

Exemplary Environmental Leadership/Sustainability Program or Initiative

School Board Near North District School Board

Contact Person and Email Address Lotje Hives, Program Coordinator Lotje.Hives@nearnorthschools.ca

Name of Program/Initiative NNDSB Outdoor Environmental Inquiry Mentor/Mentee Project

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative

Near North District School Board Outdoor Environmental Inquiry 2014 Mentor/Mentee Project

Visit:

<http://www.nearnorthschools.ca/documents/outdoor-inquiry-2014.pdf>

Description of Program/Initiative

The NNDSB Outdoor Environmental Inquiry Mentor/Mentee initiative is intended to build professional capacity in Environmental Education in sustainable ways across the Board, and engage educators and students in inquiry about, for and in their environment. Coordinated by Lotje Hives, Program Coordinator, over the course of 3 weeks lead facilitators Ann Butterworth and Jonathon O'Donoughue engage mentors in co-constructed, outdoor environmental inquiry. Mentors further engage mentees in co-planning inquiry-based learning in response to their students' interests and wonderings in their local environments.

Educators engage in Pedagogical Documentation with their students to make thinking visible. Documentation (photos, video, narratives and artifacts) provides evidence of the learning process, and the impact of outdoor environmental inquiry on student achievement and well-being. Learning stories are shared creatively with schools, families and community partners. It invites us to reflect as influencers of learners today and tomorrow.

Ministry of Education Outdoor Education Funding is accessed to ensure educator release, transportation costs, sustainable use of natural and accessible resources (human and material) and digital publication of documentation.

Each year principals and educators from other elementary schools throughout the Board are invited to participate and the journey is aligned with each school's School Improvement Planning.

What has been the Impact on Student Learning?

The described NNSDB Outdoor Environmental Inquiry Mentor/Mentee initiative has resulted in a positive impact on student learning.

- Educators documented an increase in student knowledge, skills and articulated perspectives that foster environmental stewardship.
- Documentation to make student thinking visible is evidence of students' increased capacity to take action on locally relevant environment issues.
- Leadership support and facilitated modeling, through the Mentor/Mentee Initiative, is building professional capacity by way of gradual acceptance of Environmental Inquiry instructional strategies, and leading to an increase in time spent learning in the natural environment.
- Educators are collaborating (face to face and online) and sharing experience and evidence of learning through documentation leading to an increase in environmental inquiry-based learning.
- The annual documentation of the journey is provoking further professional dialogue and each year new schools are engaging in this initiative for their educators, students and school communities.