

OUTDOOR LESSONS - *A suggested framework*



Learning outdoors has proven academic, social, emotional and physical benefits for students and teachers alike, but taking the first step outside can be overwhelming. The Nature Play SA team have developed a framework, based on best practice and ideas from near and far to support this first step.

A successful model for learning outdoors is critical to the long-term sustainability of any outdoor learning approach and supports students to develop independence and autonomy in learning. This framework will help you establish group norms, boundaries, routines and expectations in a fun and simple way.

You will notice that these steps essentially provide routines that can be tweaked and personalized over time. Before too long, they will become part of your personal outdoor teaching repertoire.

STEP 1

TRANSITIONING AND MOVING OUTSIDE

Give students a way to line up, a place to meet, something to 'do' on the way and a timeframe.

Lining up ideas – pattern, boys/girls/number/hair colour / birthday month / more ideas will come from students.

Practice one way for at least a week or more before introducing another.

A place to meet – use natural and built features of the school environment.

Something to do – find something 'insert a shape, colour or other attribute here' whilst moving, move like a creature or familiar character or use a familiar song (The Ants Go Marching or The Grand Old Duke of York).

A timeframe – Use a stopwatch, egg timer, number of steps etc, to set clear expectations.

STEP 3

TIME TO MOVE, RUN AND TOUCH

No more than 5 minutes. Run and touch orientates everyone to 'this' classroom space and allows students to expend energy and focus when required.

Ask students to run and touch and come straight back to the 'sticky' circle. This may be in another place if you have moved. (The anchor point is with you or wherever you instruct the class to gather.)

Run and Touch ideas - something on your boundary, 2/3/4 trees, 5 green (or insert colour here) things, something rough, something smooth, something cool (ie insert adjectives here), 2/3/4 things in the shade/things in the sun.

STEP 2

GATHERING

- Use sticky feet, knees or fingertips to create a circle.
- Identify the boundary, remembering that it may change from lesson to lesson depending on the class dynamic (and teacher's initial level of comfort.)
- Remind students of a cue (whistle, coo-ee, drum beat) to listen out. This is your cue for them all to return immediately. *Practice this skill until it is seamless and needs no further explanation.*
- Risk asses as a whole group then reflect upon 'How do we keep ourselves and one another safe?' in this space.

STEP 4

WHOLE GROUP FOCUS

Use a white sheet (calico or tablecloth) or rope circle to draw student's attention to the middle of the sticky circle. Use the white sheet 'tabletop' as a focus for a 5-minute whole class activity.

It can be used to share something interesting, showcase a collection of sticks or leaves, share provocation images or have a picture book on it to read later.

Over time, objects and materials within the focus area will relate to your lesson focus. Initially, it may simply be a place to share something you have found.

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STEP 5

TIME TO MOVE – LINK TO WHOLE

GROUP FOCUS

It is time to move out from the whole circle activity with an independent task that encourages movement and, ideally, is linked to the focus activity. No more than 10 minutes.

Suggestions - stand next to something interesting, complete a scavenger hunt for x, y and z, collect 5 leaves of different colours, locate a right angle in nature, stand next to something and guess its age or explore positional language with go around, under, over 2/3/4 things.

Once again, students will have ideas to contribute to this and the focus of the lesson will also help develop intention – in time.

STEP 7

AND WHAT ELSE?

Include some time, however small, for unstructured free play; the true essence of play. Build this into your session at some point and discuss this with students. How long, where and expectations.

Facilitating a conversation with students about the balance of structured learning time and unstructured play time will help them settle and engage.

STEP 6

SMALL GROUP WORK

15 minutes (or adjust to less/more time depending on the age of students)

Use white sheets or rope circles to establish small group work areas near you. In small groups, students respond to a challenge, a question, an activity or share ideas. This is where students sharing ideas and knowledge really comes into play!

Action to support this behaviour – start with activities that are known to students and easy to do – initially. The skill of gathering and working in small groups IN an outdoor environment is the first skill you want to develop. This comes before curriculum content.

STEP 8

GATHERING - BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER AND TIME TO REVIEW

5- 10 minutes. This is called 'Feedback with 5'.

Hold up five fingers and think of something for each.

- 1 Something that was surprising...
- 2 One thing that I learnt...
- 3 Something I enjoyed...
- 4 A wondering I have...
- 5 Next time I would like to...

ROUNDING IT OFF - TRANSITIONING INDOORS

Apply an element of challenge or routine to the move back indoors, in the same way that moving outdoors has structure.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Complete a personal 'Reflection with 5' and share this with a colleague who may be supporting your journey.

Remember to start small, expect that it will take more than a few visits to find a level of comfort and celebrate small wins along the way.

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