

Chase Outdoor School Proposal

Prepared for Kamloops Thompson School District #73 Board of Trustees

This proposal for an Outdoor Learning School in Chase, BC has been prepared by the Parent Working Group formed in January 2018.

Over the past decade, the movement to connect children meaningfully to the natural world has gained momentum throughout the globe. Both private and public organizations in the health and education sectors have adopted the movement, including many School Districts throughout British Columbia. Learning outdoors is valued highly throughout our region and it is clear that parents would like to see more of these opportunities for their children.

There is a great deal of research on the cognitive, social, physical and behavioral benefits of experiential learning that happens outdoors and involves natural eco-systems. In addition to improving students' overall health, playing and learning in natural landscapes has been shown to improve motor fitness, balance, and coordination, boost students' mood, reduce behavioral issues and generate more creativity in their work. Students who have participated in outdoor learning develop an increased ability to think both creatively and critically, and demonstrate improved performance on standardized tests. (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998)

Outdoor learning practices have proven to not only benefit students, but also teachers and the wider community (Dyment, 2005). After commencing an outdoor learning practice, many teachers have reported a renewed enthusiasm for teaching while communities' benefit from having students who are active and critically engaged (Ballantyne & Packer, 2002; Lieberman & Hoody, 1998; Rickinson et al., 2004).

Policy 706.1 1.A

A mission statement accompanied by the goals and objectives for the program;

To facilitate the creation of an outdoor school in Chase that will provide meaningful, engaging, experiential outdoor experiences, enabling personal growth and learning, while inspiring wonder and a deeper connection to the natural world.

Goals and Objectives:

- a) to create an outdoor school in Chase encompassing grades K-6
- b) to meet the current BC curriculum through an environmental lens using the world around us as our classroom.
- d) to encourage physical literacy and increase the physical activity of our students.

- e) to encourage environmental stewardship.
- f) to incorporate Secwepmec perspectives and knowledge into daily learning.
- g) to create a learning environment that better supports the four dimensions of health (mental, physical, emotional and social) allowing students to connect to each other and the natural world in a caring and responsible manner.

Policy 706.1 1.B

A statement which sets out the educational soundness of the Program for the District; including how the proposal is distinct from existing educational programs or fills a particular need not currently offered in the District;

The benefits of outdoor learning are well understood and are being widely incorporated into the public-school system. Experiential outdoor learning involves using the natural environment as a classroom; integrating the outdoor experience into all facets of the BC curriculum to help students gain a better understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

The difference between what we are proposing and the current push to get students outside is that in an outdoor school the majority of the school day is spent outside learning. It is not an occasional outing or field trip, which is how this concept is currently employed. The Chase Outdoor School will serve as a model with in School District #73, where students spend 80% or more of their school day outside, and have access to indoor facilities within the school such as the library, computer resources, and gym.

For further information on the educational soundness of this approach please see the references listed at the end of this proposal.

Policy 706.1 1.C

A clear indication of the intended school population to be served including age, grade levels, learner characteristics, and the number of students to be served including the neighbourhood communities;

Our intended school population consists of students that are currently enrolled in Haldane Elementary, are homeschooled, or live proximate to Chase in School District #83. As a school of choice, the program is open to any student with in School District #73 provided they can arrange transport to the school location. In 2018 we had 107 students from the Chase/Pritchard/Lee Creek area who expressed their intent to register with the outdoor school program as soon as it was operational.

Our hope is to see the outdoor school encompass grades K – 6 as per the current configuration of Haldane Elementary School. We are well aware that this goal is one that may be best met incrementally, starting off with the lower grades and gradually increasing the enrollment by one or two grade levels year to year.

The number of students to be served depends on support and momentum created by the Board of Trustees through acceptance and implementation of this proposal. The Parent Working Group has met with parents, School District staff, community members and local businesses and sees a great deal of interest in this school. A significant number of local parents drive their children to schools outside the district or have chosen to homeschool. Opening an outdoor school will draw some of those students back to the district, and encourage new families to move to the area. This has been demonstrated by the annual increase in enrollment at Sun Peaks Elementary and the impact that school has had on the community. Our hope is that the success of the outdoor school will lead to the eventual re-opening Chase Primary as a dedicated outdoor school.

From our perspective any child could thrive in an outdoor school, provided they are supported, interested, and have access to appropriate clothing. The skills and confidence that is gained through outdoor learning will give these students an advantage as they continue to learn and progress through life.

Policy 706.1 1.D

A clear understanding of the qualifications and nature of professional staff, and support staff required to offer the program;

It is critical that professional and support staff have training specific to facilitating outdoor learning. It would also be beneficial if they had actual experience working in an outdoor school or preschool. Using resources from the environments around us to meet all facets of the curriculum is very different from traditional classroom teaching. Staff will need to be comfortable outdoors, understand how to assess a site for risks, and make ecological impact and risk / benefit analysis on an ongoing basis. They should be trained in outdoor safety protocols including: inclement weather plans, wind warnings, wildlife safety, fire & earthquake hazards, healthy outdoor toiling practices, poisonous plant and mushroom identification, etc. They will need to dress appropriately for all weather and ensure that students are adequately dressed as well.

Other outdoor schools have found that staffing levels need to be adjusted. It may not be feasible for one teacher to focus on teaching if they are managing a class of twenty students in outdoor environments. Some schools use one or two parent volunteers to help out early in the year, while boundaries and safety protocols are being established, as a way to increase the adult to child ratio without significantly increasing costs.

Additional support staff will depend on the individual needs of students with in the class. We feel these are considerations best handled by the Trustees and teachers in accordance with district and provincial policy and in consultation with existing outdoor schools.

Training in facilitation outdoor learning is readily available through:

-Fresh Air Learning <https://www.freshairlearning.org/professional-development>

-Child & Nature Alliance of Canada (practitioner training or workshops) <http://childnature.ca/forest-school-canada/>

-Bonnie Davison - Victoria Nature School <https://www.victorianatureschool.com/outdoor-learning-programs--schools>

-Jay Roberts - Tofino Nature Kids <https://www.tofinonaturekids.com/workshops>

-Wisdom of the Earth <http://www.wisdomoftheearth.ca/art-of-mentoring-2018/>

There may be opportunities for training and mentoring with staff from the South Canoe Outdoor School in District #83.

Policy 706.1 1.E

A clear understanding of the facilities required for offering the program, both in the immediate and the long term;

The Parent Working Group consulted a certified outdoor educator who runs an outdoor preschool in Chase, and determined that the following facilities would be required for successfully operating an outdoor school.

- A completely natural space, not just a field or landscape area.
 - This needs to be somewhere with a diversity of flora, and fauna ideally, that is robust enough to handle some trampling and erosion due to foot traffic and can with stand some kid destruction. It is best to have access to several different ecosystems for varied learning opportunities.
 - Local examples include: the banks of Chase Creek, the Douglas Fir forest bordering Chase to the south, the sand bars and bank areas of the South Thompson river...
- Ideally the natural space also has lots of 'loose parts' such as rocks, sticks, pine cones, etc. that can be altered, moved, examined, and used in daily learning.
- A covered outdoor space like a tent or a gazebo as somewhere to go for brief periods where paper and other activities won't be spoiled by rain.
- A place for muddy / wet gear to be hung and potentially dried out.
- Places to sit and work such as tables and chairs or stumps, picnic tables with built in benches.

- Nature exploration tools such as magnifying glasses, binoculars, tweezers, small clear containers, shovels, scoops, buckets, identification guides...
- Tarps
- Rope, optional: carabineers, pulleys
- Portable Sit-upons, (a pad made of foam or other durable material pad to sit on in the forest. An example made from recycled materials: <https://www.reallygoodstuff.com/sit-upons/p/152594/>)
- Spare outdoor clothes and a rubber maid full of back-up clothes that is stored at the school.
- Hot water bottles or other hand-warming things (
- First Aid Kits
- A space where you can safely have outdoor fires as needed in winter.

Option A) Chase Primary

The vacant Chase Primary School is an ideal location for an Outdoor Learning School. It is within easy walking distance to many different eco systems, including Little Shuswap Lake, the South Thompson River, Chase Creek and Canyon, and the forested areas adjacent to the Village of Chase. It is a five-minute drive from Haldane, making bus transportation possible.

In January 2018 the working group contacted Mr. Art McDonald, Director of Facilities and Transportation SD 73, who stated there were no major structural issues with Chase Primary, and a basic upgrade would be all that was required to get the building re-opened as a school.

Option B) School within School at Haldane Elementary

We realize and understand the process and time it takes to re-open a school that has been vacant for 15 years. We are eager to get an outdoor school open, so a more practical and expedient option would be to create “school within a school” at Haldane Elementary. This would mean that students who are enrolled in the outdoor school use the existing school as their base, sharing facilities and administration, but spend at least 80% of their time outside in a natural environment.

This model allows initial enrollment in the outdoor school to be small, with one or two “class rooms” dedicated to the outdoor school. It also makes it easy for existing supports and resources to be shared, and for the outdoor school to grow into Chase Primary. Haldane is also easy walking distance to all the ecosystems mentioned for Chase Primary.

Policy 706.1 1. F

Evidence of community support for the program which indicates the parents have an understanding of the proposal and have or will have children who will enroll in the program;

In January 2018, the first public information meeting was held regarding an outdoor school in Chase. This meeting was so well attended that it had to be moved to a larger room, and led to the formation of the Chase Outdoor School Parent Working Group.

The Parent Working Group attended the Chase & District Shuswap Experience Trade Show on May 5th, 2018, and talked with parents and community members about benefits of outdoor education, and the potential of bringing an Outdoor School to Chase. In 2018 we surveyed parents and took feedback on what they expect and why they would choose to enroll their children in this program.

On March 26, 2019 another public information meeting was held to present the Chase Outdoor School proposal to parents for feedback and to renew the survey data collected in 2018.

We have received the following Letters of Support:

The Shuswap Trail Alliance
Shuswap Outdoor Learning Foundation
Skmana Ski and Snow Shoe Club
Thompson Nicola Regional District
Thompson Rivers University
Village of Chase
Pritchard Community Association
The Adam's River Salmon Society
Golden Ears Farm
Chase Heat

Policy 706.1 1. G

How students register for the program

The Chase Outdoor Learning School will be a School of Choice for District #73 and registration procedures will be the same as for other schools of choice with in the district.

The outdoor schools we looked at all have parent information sessions prior to registration. These meetings are quite detailed, so families have a clear understanding

of what their obligations are, and parents are required to attend these sessions before they can register their child in the program.

Application and Registration Process

The following is an excerpt from the South Canoe Outdoor School Proposal.

Application form:

The Subcommittee recommends that: -At the Parent Information Meetings, parents sign an “intention to register”, with contact and demographic information, then take home an application form and “sign off” on things like:

- *parents are willing / able to drive to school and scheduled sites (or organize rides for their child OR take bus from feeder schools)

- *parents are willing to properly outfit their child for weather, and commit to checking weather every day before school (funding needs to be in place to support clothing needs for those families that can't afford it)

- *parents understand that their child will be (and come home) wet and dirty; and that their child will be outside a lot

- *parents understand and support Outdoor School's values and principles of learning

- *parents agree that if their child's ongoing needs prove greater than the supports available, there will be a discussion with school and district staff to see if Outdoor School is a good fit for their child. Committee felt that this was important. It is a safety issue when in outdoor spaces.

Composition: Agreed that preferential opportunities should be given for Indigenous students on Reserve. Given the very small percentage of students on Reserve, these applications could be automatically chosen/accepted.

Siblings: It was agreed that we should keep families together if desired. Thus, siblings are automatically accepted to program as is done with French Immersion.

Policy 706.1 1. H

Evidence of such programs' success if they are operating in other school district.

1. Maple Ridge Environmental School (MR) School District #42

Principal: Randy Bates

K-7 Elementary School - 88 students

This school is based out of a research forest and they have some outbuildings used to store materials. With the exception of visits to the Library, pool and workshop in town, 100% of the learning takes place outdoors. Maple Ridge embraces the idea of experiential education thoroughly, thus policies are ever changing and not recorded in much detail. They work closely with local Indigenous groups and with many partner organizations. As pedagogical exploration and experimentation is at the heart of the

principles and values of the school, many areas are different than other schools including: assessment and evaluation, registration, and hiring. *credit South Canoe SD#83

2. Sangster Nature Kindergarten (SNK), School District #62 (Sooke)

Principal: Maureen Lauren
Kindergarten 20 students

Sangster has operated successfully for 5 years. This year, they have opened a second nature kindergarten in the Sooke School District. At this school the teacher is supported with one full time early childhood educator (ECE). Sangster's Nature Kindergarten was built within the School District's rules, as Maureen says, "followed the policy, down to the wire". For example: they followed the district's policies on hiring; the teacher/ECE seem completely comfortable teaching in a 'traditional' way though they are also skilled at an inquiry-based approach to learning; and their class is embedded in a regular school, which means they have a classroom that they use in the afternoons and they go to music and use the gym and go to assemblies. *credit South Canoe SD#83

3. NEST program at Davis Bay Elementary, School District #46 (Sechelt)

Principal: Ursula Hardwick
K-7 dual track school 90 students

NEST was a program created to prevent the school from closing due to low enrolment. There is a 'regular stream' of students at the school and an 'outdoor stream'. In general, it seems that NEST was also conceived within their school district's bounds, though they are pushing the edge as they ask 'what is authentic learning and reporting?' They have a reporting system that is based more on dialogue with parents, on student-led demonstrations of learning, and on anecdotal written reports, and they do not use grades or numbered scales. They have created partnerships with the teachers and also the researchers from SFU (Sean Blenkinsop and Laura Piersol) that have supported start up for their program and the program in Maple Ridge. *credit South Canoe SD#83

NOTE: A summary of relevant Policy and Operational details from these three schools has been included in the appendix. Information includes details of day to day procedures followed in the three sites and may be of interest to trustees and board members.

4. South Canoe Elementary, School District #83

K-7

South Canoe re-opened its doors as a dedicated outdoor school in September 2018. Students spend most of the school day outside on the school grounds or in the neighboring forests and fields.

Policy 1118.1 Transportation

Transportation of Students

Policy 706.1, Education Choice, states that such a program/school be maintained without transportation assistance from the Board.

We ask that the above policy be ignored for the following reasons. The two schools currently operating in Chase are located on the same grounds, and Chase Elementary is a five-minute drive away. Due to this unique situation, we ask that all Chase Bus Routes include pick up and drop off at the Chase Outdoor Learning School regardless of which building it is located in. This will not have a negative financial impact on the transportation budget and is necessary for rural families who depend on bus transportation. Many families will not be able to enroll their students in the outdoor school without bus transportation.

Furthermore, we are asking that families from Kamloops be able to access a designated pick up drop off site in Pritchard that would allow their children to finish their trip to school on the existing bus.

Conclusion

Current research strongly supports the benefits for learners in having the opportunity to participate in an outdoor learning school. Such a school would enhance not only the educational options available in the district but also help to meet the needs of the diverse learners found in a rural community like Chase. As educators, you are aware of the many benefits of promoting active experiential learning that engages and motivates learners and promotes cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth. The interest and support from local parents, the suitable environments for such a school in and around the village and the availability of space make Chase an ideal site for exploring this educational model. Small rural schools struggle with high teacher turnover. The opportunity to teach in such a unique setting may help attract and retain teachers. Chase is an excellent location for an outdoor school in this district. The interest from parents, students and the community, paired with ease of access to suitable environments cannot be easily matched.

Research articles:

Academics

Time spent in nature boosts performance in reading, writing, math, science and social studies

1. Lieberman & Hoody (1998). Closing the achievement gap: Using the environment as an integrating context for learning. Results of a Nationwide Study. *San Diego: SEER*.
2. Chawla (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Plan Lit*, 30(4), 433-452.
3. Berezowitz et al. (2015). School gardens enhance academic performance and dietary outcomes in children. *J School Health*, 85(8), 508-518.
4. Williams & Dixon (2012). Impact of garden-based learning on academic outcomes in schools: Synthesis of research between 1990 and 2010. *Rev Educ Res*, 83(2), 211-235.
5. Wells et al. (2015). The effects of school gardens on children's science knowledge: A randomized controlled trial of low-income elementary schools. *Int J Sci Edu*, 37(17), 2858-2878.

Time spent in nature enhances creativity, critical thinking and problem solving

1. Moore & Wong (1997). Natural Learning: Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching. *Berkeley, CA: MIG Communications*.

Time spent in nature increases focus and attention

1. Faber Taylor et al. (2002). Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner-city children. *J Environ Psy*, 22, 49-63.
2. Martensson et al. (2009). Outdoor environmental assessment of attention promoting settings for preschool children. *Health Place*, 15(4), 1149-1157.
3. Wells (2000). At home with nature effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning. *Environ Behav*, 32(6), 775-795.
4. Berto et al. (2015). How does psychological restoration work in children? An exploratory study. *J Child Adolesc Behav* 3(3).

Time spent in nature can decrease ADHD symptoms

1. Faber Taylor et al. (2001). Coping with ADD: The surprising connection to green play settings. *Environ Behav*, 33(1), 54-77.
2. Amoly et al. (2014). Green and blue spaces and behavioural development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE Project. *Environ Health Perspect*, 122, 1351-1358.

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2. Amoly et al. (2014). Green and blue spaces and behavioural development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE Project. *Environ Health Perspect*, 122, 1351-1358.

Time spent in nature leads to improved relationship skills

1. Chawla et al. (2014). Green schoolyards as havens from stress and resources for resilience in childhood and adolescence. *Health Place*, 28, 1-13.
2. Chawla (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Plan Lit*, 30(4), 433-452.

Time spent in nature allows children to better cope with stress

1. Wells & Evans (2003). Nearby nature; A buffer of life stress among rural children. *Environ Behav*, 35(3), 311-330.
2. Corraliza et al. (2012). Nature as a moderator of stress in urban children. *Procedia - Soc Behav Sci*, 38, 253-263.

*credit South Canoe SD#83

Appendix 1

Summary of Policy and Operations:

This is a comparison of the three outdoor schools listed above from the South Canoe Proposal, and is relevant because it illustrates the day to day procedures these schools follow.

Field trips & Off-school-grounds

Maple Ridge (MR): Meet off site 2-3 times a week at different locations, based on their year plan: generally, they spend a chunk of time (a couple of weeks to a couple of months) at one site before moving on to the next. Parents are expected to drive/carpool.

Sangster Nature Kindergarten (SNK): They are outside for 3 hours every morning in the forest adjacent to the school property, about 1km one-way. This is not considered a field trip, just daily learning, so they have one teacher and one ECE for 20 kindergarten students. Sometimes they go on 'regular' field trips (to the library, etc), and then they need to follow district policy, but their district doesn't have an adult-child ratio so as long as they can get all of the children there (by bus or car), they don't need to have a bunch

of other adults along. NOTE: The Nature Kindergarten at Scout Island (Williams Lake) also does not have an adult-child ratio. NOTE: SNK has M.O.U's with First Nations and with the school district saying that they will be outside at these particular sites everyday.

NEST: They walk about 1km one-way to their daily sites. Like SNK, they have a couple of sites depending on the weather (eg. if it's windy they go down to the beach; if it's rainy they shelter under the trees of the forest). Also like SNK, these sites are not considered 'field trips' because they are their daily learning spaces, so they don't have field trip adult-child ratios: they go two teachers together, which means two classes, so that there are two adults in a group. Their district also doesn't have adult-child ratios for field trips.

Safety risks/policies

SNK: They had an official person from the Provincial Emergency Preparedness ministry come and do an assessment, and at the same time they brought a 7-year old child with them to walk the land and record what hazards/risks a child would uncover or be drawn to. They don't share their risk management plan with parents (or anyone else, including us), but they do tell parents at the informational meeting that they have a risk management plan. This document is always changing, such as when they had an unusual snowfall, or the kids ran into a bees' nest.

From Sangster's Risk Management Plan:

Step One – Determine your Philosophy Regarding Risk

Step Two – Identify your Internal and External Human Resources ie who can help build risk

Step Three – Identify a Point Person

Step Four – Consult with a Risk Management Expert

Step Five – Review the Standard Risk Register Template Follow this link –

www.bcspp.org

Step Six – Re-format Your Risk Management Plan to Include Necessary Details

Step Seven – Revisit the Risk Management Guidelines Continuously

Application & Registration process

MR: On-line application only for kindergarteners except for the first few years, to allow entry of all grades and only Kindy registration now that the program is full. After online application, each family is interviewed to ensure that principles are understood and to help ensure a good fit. All families were interviewed prior to entering school. It was important to them that they were clear on the philosophy and reality of the school - i.e. being outside all the time. Just because a family applies to the school, does not mean that they will be able to register: it depends on the interview.

SNK: There is lots of information at this link re: their first year registration:

<http://naturekindergarten.sd62.bc.ca/registration-process/> There are three information sessions offered in January, and parents who are interested in registering their child in the Nature Kindergarten must attend one: on a Thursday night or on a Saturday

morning (accessible for all parents, working or not), or at the Indigenous centre called “Journey of the Heart” (which is an intentionally chosen venue so that the news gets out to the Indigenous community and they have an equal chance to register). Attendance at an information meeting is mandatory, and attendance is tracked. At the meeting there are the teachers, the admin, and a parent of a child who has already done the Nature K program. At the information sessions they discuss expectations, such as clothing, and parents sign an application form saying that their child can walk a couple of kilometers, that their child can follow directions, that their child is toilet trained, etc. This application form is then colour-stamped and handed in to admin by the Friday of the online registration week, which doubles as an attendance record. The Monday after these parent information meetings, online registration begins. Registration is first-come, first served, within the guidelines of 9 girls, 9 boys, and 2 aboriginal students. They don’t do interviews. They also don’t restrict composition (other than ministry composition limits). They have two orientation days, with the future-students and their parents: one in February (when the weather is cold and difficult, to give parents and kids an idea of what the reality of 3-hrs-a-day outside is like), and another one in May/June (they use Ready-Set-Learn money for a TOC for this day).

Composition

MR: Using online registration, they were able to filter elements of composition including boy/girl ratios and the number of Indigenous students. Class sizes K-8 are between 18-23 students per class, due to a large number of students with I.E.P.’s.

SNK: The Nature Kindergarten program follows ministry composition limits. The application form that parents sign off on acknowledges that an outdoor program needs to be a good fit for their child, and that withdrawing from the program may be necessary if, after conversations and adjustments have been made, it is still not suitable or safe because a child’s “ongoing needs prove greater than the supports available”.

Students withdrawing part way through the year

MR: This happened for a couple of students, but in general, a rigorous interview process that outlined expectations avoided this. Students that chose to withdraw simply transferred back to their regular catchment school.

SNK: This happened on one occasion for a student whose behaviour simply made it too unsafe to be outdoors, even with designated CEA. This was in the first year of the Nature Kindergarten program: there was a child who was oppositional/defiant, who was unable to listen and follow directions, and who would run away. It was unsafe to have a child who would bolt while trying to manage a class. They worked with this family to try to support this child, but in the end it was untenable.

Hiring timeline and procedures (connected to registration process)

MR: When they first started the school, they hired teachers in late April/May, which posed a major challenge in terms of setup and preparation. 25 MR requires that teachers complete a 40-hour special training course about experiential education and teaching outdoors, run by Clayton Maitland. This certificate trumps seniority.

Behaviour

SNK: Teachers bring cell phones or walkie-talkies, and if there is a behaviour issue, they call the administrator who comes and retrieves the child and keeps them in the office for the rest of the morning; if it is a repeating problem the administrator will keep the child in the office for the next day too. There are always two adults in the forest. "We are firm on the behaviour. If they can't handle it, they are out of there. It's a safety issue if you can't trust them out there," says Maureen Lauren, the principal.

Parent drop off/pick-up at different locations in expectations/handbook, registration

MR: Drop off/pick up in town once a week and an additional drop off at off site location once a week. Phone communication via teacher/admin cell if unavailable. The school creates a year-plan with locations and parents know ahead of time where school will be held each day. There is a 45 minute radius (by car) that is considered the "learning area" for the school.

Requirements/ signals, procedures before going outside.

MR: Ongoing discussion with students on how to dress, boundaries, and procedures for animal encounters. Also rules about staying behind the lead teacher and in front of the sweep.

SNK: There is a period of time at the beginning of the year (a few weeks or more, depending on the class) where teachers practice signals and procedures with students on the school fields before taking them to the forest. Some procedures include: what to do if you see a cougar/bear/deer etc, how to treat simple first aid, how to respond to teacher signals, etc.

NEST: Students are part of the ongoing discussion around awareness and management of hazards.

Recess/Lunch/preps at Outdoor School

MR: As it is outdoors with no major school facility, teachers are always milling about. However, the principal, is in charge of supervision when he is on-site.

NEST: Typically, they are gone for morning until lunch. Recess is compensated by keeping track of recesses and giving them days off. Preps are blocked into afternoons for all classes to allow for co-teaching and multi-aged learning when off school grounds

SNK: The teacher and the ECE take turns doing supervision at recess in the forest. They have prep in the afternoon when they are back at the school building.

Assessment and Reporting

MR: They operate outside of the rest of the school district. Primarily they use learning stories, always focusing on what the student can achieve. Anecdotal comments are done unit by unit.

NEST: No numbered scales, only anecdotal comments. A major student led interview each term and also use of Fresh Grade.

SNK: They use the reporting system that the rest of the school district uses. They also document learning stories but primarily as an additional communication tool with parents and students.

Use of technology

MR: "We use extensive technology ... artifacts of technology, from pen and pencil to knitting needle and crochet hook, from shovel, adze and rake to hammer, saw and power tools, from knives for carving and cooking preparation to carving tools, and from creating/carving/ making their own fork, knife, spoons, baskets, flutes, drums." They also have 15 iPads and 25 laptops, but the founder of the school, Clayton Maitland says: "Digital technology is only one tool."

First aid training

MR: All teachers need first aid. One or two main first aid attendant with up to date certification, quite high. Everyone trained in a three-day Red Cross course, level 1 with add in discussions/practice for the needs of that school. All training was done as a complete staff. Review first aid is done every second year.

NEST: All have Wilderness first Aid, which is a 25-hour course. This was a requirement for qualification.