



Outdoor Classroom

We are pleased to inform you that some of the Lochside teachers, staff, administration and PAC members are collaborating on the planning and building of an 'Outdoor Classroom' on the Lochside schoolyard. As the importance of time spent in nature for children has become a current theme in popular child-raising and education, we are excited to plan and facilitate this project for the benefit of current and future Lochside students.

In an ever increasing era of media, electronics and general screen-time, we are witnessing an unprecedented rate of obesity and mental health conditions in children. In BC, current research indicates that 1 in 7 children in BCⁱ will experience a diagnosable mental health condition at some point through their childhood. Childhood obesity has risen sharply over the last decades and physical fitness has declinedⁱⁱ.

In Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods", he compels readers with the concept of Nature-Deficit Disorder and the impacts of increased technology/inside-time and decreased connectedness to nature has on our children. His work has been cited over 2000 times in academic articles and has sparked international conversation on how to mitigate the negative effects of the cultural shift we find ourselves parenting and educating our children in.

Following other schools' examples and by the sharp increase in the popularity of 'nature kindergartens', we are keen to ensure our Lochside students are given the same opportunity for access to active, outdoor learning. Early childhood is a key time to develop positive habits that can impact health outcomes throughout the lifespan.

LEPAC is looking to approve an amount of \$25,000 to support the building of this project. There would also be many volunteer hours committed to make this project a reality. For more information, to help out and/or to vote on this project, please come to our Annual AGM this Wednesday.

ⁱ <http://www.cmha.bc.ca/get-informed/mental-health-information/child-youth-md>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2011001/article/11397-eng.htm>