

# What is the value of outdoor education?

In recent years, schools have become more interested in outdoor education for a number of reasons. Outdoor education can help students learn to appreciate nature and its biodiversity in nearby settings before being introduced to the seriousness of environmental issues (e.g. pollution and deforestation). These familiar outdoor spaces are rich learning environments where teachers can incorporate content in a concrete way to make what is learned in school more meaningful. For example, students can study biodiversity by discovering the species that surround them, use buildings to put mathematical concepts into practice, or identify problems in their community to develop a project.

## HERE ARE FIVE TIPS TO HELP TEACHERS GET STARTED TEACHING OUTDOORS

<b>Clearly define your educational intentions</b>	To properly plan an outdoor activity, it's essential to set a clear educational intention for each outing (e.g. have students explore the diversity of arthropods that live in environments near school).
<b>Prepare students for going outside</b>	To ensure that students know what to do outside, it's important to define your expectations by providing clear instructions, and/or by modelling the expected behaviours.
<b>Plan short activities</b>	Respect your level of comfort. It's best to start with shorter challenges the first few times (e.g. a 15-minute outing) before gradually adding new elements with each outing.
<b>Make connections between outdoor and indoor activities</b>	To maximize the impact of outdoor activities, it's important that they are integrated into and complement the activities taking place indoors (e.g. prepare an observation sheet for students to record their observations of arthropods and then have them compare their observations with their classmates when they return to class).
<b>Be confident</b>	Although the adoption of new educational practices requires a period of adaptation, trust your experience, your adaptability and your desire to teach outside.

While outdoor education allows students to learn differently, this practice also includes many other benefits. When natural outdoor environments are integrated into teaching and learning, they can foster students' cognitive, social, and physical development. In particular, research shows that outdoor education decreases sedentary behaviours and encourages students to be more physically active, improves their attention and motivation, and reduces stress levels.

For online resources and references please visit:  
[www.edcan.ca/facts-on-education](http://www.edcan.ca/facts-on-education)

*Author,*  
**Dr. Jean-Philippe Ayotte-Beaudet**

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