

# FOREST SCHOOL PROGRAM

## PLANNING PROJECT

### 1 OBJECTIVES

- 1) Establish a new partnership between a local school in Edmonton, Alberta and the University of Alberta.
- 2) Collaborate with the school community to determine potential research questions and methods for a future research project on the forest school program.

### 2 PARTICIPANTS

- 24 educators (teachers/educational assistants)
- 17 students (kindergarten - grade 6)
- 10 parents
- 8 knowledge users from outdoor play, disability, and healthy school community organizations

Participants engaged in meetings, interviews, and/or focus groups.

### 3 RESULTS

Participants identified important topics for future research. These included:

- social-emotional wellness
- cognitive/academic outcomes
- environmental stewardship
- barriers to participating in the forest and nature program

### 4 NEXT STEPS

The local school and the University of Alberta have received funding from Alberta Education for a larger study to explore the experiences and examine the impact of the forest school program on staff and student **socio-emotional wellness**, using methods identified by participants.

### Quotes SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

*[Forest School] allows you to regulate, build resilience not only for children but for us as well as adults. Allows you to reflect, pause, and heal. - teacher*

*I think mental wellness is always an important one...like, are there protective factors that come with or are correlated with having that connection to nature, that outdoor experience? - parent*

*I think we have to map both like the academic outcomes and the social-emotional development. - knowledge user*

*So if you get angry, you go to your sit spot and then you take 1 trillion deep breaths until you are out of air...and then you are fine. - student*

Please reach out if you are interested in more information about next steps:

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