

What are some top research gaps or questions within the field of outdoor play?



Implementation Science

- How to implement what we already know from the research. More DOING with educators
 - Is there actually no bad weather?
 - Need to work with municipalities
-

Data Collection

- Baseline data - how much are kids and adults actually playing?
 - Statistics describing the problem --> draw attention to the crisis to cause action
 - What are children's perspectives of outdoor play in early childhood?
-

Funding & Equity

- How do we get more funding for children in low socioeconomic status situations to support them in having opportunities for outdoor programs?
 - How to involve/support newcomers and refugees in nature & outdoor play (in all seasons)
 - Funding to support initiatives
 - Inner-city support
 - Rural vs. urban outdoor play experiences
-

In Schools

- Pre-school, elementary, and high-school access to outdoor play
- The value of outdoor play for emotional regulation as strategy for children in classrooms
- Ecological school yard environments and teacher confidence/tools
- Implementation of key curriculum: math & literacy in junior years (grades 4-6) & outdoor education
- How can we make manageable class sizes to support quality outdoor learning?

How can we advance the outdoor play policy landscape?

Engaging Policy Makers

- Get the Ministry of Education to listen to research. Fund more outdoor-licensed spaces
- Engage the policy makers & regulators
- Government & policy is reactive so outline the problem/ desired action to get attention of governments/policy makers



Existing Guidelines/Standards

- How do UN rights of the Child UNDRIP & TRC Calls to Action demand change in childcare and K-12 learning policy?
- Link with provincial, municipal, and federal priorities
- National/Provincial standards for licensing/regulation for forest schools!
- Standards for outdoor learning in K-12 (Ontario)
- Minimum amount of time required for outdoor learning in K-12 in Ontario

Look at what others have done

- Consider international policies. What could work for Canada?
- Share success stories to show how it works in other places

Practice

Who do we need to invite to the table?
What are important pedagogical priorities for outdoor play and learning?



Continuous Learning

- Continuous PD in the field “in the outdoors”
 - Best practices, visual guides, and multimedia tutorials
 - Diversity of pedagogical practice (e.g., place base ecopedagogy, etc.)
-

Who should be targeted?

- Professors from universities/superintendents from school divisions
 - Ministry of Education (Ontario)
 - Canadian Child Care Federation (front-line)
 - Front-line on the ground educators
 - National multi-sport organizations
 - Libraries
-

Partnerships

- Partnerships with schools
 - Community partners
-

Acknowledging Diverse Perspectives/Experiences

- Understanding the importance of how not all children/adults fit in the same box!
- Urban, low income, refugee & newcomers' families

Next Steps

What critical steps are required to action some of these ideas?

Remove Barriers

- Accessible training resources for practitioners pre & post service
- Safe, efficient, and affordable public transit to natural spaces
- Funding for gear
- Access to resources



Systems Thinking & Outreach

- Define the problem and develop a call to action
- Different licensing requirements for outdoor programs (i.e., window requirements)
- Showcase what policy integration would look like across the disciplines that “get” outdoor play
- More lobbying of decision-makers to understand the downstream benefits provided by the outdoors
- Support regional events
- How do you become a NATIONAL organization?

Professional Development Opportunities

- Training & education for school teachers to understand the value
- Outdoor play as a core subject in ECE study (i.e., part of college curriculum)
- Government incentives and projects regarding nature & the human experience needs to re-focus and grow