

A Vision for Outdoor, Environmental and Experiential Education in Foothills School Division

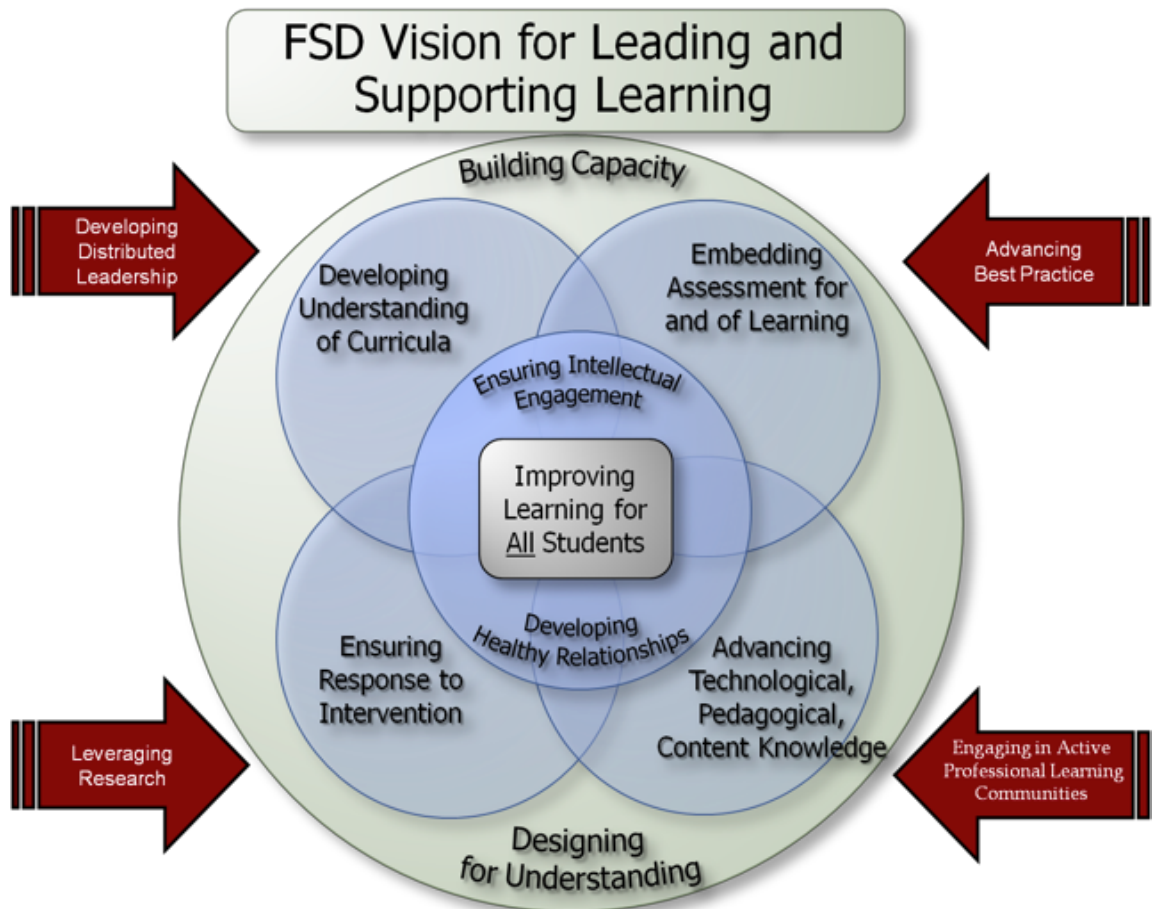
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Introduction:

Learning in the outdoors is a powerful and meaningful platform for life-long learning for all learners. Outdoor education is much more than learning outdoor skills, it is avenue for personal and group development. Moreover, it provides authentic experiences for students to grow in the skills required to be an engaged 21st century citizen. In addition, the out of doors provides a unique space to explore curricula for all subject matter. Students are also able experience the life-long physical and mental benefits of an active outdoor lifestyle.

Over the past few years there has been an increased interest towards outdoor education in Foothills School Division. School based: Outdoor Clubs, Outdoor and Environmental Education Courses and more extensive programs including Quest and the Millarville Community School's focus on outdoor education speak to how Outdoor education fits well within the vision of Foothills School Division to improve learning for all students.

The purpose of this document is to guide and inform future outdoor and environmental education programing within Foothills School Division.



Understanding Curricula

Outdoor, environmental and experiential education is a vehicle to address all aspects of the Alberta curriculum. Through intentional planning and thoughtful design, teachers are able to take students outside the classroom and offer unique opportunities for students to address content, skills and application of knowledge.

Outdoor learning offers many opportunities for students to physically interact with the subject matter, utilize their multiple intelligences and engage with curriculum. This can result in a deeper understanding of the material for a wider range of learners.

Ensuring Response to Intervention

Taking students outside provides opportunities to: listen to the wind in the trees, feel different textures, taste the fresh air, observe intricacies in nature, and smell the flowers. Outdoor, environmental and experiential education provides opportunities for students to learn using all their senses. Taking students outside who struggle in the classroom environment provides kinesthetic learning, which accesses all their senses. It also gives students ways to experience and showcase different intelligences. In addition, it allows all students access to different stimuli, which will deepen learning for all. Finally, the therapeutic benefits from experiencing the stillness and silence of wilderness benefits every person on a physical and emotional level.

Embedding assessment for and of learning

In order for outdoor, environmental and experiential education experiences to be intentional and have the greatest learning students must be active participants in the experience. As engaged participants, students will be equipped with the skills to be reflective participants. This ability to reflect about oneself takes the form of: group/ individual reflections, goal setting and post-trip debriefing. These are key skills for life-long learners. In addition, the outdoors offers real-life problems that can be addressed in performance based assessments.

Advancing Technological, pedagogical and content knowledge

As our capacity to engage learners in outdoor, environmental and experiential education increases we will be able to cross-pollinate our ideas, share and act as resources for other teachers who want to integrate outdoor and environmental education into their classes, but are unsure how to do so.

Our professional development events will diversify to include:

- certification courses
- sessions regarding outdoor pedagogy
- methods of implementing field studies
- Review of guidelines in “Physical Activities in Alberta Schools” and ASBIE’s “Off-Site Policy and Procedures Manual
- Development of Standard Operating Guidelines for field course prep (eg Lost and Alone and Leave no Trace) and emergency response.
- Modeling and mentoring UBD for trip planning to ensure learning and safety

Four Pillars of Outdoor, Environmental and Experiential Education in Foothills School Division are:

1. Character Education
2. Environmental/ Ecological Education
3. Wellness Education
4. Outdoor Skills



The following skills, abilities and understandings are taken the Foothills School Division vision as well as the ministerial order on what engaged thinking, ethical citizens and entrepreneurial spirit is.

We believe character education to be:

- Leadership
- Group awareness
- Communication
- Multiple perspectives (open mindedness)
- Problem solving
- Resilience
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Empathy and compassion
- Collaboration
- Community contributions (service)
- Decision making

- Accessing multiple intelligences
- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection

We believe environmental education to be:

- Multiple perspectives of people engaging in land management
- Ecology
- Current issues
- Curriculum links based on grade level
- Cross Curricular opportunities

We believe outdoor skills to be:

- Exposure to outdoor careers
- Activity specific skill building (ie: skiing, camping)
- Outdoor safety protocol and procedures

We believe wellness education to be

- Activities that promote physical health and wellness
- Activities that promote mental health and wellness
- Promotion of the therapeutic benefits of the nature based activities

The following lists contain the skills, abilities and understanding of the four pillars of outdoor, environmental and experiential education into the main objectives of Foothills School Division's vision.

Intellectual Engagement

- Multiple perspectives (open mindedness)
- Problem solving
- Empathy and compassion
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Community contributions (service)
- Decision making
- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection
- Multiple perspectives of people engaging land management
- Current issues

Developing Healthy relationships

- Leadership
- Group awareness
- Communication
- Resilience
- Patience
- Empathy and compassion
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Decision making

- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection
- Friendship
- Multiple perspectives of people engaging land management
- New experiences, being open to local experiences

Understanding Curricula

- Multiple perspectives (open mindedness)
- Problem solving
- Empathy and compassion
- Collaboration
- Community contributions (service)
- Decision making
- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection
- Multiple perspectives of people engaging land management
- Ecology
- Current issues
- Curriculum links based on grade level
- Cross Curricular connections

Ensuring Response to Intervention

- Perseverance
- Resilience
- Patience
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Accessing multiple intelligences
- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection
- Curriculum links based on grade level

Embedding assessment for and of learning

- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Decision making
- Accessing multiple intelligences
- Self-assessment
- Self-reflection
- Multiple perspectives of people engaging land management

Advancing Technological, pedagogical and content knowledge

- Problem solving
- Perseverance
- Empathy and compassion
- Multiple perspectives (open mindedness)
- Teamwork
- Collaboration
- Decision making
- Multiple perspectives of people engaging land management
- Current issues
- Curriculum links based on grade level
- Exposure to outdoor careers
- Activity specific skill building (ie: skiing, camping)