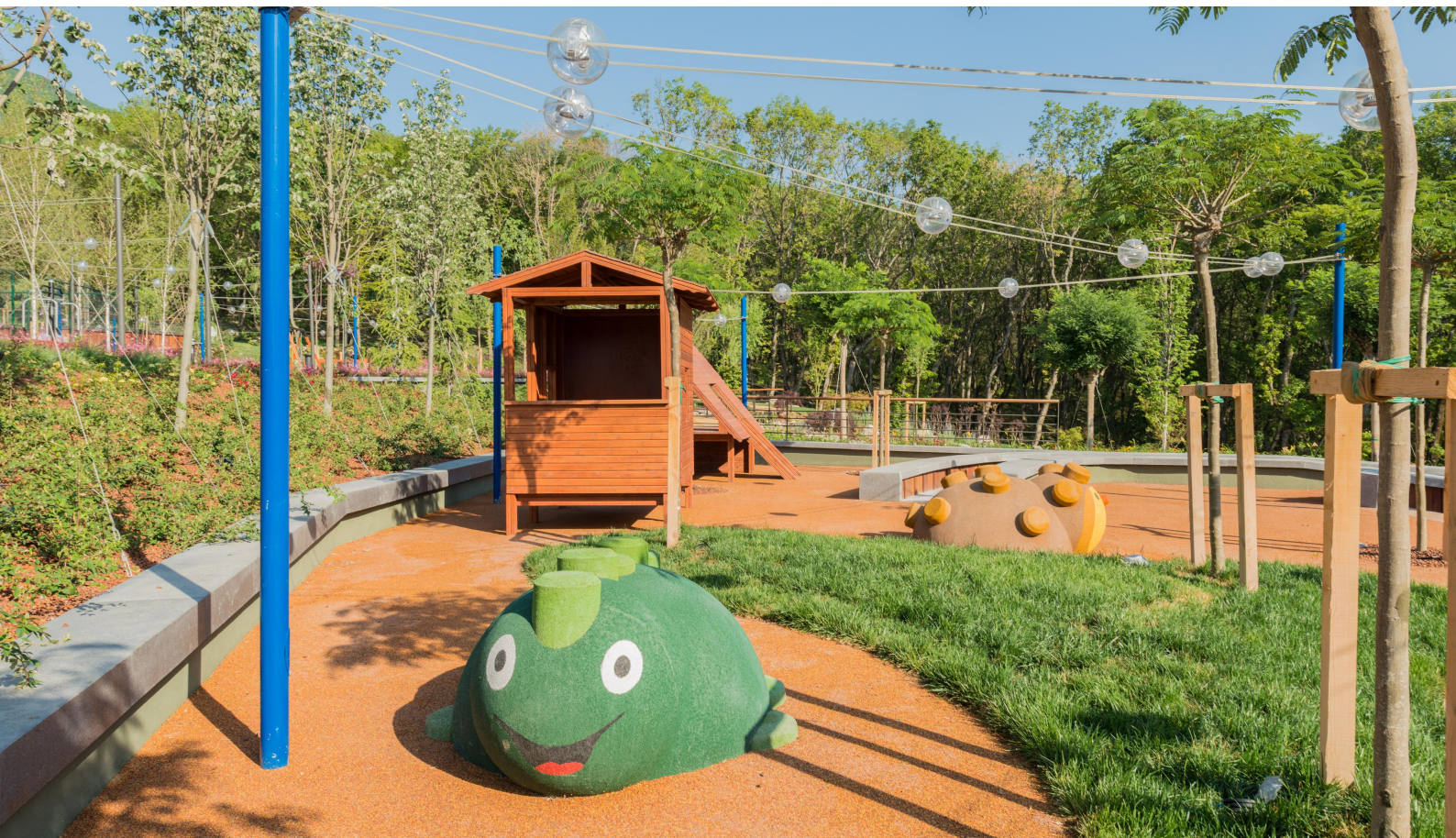
“

*... Invite everyone who might have an interest in the school grounds, or may be affected by them, to provide input and participate. Include teachers, caretakers, parents, the principal, school administrators, neighbours living adjacent to the school and, most importantly, students. A participatory process involves working together in a spirit of mutual respect and acknowledging that each person brings something of value to the initiative. It is about inviting the school community, including its neighbours, to create a collective vision, to determine the agenda and, later, to carry it out ...*

”

This approach allows more hands to help, provides a strong sense of involvement and ownership. There is a greater likelihood of long-term support and ultimately success and the decisions are representative of the school community and neighbours. Challenges with this approach might include a delayed start due to the extra upfront planning that needs to be conducted, and it takes time and skill to bring multiple voices from differing communities together.

**[Click here for more detail on a NSW program to redevelop school playgrounds](#)**





# Safety Considerations

One of the reasons for a reduction in children's outdoor play and outdoor learning is the increased focus on risk and danger. It is important when designing outdoor spaces or playgrounds that you consult the Australian Standards for Playground surfaces and Equipment (AS4685) As an example, one requirement states that

“ ... Falls from heights more than 600mm need to be managed, and the surfaces designed to attenuate impact. Mild roughness and splinters are considered acceptable, unless they are sharp protrusions that can injure a child.

”

Nature Play Western Australia in 2018 released [A guide to the Playground standard AS 4685-2014](#). The document does not replace the need to use or rely on the actual Standard documents, which include further detail, but it provides a ready reference for those responsible for inspecting and maintaining playground equipment. Any opinions expressed in the document are those of the author and should not necessarily be construed to be those of Standards Australia

In many instances natural, non-manufactured items are incorporated into the playground, including items such as logs, boulders, plant materials, surfaces, changes of level and other landscape elements. The requirements of the Standards do apply to natural play elements incorporated into a playground. Where the requirements of the Standard cannot be applied to natural elements incorporated into a playground, a risk benefit assessment must be undertaken and documented to determine the suitability of such elements. For example, it may not be practical or desirable to place barriers or handrails on a log or boulder. In this instance, impact-attenuating, in accordance with AS 4422 Playground Surfacing, should be provided in the impact area corresponding to the free height of fall, the impact area should be free of obstacles that could cause injury and hazardous situations that may cause entrapment should be avoided. Consideration should be given to preventing easy access to hazardous situations.



It is important to recognise the value to children of engaging with nature. The incorporation of natural materials as design elements in a playground can add significant play, aesthetic and environmental value. Unlike manufactured products and materials, natural elements are not necessarily predictable. They therefore encourage children to develop risk management skills as they negotiate natural environments and build resilience through exposure to falls and minor injuries and learn to adapt their behaviour to the setting.

**Further information can be found [here](#).**



# Tips for embedding Outdoor Learning in the playground

Here are some tips and considerations when taking your class to learn in the outdoors:

- 'Outdoors' could be your school playground or your wider local area. Any place within walking distance that little legs can travel will do. Whatever is practical for you and your students.
- Establish rules and routines to make outdoor learning fun. These can be set as games, songs or stories.
- Prepare a class 'outdoor kit' – a bag that is ready by the door and includes pencils, paper and a first aid kit.
- The Scandinavians say 'there is no bad weather, only poor clothing choices' so ensure all children have raincoats, hats and jumpers in their bags at all times.
- Be prepared for enthusiasm and loads of it. Outdoor lessons can be a whirlwind of excitement and eager learning.
- Prepare risk assessments for your chosen sites of learning by switching your thinking to 'what are the risk benefits?' Begin your risk assessment by thinking: what will my children gain from being aware of the roads, wobbly logs or native animals?
- Attend some outdoor learning professional development and explore the potential of the outdoors as a site of valuable, authentic learning



# Nature Weaving

Nature weaving is an activity which has been used by generations of students. It provides a fantastic opportunity to give students a hands-on experience.

**Step 1** - First, find four sticks. To create more of a square frame, the sticks need to be of similar size or to create a rectangle, two longer sticks and two shorter sticks will do the trick.

**Step 2** - Use a compass to show where north is. Students face north. Practice giving four cardinal points and students turn towards each one OR they can move their arms to point to each cardinal point.

**Step 3** - Once your frame is finished, wind the twine around the frame, looping on each end before continuing to the other side (see photo below) until the frame has lines of twine across it. Secure by knotting.

**Step 4** - Go on a nature walk and collect leaves, twigs, weeds, flowers, feathers, grass, and other items for the project.

**Step 5** - Weave the items collected one at a time over and under the twine, alternating to create more interest.

**Step 6** - Admire your lovely creation!



### EXTENSION SUGGESTION

Set up a competition where student teams start in a particular place and they use number of steps and direction to find objects in the school ground. They can photograph or collect the objects. This activity is a little like an orienteering course.

### Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2** • Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings including aquatic and the natural environment (VCHPEP063)
- Describe and explain where places and activities are located (VCGGC058)
- 3-4** • Identify symmetry in the environment (VCMMG144)
- Explore visual conventions and use materials, techniques, technologies and processes specific to particular art forms, and to make artworks (VCAVAV026)
- 5-6** • The growth and survival of living things are affected by the physical conditions of their environment (VCSSU075)

### Equipment & Materials

- Twine
- Four (4) Sticks
- Items found in nature

### Additional Resources:

*Nature Weaving Activity:* <https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/archives/nature-weaving>  
*Tools for Nature Weaving:* <https://mothernatured.com/nature-crafts/nature-weaving-tools/>  
*5 Steps to Branch Weaving:* <https://www.brisbanekids.com.au/nature-craft-teach-your-child-to-branch-weave-in-5-easy-steps/>

# Nature Listening

In the world of iPads and smart tv's, students often can become overstimulated and too busy to look at the real world. This activity is one of the simplest in this teacher toolkit but also one of the most successful.

**Step 1** - Take students outside, ideally near trees or plants but if that is not possible, anywhere on the school ground and get them to listen consciously. Listen to the birds, the trees or their own breathing.

**Step 2** - Take the students outside to your selected outdoors space. Provide them with the plan view shapes and ask them to match them with objects they find and how they would look from above or a bird's eye view. Ask students to draw or write down what they are feeling while sitting in silence

**Step 3** - Then ask the class to sit still, back to back with a partner and listen quietly. List all the things you can hear over three minutes. Did you both hear the same things?

**Step 4** - Get the students to go to their own quiet area and every time they hear a sound, get them to softly echo that sound and create a natural orchestra.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
  - Describe ways to include others to make them feel that they belong (VCHPEP075)
  - Identify and practise emotional responses that account for own and others' feelings (VCHPEP076)
- 3-4**
  - Describe ways to include others to make them feel that they belong (VCHPEP075)
  - Identify and practise emotional responses that account for own and others' feelings (VCHPEP076)
- 5-6**
  - Investigate how emotional responses vary in family situations and in friendship groups (VCHPEP093)

## Additional Resources:

*Listen to the sounds of nature:* <https://www.fastcompany.com/3047398/want-to-be-more-productive-listen-to-the-sounds-of-nature>  
*Outdoor listening activities:* <https://creativestartlearning.co.uk/nature-play-learning/listening-activities-outside/>  
*Listening in the Outdoors:* <https://www.fantasticfunandlearning.com/listening-walk-outdoor-activity-kids.html>  
*Listening Activity:* <https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resource/listen/>



## EXTENSION SUGGESTION

Take a recording device to record sounds outside that can be brought back to the classroom.

For an extension suggestion, get students to illustrate the sounds they hear.



## Equipment & Materials

- Paper
- Pencils
- Rocks & Trees



# Student Learning Walks



Learning Walks have been well known for their use in teacher education (walking meetings) although there have been several studies that have shown student learning walks have a range of benefits. A typical learning walk consists of a sequence of designated sites that are along a planned route in which students stop and explore different aspects of allowing the environment to come alive.

Each walk can have a different lens as its filter, for example;

- a sustainability lens. Students assist in cleaning up rubbish in the school ground then come back into the classroom and watch a video on the War on Waste (See Resources)
- a nature-based lens. Students look for different animals and other critters in the schoolyard

Learning walks could also be specific to discipline areas including English, Mathematics or Science. On a walk that has a “Mathematical lens” students may need to find the following things like;

- five objects which have one line of symmetry
- an object with a repeating pattern
- an object that is approximately one meter tall

These walks can be structured or unstructured, but the learning intention needs to be clear as numerous lenses could be applied to various walks.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Participate in guided investigations, including making observations using the senses, to explore and answer questions (VCSIS051)
  - Use informal measurements in the collection and recording of observations (VCSIS052)
- 3-4**
- Suggest ways to plan and conduct investigations to find answers to questions including consideration of the elements of fair tests (VCSIS066)
- 5-6**
- Construct and use a range of representations, including tables and graphs, to record, represent and describe observations, patterns or relationships in data (VCSIS085)

## Equipment & Materials

Not much is needed. Think about incorporating quizzes, treasure hunt, or even an amazing race.

## Additional Resources:

*Maths outside the classroom:* <https://theconversation.com/how-to-get-children-to-want-to-do-maths-outside-the-classroom-46360>

*War on waste:* <https://youtu.be/luz80yD9S7A>

*All walks can be nature walks:* <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/turn-any-walk-nature-walk>

*Take a Walk book series* by Jane Kirkland includes books for elementary-age children that discuss different environments (beach, city, wetlands) and different things to observe (birds, butterflies, clouds). – Take a Walk – Jane Kirkland (2005)

# Play Pods

A new process for play that involves pods / containers full of 'loose parts' is delivering enriched learning opportunities for schools. (Sports NZ)

The 'loose parts' are typically sourced from the local community. They might include keyboards, cable reels, chairs and wood pallets.

Apanui Heemi (Play.Sport activator) describes it as a treasure chest that "encourages kids to play creatively, use their imaginations and energy, make new friends and discover and develop social and cognitive skills".

In the United Kingdom over 100,000 students have accessed play pods on a regular basis since beginning from a research project in 2007

Common observations include;

- improvements in behaviour and a reduction of incidents and accidents, integrated play across age ranges, abilities and genders,
- utilisation of the resources for positive classroom learning,
- children's perceptions of the school day improving,
- more confident and motivated staff

In Victoria, Eastbourne Primary School has invested in two unique Play Pods. The first Prep-2 Play Pod contains a variety of items designed to promote cooperative play. The year 3-6 Bush Play Pod contains a variety of natural and man-made materials with which students can create things.

Both play pods are overseen by teachers to facilitate learning in this context. These resources are very popular with students across the school.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Explore ideas for characters and situations through dramatic play (VCADRE017)
  - Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings including aquatic and the natural environment (VCHPEP063)
- 3-4**
- Participate in outdoor games and activities to examine how participation promotes a connection between the community, natural and built environments, and health and wellbeing (VCHPEP096)
- 5-6**
- Explore how participation in outdoor activities supports personal and community health and wellbeing and creates connections to the natural and built environment (VCHPEP113)

## Additional Resources:

*Play Australia on Play Pods:* <https://www.playaustralia.org.au/category/resource-tags/play-pods>

*Loose Parts:* <https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/our-publications/play-sport-newsletters/play-sport-issue-6/loose-parts/>

*Eastbourne Primary Play Pods:* <http://eastbourne.vic.edu.au/portfolio-view/play-pods/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zolpA3JYoDc>



## Equipment & Materials

Common equipment used for this activity can include;

- Scrap rubbish
- Broken furniture
- Second hand, and Op Shop items

# Outdoor Learning Bags

Students create their own Outdoor Learning Bag in class and then use it outdoors at lunch time or during planned structured sessions. This will promote students wanting to go outside more often. If you have the same resources that students have in their tubs or in bags, you are more likely to find the time to take them outdoors.

Like many of these activities, this is open to your imagination. The bags can be small and handmade or can be large and contain products.

Some of these things have been seen in Outdoor Learning or Forest Bags in the past.

- Pocket ID book
- Clay and chalks for making/marking in a non permanent manner
- Magnifying glass, ruler/tape measure, binoculars, field notebook and pencil
- String/yarn
- useful for dens, making jewellery, mobiles, decorating sticks,
- Magnifying glass, pocket bug/bird book
- Seeds, bulbs, something that can grow
- Potato peeler (to debark sticks safely)
- A nature journal
- Insect pooter (a device for catching insects)
- Compass and map of local area. And a plan of the garden/bush/play
- Mirror or mirror card - great for getting a different perspective of the outdoors.
- A treasure map

## 📖 Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Practise personal and social skills to interact with others (VCHPEP060)
  - Participate in play that promotes engagement with outdoor settings including aquatic and the natural environment (VCHPEP063)
- 3-4**
- Participate in outdoor games and activities to examine how participation promotes a connection between the community, natural and built environments, and health and wellbeing (VCHPEP096)
- 5-6**
- Explore how participation in outdoor activities supports personal and community health and wellbeing and creates connections to the natural and built environment (VCHPEP113)

## 🔍 Additional Resources:

*Outdoor Learning Support:* <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/elc34-outdoor-learning-support4.pdf>



## 📝 Equipment & Materials

Get creative with items that are easily accessible that can go in a learning bag - see some examples listed.



# Map Making

Reading a map is a skill that students will carry all of their life. This reading could be through a GPS, online services maps like Google, Topographical maps, and Mud maps, to name a few.

Fortunately, understanding key skills of map making can start in the playground.

**Step 1:** Give all students a piece of paper, and in the school yard ask students to create maps of their surroundings. Discuss how students would interpret their surroundings on a map, and what do they identify as key features.

**Step 2:** After your discussion, ask students to draw and label features and items they see. Then, get students to create small symbols and a key to add to their maps.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Collect and record geographical data and information from the field and other sources (VCGGC060)
  - Represent data and the location of places and their features by constructing tables, plans and labelled maps (VCGGC061)
- 3-4**
- Collect and record relevant geographical data and information from the field and other sources (VCGGC074)
  - Represent data and the location of places and their characteristics by constructing tables and simple graphs and maps of appropriate scale that conform to cartographic conventions of border, scale, legend, title and north point (VCGGC075)
- 5-6**
- Describe and explain the diverse characteristics of places in different locations from local to global scales (VCGGC085)
  - Describe and explain interconnections within places and between places, and the effects of these interconnections (VCGGC087)
  - Collect and record relevant geographical data and information from the field and secondary sources, using ethical protocols (VCGGC088)
  - Represent the location of places and other types of geographical data and information in different forms including diagrams, field sketches and large-scale and small-scale maps that conform to cartographic conventions of border, scale, legend, title, north point and source; using digital and spatial technologies as appropriate (VCGGC089)

## Additional Resources:

*Make Map Neighbourhood:* <http://www.pbs.org/parents/adventures-in-learning/2015/03/make-map-neighborhood-happy-birthday-mr-rogers/>  
*Make your own map:* <https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resource/make-your-own-map/>  
*Introduction to map making for kids:* <https://www.giftofcuriosity.com/montessori-mapping-activities-intro-to-geography-for-kids/>



## EXTENSION SUGGESTION

As an extension activity, students could build upon these first steps and utilise a compass and existing topographical maps and identify and explore the key and different surroundings. Have students explore the differences between the different maps



## Equipment & Materials

- Paper
- Pens & Pencils
- Compass (Optional)

# Texture Scavenger Hunt

The texture scavenger hunt is an activity that can unpack a range of learning, including sustainability, and vocabulary with the introduction of texture and sensory words like pointy, bumpy and smooth.

**Step 1:** Place natural objects with a variety of textures in a bag or box. You might put a pinecone in one, a stick in another and a stone in a third. Get students to close their eyes and feel each object without seeing it.

**Step 2:** Get students to write a list of all the textures and items they felt.

**Step 3:** Students then go outside to find a similar texture or object in an attempt to find all or similar textured items from their list of textures they felt before.

## Alternatively, make a traditional treasure hunt

1. Give students a list of all the items they need to find.
2. Assign each item a letter, ask students to find an object, on the list, write down its number and then move onto the next object.
3. Get students to (safely) spot as many list items as they can.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Respond to and pose questions, and make predictions about familiar objects and events (VCSIS050)
  - Participate in guided investigations, including making observations using the senses, to explore and answer questions (VCSIS051)
- 3-4**
- With guidance, identify questions in familiar contexts that can be investigated scientifically and predict what might happen based on prior knowledge (VCSIS065)
  - Compare results with predictions, suggesting possible reasons for findings (VCSIS070)
- 5-6**
- With guidance, plan appropriate investigation types to answer questions or solve problems and use equipment, technologies and materials safely, identifying potential risks (VCSIS083)
  - Decide which variables should be changed, measured and controlled in fair tests and accurately observe, measure and record data (VCSIS084)

## Additional Resources:

*Camping Scavenger Hunt:* <http://www.gocampingaustraliablog.com/2017/06/camping-scavenger-hunts.html>

*Nature Play Scavenger Hunt:*

<http://www.natureplaycbr.org.au/library/2/file/Nature%20Play%20SCAVENGER%20HUNT.pdf>

*Scavenger Hunt Printables:* <https://www.kidspot.com.au/things-to-do/outdoor-activities/outdoor-play/nature-treasure-hunt-free-printable-and-pretty-mobile-howto/news-story/e58629c6da1c120a3375983490f47543>



## EXTENSION SUGGESTION

To modify this activity, incorporate a Nature Walk, where students can walk around the school grounds and tick off the objects as they spot them.

Get students involved in designing the Nature Walk sheet. Ask what natural objects they would expect to find around the school grounds.

## Equipment & Materials

- Blindfolds
- Box or Bag
- Nature based items  
e.g. Pinecones, stones, sticks, etc.

# Obstacle Course



An obstacle course is a fantastic way to get students outside and uses little or no equipment. In this version you can use inexpensive pool noodles, sports marker cones, and anything your school already has on hand.

As a class or in groups, ask students to design an obstacle course that all students can attempt. Students should use equipment available. Laying full or half pool noodles on the ground, hanging them from a branch or attaching them to a seat are great ways for students to utilise the environment around them.

Challenge your students to limbo under them, crawl around them or walk on them like a balance beam. Students have the opportunity to unleash their creativity whilst considering ways they can use the outdoors around them.

**!** Ensure that students are staying safe whilst enjoying this activity.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
  - Identify and describe how their body moves in relation to effort, space, time, objects and people (VCHPEM067)
  - Use trial and error to test solutions to movement challenges (VCHPEM069)
- 3-4**
  - Practise and apply movement concepts and strategies (VCHPEM099)
  - Combine the elements of effort, space, time, objects and people when performing movement sequences (VCHPEM101)
- 5-6**
  - Practise specialised movement skills and apply them in different movement situations in indoor, outdoor and aquatic settings (VCHPEM115)
  - Propose and apply movement concepts and strategies (VCHPEM117)

## Additional Resources:

*A guide to Obstacle Courses:* [http://www.excelligence.com/Obstacle\\_Course\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.excelligence.com/Obstacle_Course_Guide.pdf)

*Muddy Obstacle Course:* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-08/muddy-student-on-obstacle-course/9523326>

## Equipment & Materials

- Pool Noodles

Tip: Use common found items like plastic cone markers, rings, etc. - your Physical Education staff should have these available.



# Critter Quest



This activity is designed to improve eye movement and visual tracking, assist in strengthening student vocabulary, letter recognition and sounds.

This is a teacher led activity, where you play the role of “Critter”. The students in this task are the “Trackers”. It’s their job to follow you with their eyes and answer the questions you have for them.

**Step 1** - Slowly inch your way around a designated space (students will physically follow you).

**Step 2** - Describe your progress as you move around the space. Use descriptions like “I’m climbing up the swing set” and “What letter does swing start with?”

As you progress, work in new words like climb, reverse and descend, suiting the age group of the students. Remember, this activity is a hands-on learning experience within the playground to assist in strengthening vocabulary, letter recognition and sounds.

## Equipment & Materials

No equipment is needed for this activity.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2** • Participate in guided investigations, including making observations using the senses, to explore and answer questions (VCSIS051)
- 3-4** • Suggest ways to plan and conduct investigations to find answers to questions including consideration of the elements of fair tests (VCSIS066)
- 5-6** • Propose and apply movement concepts and strategies (VCHPEM117)

## Additional Resources:

*Engaging outdoor activities for kids:* <https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/engaging-outdoor-learning-activities-for-kids/>

# Garden Detectives



For this activity you need markers, coloured card and an egg carton. On the card draw an object above each empty section of the carton.

Then ask students to go out and find the objects and put them into the matching compartment of the box. This can be natural objects like Sand, Leaves, flowers, grass, bugs, etc.

This is an interesting activity to do with students at the start of a unit where you can get them to go out and collect all things relevant to the topic being studied. Ask students to fill every section of the egg carton with natural objects to encourage them to think and explore the environment around them.

Once students detect more natural objects and fill their cartons, get them to share their findings with each other and discuss.

This forms a part of a pre-test of knowledge.

## Equipment & Materials

- Egg Cartons
- Markers
- Card

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Respond to and pose questions, and make predictions about familiar objects and events (VCSIS050)
  - Participate in guided investigations, including making observations using the senses, to explore and answer questions (VCSIS051)
- 3-4**
- With guidance, identify questions in familiar contexts that can be investigated scientifically and predict what might happen based on prior knowledge (VCSIS065)
  - Compare results with predictions, suggesting possible reasons for findings (VCSIS070)
- 5-6**
- With guidance, plan appropriate investigation types to answer questions or solve problems and use equipment, technologies and materials safely, identifying potential risks (VCSIS083)
  - Decide which variables should be changed, measured and controlled in fair tests and accurately observe, measure and record data (VCSIS084)

## Additional Resources:

*Garden Detectives Activity:* <http://clarinascontemplations.blogspot.com/2013/04/garden-detectives.html#comment-form>

# Insect Activity

This activity is an engaging way to help students imagine the world from another perspective.

It will challenge children's perception of the world around them. It will pose questions such as:

- "What feels different".
- "Might anything feel the same?"
- "What do you think it is thinking?"
- "Why do you think it decided to go that way"
- "Do you think they were working or were they having fun"

**Step 1:** Take students out into the playground and find an insect in their area. (If you cannot find insects, think about bringing along some collected insects to the class)

**Step 2:** Ask students to observe and follow the insects movements. Whilst they do this, get them to fill in a worksheet detailing what thoughts they think the insect may have as they follow it.

Discussing the recorded answers with the class can generate thoughtful discussion around conservation and emotional IQ with students.



## Follow an insect activity

What do you think it's thinking? Keep a record here:

**Thought 1:**

**Thought 2:**

**Thought 3:**

**Thought 4:**

## Equipment & Materials

All your class needs is a sense of adventure and an outdoor space to explore.

To enhance the experience, you may wish to use magnifying glasses, so students get an up-close look at what they are watching.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
- Identify and describe the features of places at a local scale and how they change, recognising that people describe the features of places differently (VCGGC057)
  - Collect and record geographical data and information from the field and other sources (VCGGC060)
  - Represent data and the location of places and their features by constructing tables, plans and labelled maps (VCGGC061)
- 3-4**
- Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things (VCSSU057)
- 5-6**
- Living things have structural features and adaptations that help them to survive in their environment (VCSSU074)

## Additional Resources:

Follow an Insect worksheet: <https://outdoorclassroomday.com/resource/follow-an-insect>



# School Garden

A school garden is a valuable teaching space which allows you to do hands-on activities in a variety of interdisciplinary lessons.

The garden engages students by providing a dynamic environment in which to observe, discover, experiment, nurture and learn.

The Collective School Garden Network (CSGN), has found that school gardens are “a living laboratory where lessons are drawn from real-life experiences rather than textbook examples, allowing students to become active participants in the learning process.

Through the garden, students gain an understanding of ecosystems, an appreciation for food origins and nutrition, and knowledge of plant and animal life cycles. At the same time, they learn practical horticultural skills that last a lifetime”

**Many schools have gardens, but they may not be used to full potential. The Resources section below lists a range of web sites that could help you reengage with your school garden or develop one.**



## Equipment & Materials

The equipment and materials required for a school garden can vary significantly.

Typically, a successful school garden learning program needs defined curriculum links as well as open space, shovels, plants and ways of watering and protecting them.

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
  - Explore how plants and animals are grown for food, clothing and shelter (VCDSTC015)
  - Explore how food is selected and prepared for healthy eating (VCDSTC016)
- 3-4**
  - Recognise the role of people in design and technologies occupations and explore factors, including sustainability, that impact on the design of solutions to meet community needs (VCDSTS023)
- 5-6**
  - Investigate food preparation techniques used in modern or traditional societies (VCDSTC026)
  - Investigate how and why food and fibre are produced in managed environments (VCDSTC035)
  - Investigate the role of food preparation in maintaining good health and the importance of food safety and hygiene (VCDSTC036)

## Additional Resources:

*Introduction to School Gardens:* [http://www.csgn.org/sites/default/files/GFL\\_1.pdf](http://www.csgn.org/sites/default/files/GFL_1.pdf)

*School Gardens start up guide:* <http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/files/97114.pdf>

*School Garden checklist:* <https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/school-garden-checklist>

*7 steps to creating a school garden:* <http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/7-steps-to-creating-a-school-garden>

# Geocaching

Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game played throughout the world by adventure seekers equipped with GPS devices. The basic idea is to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, outdoors and then share experiences online. Geocaching is enjoyed by people from all age groups, with a strong sense of community and support for the environment.

Geocaching has been embedded in Outdoor Learning since its inception, with more than 3 million geocaches currently available in the world. Students can create their own, or find others.

When students navigate to the geocache (Hidden Treasure) they open it up and put their name on the paper inside and hide it back exactly where they found it and then progress to finding another.

Geocaching ties in well with Maths, provides mapping skills and allows direct exposure to nature in a variety of ways. It also encourages social benefits of students working in pairs or groups.

Geocaching, when embedded in education, may be referred to as Educaching.



## Equipment & Materials

- Phone or tablet device with the Geocache App (Or a GPS Device)
- Pen / Pencil

## Curriculum Outcomes

- F-2**
  - Collect and record geographical data and information from the field and other sources (VCGGC060)
  - Interpret data and information to draw conclusions and describe the direction and location of places, using terms such as north, south, opposite, near, far (VCGGC062)
- 3-4**
  - Collect and record relevant geographical data and information from the field and other sources (VCGGC074)
  - Interpret maps and other geographical data and information to develop identifications, descriptions, explanations and conclusions, using geographical terminology including simple grid references, compass direction and distance (VCGGC076)
- 5-6**
  - Collect and record relevant geographical data and information from the field and secondary sources, using ethical protocols (VCGGC088)
  - Represent the location of places and other types of geographical data and information in different forms including diagrams, field sketches and large-scale and small-scale maps that conform to cartographic conventions of border, scale, legend, title, north point and source; using digital and spatial technologies as appropriate (VCGGC089)

## Additional Resources:

*Geocaching Adventure Kit:* [https://www.geocaching.com/articles/education/Adventure\\_Kit.pdf](https://www.geocaching.com/articles/education/Adventure_Kit.pdf)

*Geocaching for kids:* <http://parentingchaos.com/geocaching-for-kids/>

*An introduction to Geocaching:* <https://www.natureplaywa.org.au/library/1/file/Geocaching/Lesson1.pdf>

*The benefits of Geocaching:* <http://www.humankinetics.com/excerpts/excerpts/learn-about-the-benefits-of-geocaching>



# Conclusion

This document suggests a range of ways to use your school playground as a place to teach and learn. It is a snapshot of evolving Outdoor Learning.

As educators we are continually seeking development. If you have feedback or would like to share your experiences or activities please add a comment on the FUSE Webpage or email [outdoorlearning@outdoorsvictoria.org.au](mailto:outdoorlearning@outdoorsvictoria.org.au) and we will review it and get back to you as soon as possible.

# Acknowledgments

This teacher toolkit could not have been created without the work and dedication of educators throughout Australia. Educators often need to look at their local environment and create activities that suit their needs for that day, we thank you for sharing your activities and hope others reading this document can utilise your creative thinking and implement these activities.

Furthermore, the following organisations and staff have assisted in the creation of this document including;

- Outdoors Victoria
- ACHPER (Victoria)
- Environment Education Victoria
- Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria (GTAV)
- Parks Victoria

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