



# Thriving Learners

Connecting Outdoor Learning and  
Wellbeing with Seacliff Primary School



**Connection to Place:** *Nature journaling invites learners to slow down and use curiosity to notice and wonder about the natural environment.*

### Overview:

The *Thriving Learners* program was designed to develop and implement nature-based play, teaching, and learning experiences that enhance student wellbeing and learner agency, ultimately supporting improved learning outcomes. Supported by the Department for Education, the program strengthens the Areas of Impact by empowering teachers to embed co-designed, student-led outdoor learning within their school contexts.

This partnership involved upper primary students from Seacliff Primary School, a Category 7 site on the Index of Educational Disadvantage, with an enrolment of 364 students in 2024.

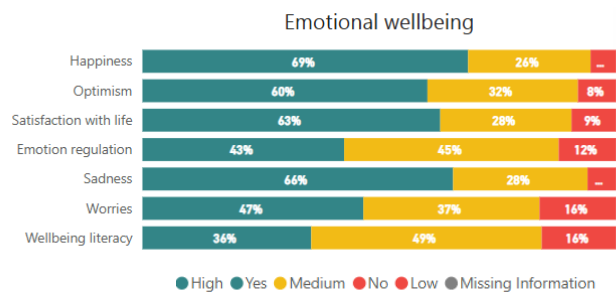
Seacliff was selected as a pilot site for this Thriving Learners project due to its proximity to Tulukutangga (Kingston Park Coastal Reserve) and Tjilbruke Springs, a site of deep cultural and spiritual significance for the Kurna people, the Traditional Custodians of the Adelaide Plains.

The program brought authentic, co-designed outdoor learning to life with a strong focus on student wellbeing. Through repeated visits to Tulukutangga (Kingston Park Coastal Reserve), students engaged deeply with the site's green and blue spaces, exploring how nature-based learning could strengthen the Department for Education's Areas of Impact. Grounded in a commitment to reconciliation, students also engaged with the Tjilbruke Dreaming story, deepening their understanding of cultural

connections to place and the significance of learning on Kurna Country. The program demonstrated strong links between outdoor learning and the prototype South Australian Curriculum for Public Education, particularly in the development of key dispositions, capabilities, and knowledge.

A key focus of the partnership was addressing gaps in wellbeing literacy, as identified through the Department's *Wellbeing and Engagement Collection* (WEC). Wellbeing literacy is defined as "how well a young person believes they can communicate about their wellbeing."

With only 22 per cent of students across South Australia reporting high-level wellbeing literacy, the pilot introduced strategies to equip students with the language and skills to understand and manage their wellbeing, express their needs, and make informed choices that support their health and learning. At Seacliff Primary School, 36 per cent of students reported high wellbeing literacy (table below). This was above the state average, but still the lowest of all WEC wellbeing measures, highlighting the need for targeted support in this area.



The key question guiding this pilot was: How can nature-based, student-centred learning enhance students' wellbeing literacy and support them to apply this knowledge in their daily lives?

### Supporting Research:

Spending time in nature was a vital part of the program's approach, reflecting research that positions nature as an essential component of a "balanced diet" of childhood experiences. These experiences support healthy development, wellbeing, and environmental attitudes, while also contributing to overall health (Gill, 2014; Chawla, 2015). Outdoor activities and time in nature offer well-established mental and physical health benefits for children (McCurdy et al., 2010).

Gill's (2014) systematic review links regular exposure to natural environments with improved physical health, mental wellbeing, and cognitive development. Physical activity, such as walking, supports overall fitness and reduces the risk of obesity, reinforcing the value of movement in daily routines.



“I am thankful. I am happy. I am inspired by how many details I missed from not looking more carefully.”

Seacliff Primary School is located approximately one kilometre from Tulukutangga (Kingston Park Coastal Reserve). It was anticipated that regular walks to this nearby green and blue space would support students’ spatial awareness and connection to place, aligning with research on the cognitive, physical, and emotional benefits of active outdoor learning. Walking has been linked to improved spatial orientation (Moran et al., 2017), more detailed mental mapping (Paskins, 2012), deeper environmental connection (García Mira & Dumitru, 2014), enhanced environmental perception (Eisenlohr et al., 2023), and greater awareness of urban elements (Agdas, 2020).

A core aim of the program was to foster wellbeing literacy, defined as the vocabulary, knowledge, and skills to communicate about wellbeing in context-sensitive ways (Oades et al., 2021). *Thriving Learners* supported this by embedding experiential, nature-based learning that built emotional awareness, regulation strategies, and expressive language through activities such as nature journaling, storytelling, and open-ended, place-based learning.

Research suggests that nature journaling and reflective storytelling help children articulate emotions and thoughts, with drawings and discussions revealing strong links between access to nature and wellbeing indicators (Moula et al., 2021).

Open-ended outdoor learning, where students practised self-regulation, mindfulness, and collaborative problem-solving, aligned with evidence linking nature experiences to positive developmental outcomes. Contact with green and blue spaces has been associated with improved behaviour (Amoly et al., 2014), enhanced self-esteem, self-efficacy,

resilience, and academic performance (Mygind et al., 2019), as well as improved social skills and behaviour, though outcomes vary by context.

Finally, place-based, biodiversity-focused outdoor learning has been linked to lasting improvements in mood and wellbeing (Harvey et al., 2020). Regular access to green space supports children’s mental health, cognitive development, and overall wellbeing (McCormick, 2017).



*Curiosity: A beachside table brimming with natural materials to spark curiosity and inspire nature journaling.*



**Assessments:**

The following assessments were used intentionally to inform the initial sessions of the program and respond to learners’ needs and interests. Before the program began, students completed two baseline assessments to explore their environmental perceptions and wellbeing literacy in a nature-based context.

The *Children’s Environmental Perceptions Scale (CEPS)*, developed by Larson, Green, and Castleberry (2011), was used to assess students’ interest in nature (eco-affinity) and their attitudes toward environmental issues (eco-awareness). In the pre-assessment, students demonstrated a strong understanding of the importance of plants and animals and expressed a clear interest in learning how to protect them. While their environmental values and awareness were high, there was less readiness to take personal action, suggesting a key opportunity to nurture agency and deepen emotional connection through hands-on experiences.

Students also completed the *Well-Lit 6 in Nature*, an adaptation of the Well-Lit 6 measure (Oades et al., 2021) developed by Nature Play SA (NPSA, 2025) to explore wellbeing literacy in outdoor settings. The tool captured how students understand, express, and communicate the link between nature and wellbeing.

The *Well-Lit 6 in Nature* provides a structured framework for assessing children’s wellbeing literacy in outdoor learning environments, ensuring their understanding is rooted in meaningful, nature-based experiences. It also aligns closely with the South Australian *Wellbeing and Engagement Collection (WEC)* survey, particularly in assessing dimensions such as vocabulary, knowledge, skills, and multimodal communication.

As part of the pre-program assessments, learners used nature journals to create *sketch maps* of the urban features between their school and the program’s green space. This activity established a baseline for spatial awareness, connection to place, and access to nature. Sketch mapping has been shown to support environmental literacy and help children form meaningful connections with features such as green spaces, social areas, and movement pathways (Hume, Salmon, & Ball, 2004). A post-program sketch map offered a comparison to assess changes in perception and engagement over time.

The classroom teacher completed the *Nature Impact Survey*, developed by Nature Play SA, which assessed the program’s impact on their confidence, knowledge, and ability to apply the Department for Education’s Areas of Impact across learning contexts.

**Well-Lit 6 in Nature: Pre-Program Assessment**



**Wellbeing Literacy:** Pre-assessment data showed that while students understood nature supports their wellbeing, they needed help developing the language and confidence to express this connection more creatively and diversely.



“I did it!  
I made fire!”

Finally, the *Interpretation of children's nature drawings* framework was used to understand children's attitudes to and relationships with nature (Salazar et al., 2020). Children were prompted to draw their favourite thing to play outside in nature. Children were invited to label their drawings to minimise misinterpretation. Children's drawings were observed, and five themes were identified: social representation; emotional affect; engagement with nature; incidents of risky play; and depictions of intellectual play.

#### **Documenting Impact:**

In addition to quantitative assessments that include the *Well-Lit 6 in Nature* and *CEPS*, the program was documented using a mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2011), incorporating a range of formal and informal tools to centre the voices of children and capture the diversity of learning throughout its duration. This approach allowed us to be adaptable, inclusive, creative, and responsive. We used the following informal and qualitative methods:

- Anecdotes
- Nature journals
- Samples of children's work
- Photography
- Observational stories

As part of the Thriving Learners program, Nature Play SA developed an observation tool to help educators make learning visible in outdoor settings. Grounded in the prototype *South Australian Curriculum for Public Education – Health and Physical Education, Years 5 and 6* (Department for Education, 2024), the tool captured students' dispositions, capabilities, and knowledge as they engaged in nature-based experiences.

#### **Rhythm of the day:**

Each session followed a similar plan, which, along with repeat visits to the space, created a level of comfort and consistency for learners. The rhythm of the day included:

- Walk to the reserve, noticing natural and built assets along the way.
- Recess break to settle into the space.
- Acknowledgement of Country incorporating Kaurna language.
- *Smiles and Frowns* check-in.
- A bookish provocation based on the program theme of the day.
- Nature Journaling, which might include a nature walk or foraging for inspiration.
- A nature play activity aimed at highlighting and supporting a specific disposition or capability, like resilience, curiosity, or mindfulness.
- A reflection and walk back to school.





### Smiles and Frowns: A Routine with Heart

One of the most effective ways educators can extend learning into nature is by taking familiar routines outdoors. In *A Culture of Agency*, Lisa Burman (2023) describes rituals as “routines with heart”, a phrase that captures the spirit of *Smiles and Frowns*, a simple yet powerful check-in used throughout this program.

Gathered in a circle, children are invited to share a ‘smile’ or a ‘frown’, or simply pass. This gentle ritual supports active listening, public speaking, and the development of empathy. It opens a space where learners feel seen and heard and supports connection that extends across friendship groups, giving educators insight into happenings that may not surface during the daily classroom discourse.

At our first session, about a third of the group chose to pass. But by the third session, every child participated, a sign of growing trust and belonging. Over time, children became more confident in expressing a wide range of emotions.

These small practices are more than just routines; they are opportunities to nurture *Positive Childhood Experiences* (PCEs), such as feeling valued, supported, and connected. While many children face *Adverse Childhood Experiences\** (ACEs), intentional nature-based rituals like *Smiles and Frowns* help build protective layers of wellbeing through reflection, shared language, and emotional literacy.

Across the program, students described emotional arcs that moved from excitement to frustration to pride, revealing how nature can hold space for both challenge and growth. In this way, rituals with heart help build the kind of wellbeing literacy that children can carry with them long after the session ends.

### Getting it “Wrong”

Nature play learning is grounded in reflective practice and guided by the Early Years Learning Framework’s Planning Cycle (ACECQA, 2022), which shapes the structure of *Thriving Learners* programs. Each session is built around a continuous cycle of observing, documenting, reflecting, and planning. This approach ensures that learning experiences are intentional, responsive, and closely connected to children’s interests and developmental needs (Houghton, 2013).



Figure 1: The Early Years Learning Framework Planning Cycle (ACECQA, 2022)

The cycle allows educators to stay attuned to what is unfolding in the moment while also shaping future learning through thoughtful reflection. Reflective practice supports quality outcomes for children (Kennedy, 2018) by prompting educators to consider what worked well, what could be changed, and how to adapt going forward.

These processes of observation, interpretation, and planning often took place during and immediately after each session. The following example illustrates how we adapted in the moment, responded to emerging needs, reflected on our decisions, and used those insights to plan for the next session.

\*Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are “very stressful events or circumstances that children may experience during their childhood,” (National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health [NWCCMH], 2020). There is strong correlation between ACEs and the likelihood of experiencing mental and physical health problems later in life. An estimated 72% of Australian children will be exposed to one ACE in their childhood (NWCCMH, 2020).

Despite the negative impact ACEs may have, there are protective mechanisms: Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) that can mitigate or soften their effect. PCEs include positive peer networks and caring adults outside the family (NWCCMH, 2020). When children feel they matter, are safe, and belong at school, through the support of an attuned teacher, they experience further protective factors (Evolve Therapeutic Services, 2024). Just one positive relationship can improve the time it takes for a child to heal from stressful life events.



*A pop-up classroom: Coastal areas offer rich learning environments to foster curiosity.*

### **The Planning Cycle: An Observational Story**

It was a windy and sunny day on the beach. The sand and wind created an extra sensation on the skin, as well as auditory input from the waves. The bright sun reflecting off the sand increased visual stimuli. We **noticed** that many children self-regulated this sensory input by covering themselves in sand from the start of our session. Some children struggled to tune in during group discussions and safety directions, and this may have been intensified by the noises on the beach.

During the session, we **observed** that many children were drawn to gross motor and whole-body sensory play by digging in the sand, picking up and carrying big rocks, and throwing pebbles in the water. We **considered** in the moment that cognitive, teacher-led learning, such as our planned nature journaling, was outside of the capacity of many that day. In response, we **adapted** to allow space for this whole-body physical exploration of the beach that children were showing us they needed. This involved having an opt-in approach to guided experiential learning where some students chose to work together to create a nature mandala with a facilitator, and others chose to explore the beach in different ways.

After the session, we **reflected** on the ways certain groupings of children supported energetic, physical play but made it harder to engage in calm, mindful exploration. This type of learning is central to nature journaling. While the session didn't go as planned, we did not view it as a failure. We **discovered** that we had tried to pack too much into one session. This increased transitions and time spent listening to instruction, pulling children away from what their bodies and minds needed. We were proud that we **noticed** this and responded with flexibility and humility. We didn't get it quite right, and that was okay.

Our **plan** was always to support both kinds of learning: honouring the children's interests while scaffolding what they know and can do with support. As we packed up, we **considered** what we might change for the next session to better support student learning and wellbeing. The following week, we began the session in the grassed area, sheltered by

trees and protected from the elements. This calmer setting helped reduce sensory input and allowed students to regulate more easily before transitioning to the beach.

Working in small groups, chosen with children's dispositions and temperaments in mind, we supported students to engage in nature journaling while they were focused and settled. Some children worked at picnic tables, others on stools or directly on the ground, choosing what suited their bodies. Teachers offered additional scaffolding for those who found aspects of journaling challenging, while also encouraging peer support and gentle prompting to help children express themselves. We promoted wellbeing literacy through naming and validating feelings, and supported a slow, mindful pace of learning.

We honoured the children's ongoing need for full-body exploration and movement by providing sustained time for free play on the beach after the focused group work. There, children followed their interests: a large group ran across the sandbank, squealing with delight; a smaller group created obstacle courses; others dug deep into the sand with clear intent and concentration.





“I feel very happy today: peaceful, playful and proud.”

### Partners in Learning: Student Co-Design

The Thriving Learners program is underpinned by the Areas of Impact, but what do student co-designed and student-led outdoor learning experiences look like in practice?

We view co-design as a continuum, an extension of what educators already do. It is deeply contextual and shifts across the duration of a lesson, a unit of work, or an entire year. The continuum includes:

- **Doing** – Students complete set tasks.
- **Informing** – The teacher explains decisions.
- **Representing** – Some students give input.
- **Consulting** – All students give input.
- **Choosing & Participating** – Students make limited choices within teacher-defined options.
- **Co-Designing** – Students help plan learning.
- **Co-Creating** – Students and teachers share responsibility and learn as partners.

Throughout a typical school day, educators move between these approaches, from Doing to Co-Creating, depending on the purpose, context, and students’ readiness. Co-design isn’t a binary concept; it’s a professional judgement call that supports students to grow in capability and independence. There’s no one-size-fits-all model. Traversing the continuum and using the approach that best suits the moment is part of the art of teaching.

This Thriving Learners program began with **consulting**, using pre-assessment data to identify student interests and opportunities for connection. Each week, students exercised **choice**, deciding where, what, and how they would **participate** within the session's learning outcomes. As the program progressed, students began to **co-design** sessions with educators based on enjoyment and curiosity. By the final session, students were excited to share their knowledge and experiences to help **co-create** a uniquely South Australian “beginner’s” nature journal resource in partnership with Nature Play SA.

By the end of the program, it was clear that students wanted to continue learning outdoors and began discussing how the class might carry it forward. One student even initiated a conversation about creating a list of wishes. Their desire for more time to explore came through in comments like:

- “A longer block.”
- “A whole day, so we don’t feel rushed.”
- “Twice a week.”
- “An overnight camp to see stars.”
- “Yeah! Just expand it!”

Students also reflected on some of their favourite learning experiences:

### Nature Journalling

- “I learnt focus, and art techniques.”
- “Yeah, you learn the close-up, intricate details and what it (the observed item) is really made out of!”

### Whittling

- “We had to work, to try hard and do different techniques. It was something different.”

### Five-Minute Fires

- “It was frustrating because every time I got it, it went out. But I had persistence.”
- “I had hope. When it was lit, it was amazing! And so, you’d try again.”
- “I don’t know the word for it, but you had to keep going.”  
“Resilience,” another child offered.  
“Yeah, resilience!”

This feedback shows that students were deeply engaged because they felt challenged, supported, and trusted. By making meaningful choices and influencing decisions, they didn’t just participate in learning; they helped shape it.



### Outcomes and Post-Program Results:

The Thriving Learners program at Seacliff Primary School supported meaningful shifts in how students and educators engage with nature. The data shows stronger student understanding of nature’s role in wellbeing, growing confidence in creative expression, and greater clarity among educators in planning and assessing outdoor learning. These findings highlight nature’s potential as a core part of teaching and learning, not an extra but something essential.

### Wellbeing Literacy: Well-Lit 6 in Nature

The most meaningful growth from the *Well-Lit 6 in Nature* survey was in students’ ability to use nature to support their wellbeing and to explain how and why it helps. These increases suggest that nature-based experiences gave students more than enjoyment; they helped build real, usable strategies for self-awareness and emotional regulation.

There was also a clear improvement in students’ ability to communicate the nature–wellbeing connection through movement, nature journalling and storytelling. This suggests a shift from simply knowing about nature’s benefits to being able to express that understanding with greater confidence and in different ways.

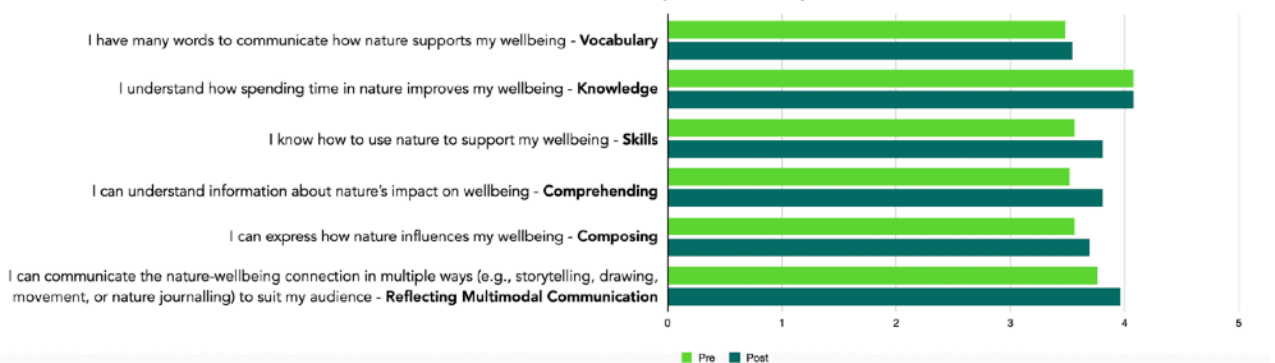
Change in Well-Lit 6 in Nature Survey (n=26)



Smaller changes were seen in vocabulary and knowledge, where scores were already high. This suggests students came in with some understanding, and the program helped deepen and apply it rather than introduce it.

For educators, the takeaway is clear: even within a short eight-week program, regular time in nature, paired with space to reflect and share, can build wellbeing literacy in meaningful ways. Simple, low-cost routines like nature journalling and emotional check-ins build confidence, emotional language, and self-awareness. With sustained focus over a full year or longer, the potential for lasting impact is even greater.

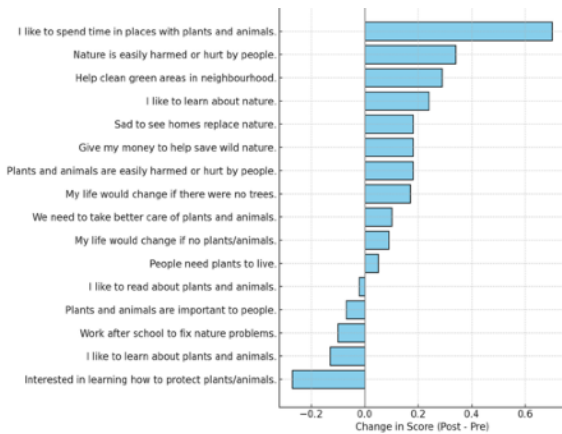
Well-Lit 6 in Nature Survey - Seacliff Primary School



## Children's Environmental Perceptions Scale

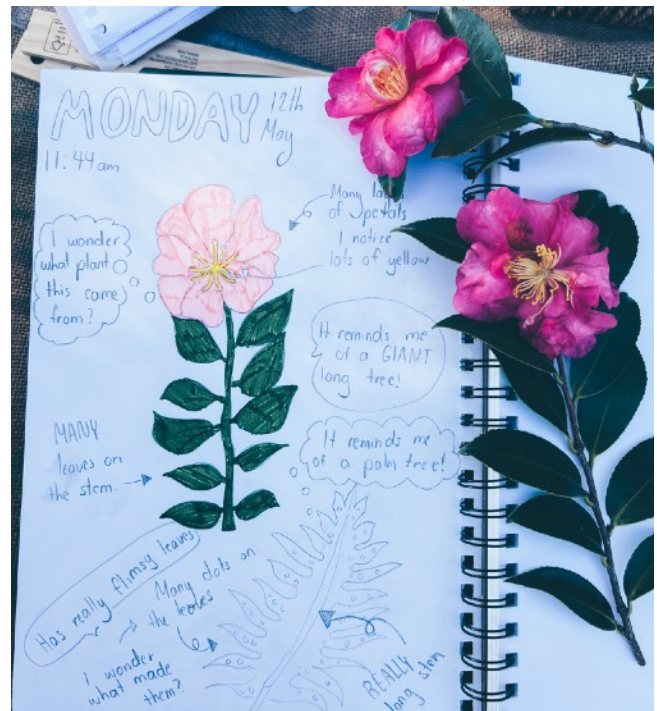
The most noticeable growth from the *Children's Environmental Perceptions Scale (CEPS)* data was in students' enjoyment of being in natural spaces. The largest shift came from the statement "I like to spend time in places that have plants and animals", suggesting that regular, positive experiences outdoors helped students form a stronger emotional connection to nature.

Change in Children's Environmental Perceptions Scale (n=26)



There were also clear increases in students' awareness of nature's vulnerability and their willingness to care for it. Items such as "Nature is easily harmed or hurt by people" and "I would help to clean up green areas in my neighbourhood" show that students began to see themselves as participants in caring for their local environment, not just observers.

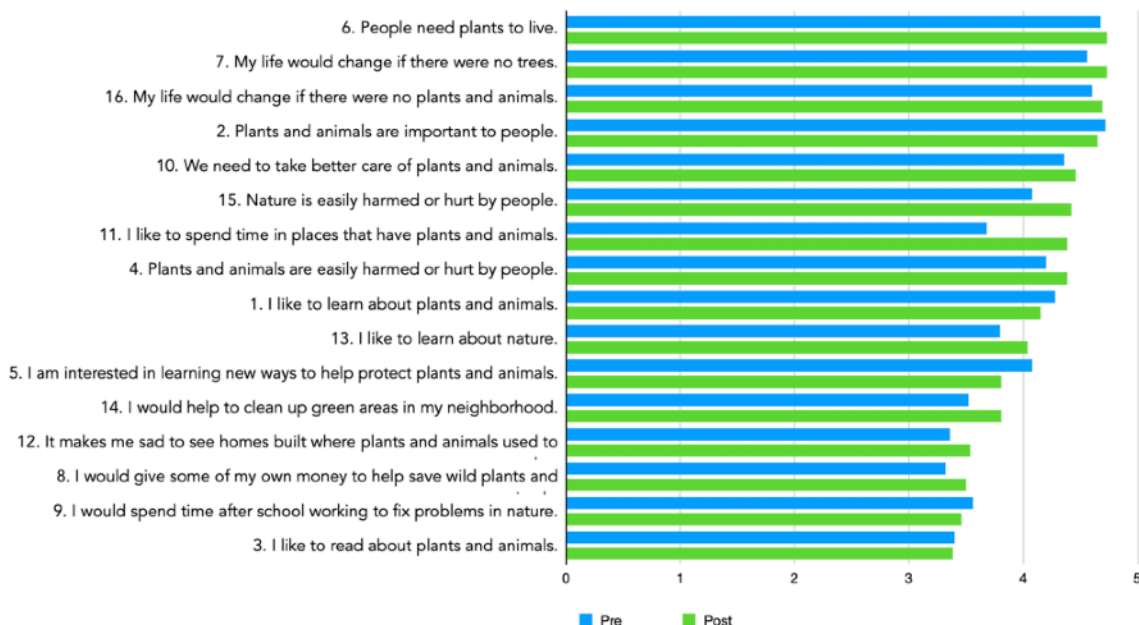
While many students already held strong environmental values, there was less movement in areas related to personal responsibility and action, such as "I would give some of my own money to help save

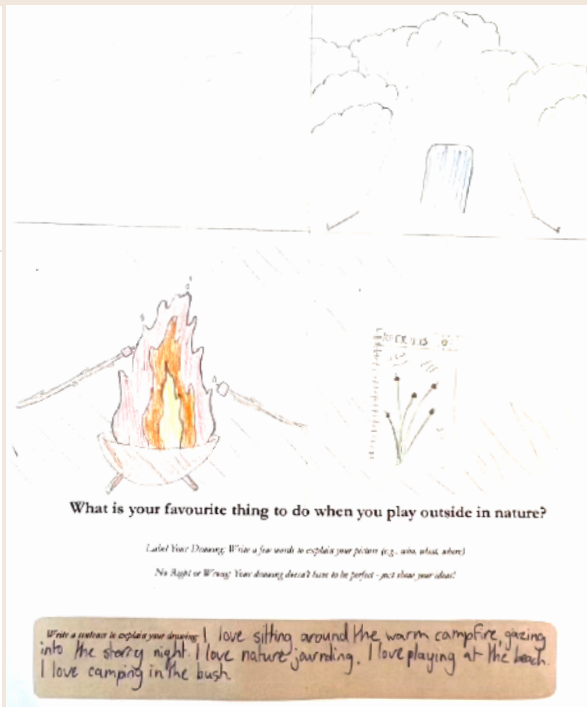
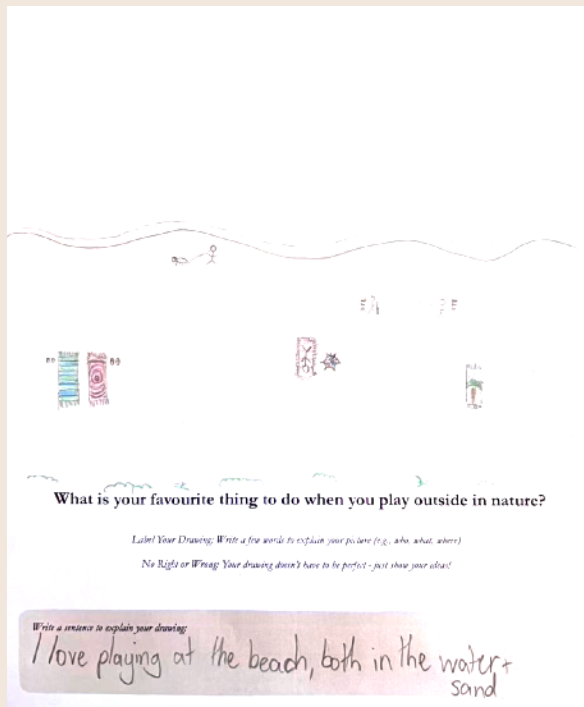


wild plants and animals" or "I would work after school to fix problems in nature." This reflects a common developmental pattern. While children may care deeply about nature, they can often feel powerless or unsure about how to make a difference. They may not yet see environmental action as something within their sphere of influence or feel confident taking ownership without support.

For educators, this highlights the importance of pairing emotional connection with opportunities for meaningful, age-appropriate action. When students are supported to act on what they value, they begin to see themselves not just as advocates for nature but as capable changemakers.

Children's Environmental Perceptions Scale - Seacliff Primary School



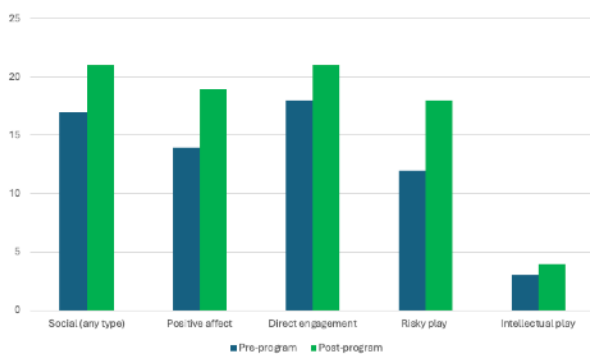


**Connection to nature:** Drawings give children a voice beyond words, showing what they notice, value and feel in nature. They help educators see learning and connection in ways surveys alone can't.

### Nature Drawings and Interpretations:

*Interpretation of children's nature drawings* was used to understand children's attitudes to and relationships with nature (Salazar et al., 2020). The drawing data showed clear growth across all five areas, reflecting deeper connection, engagement and personal expression among students after the program.

Positive Change Across All Areas in Nature Drawings



- 1) Social and personal connections became richer, with more students including themselves or others in their artwork. Children who once left people out of their drawings began to represent themselves and used more personal language in written reflections, signalling a stronger sense of self in nature.
- 2) Emotional expression shifted noticeably. While some pre-program drawings showed no emotion or neutral feelings, post-program work was filled

with smiling figures and words like “love,” “peaceful,” and “happy.” Some children expressed more complex ideas about focus and enjoyment, suggesting that nature had become a space for both calm and challenge.

- 3) Direct engagement with nature became universal post-program. All students showed themselves actively engaging with the natural world, reinforcing the program's success in fostering hands-on connection.
- 4) Risky play grew in variety and frequency. Fire-making emerged strongly after it was introduced, suggesting that new, well-supported experiences could quickly become significant and leave lasting impressions for children.
- 5) Intellectual play showed a small but meaningful increase, especially through nature journaling. Although sometimes challenging to categorise, this indicated that reflective and cognitive engagement found a place alongside physical play in children's outdoor experiences.

Overall, these results indicated that time in nature strengthened children's personal connection, emotional engagement and sense of autonomy in learning. Even students with existing connections to nature benefited in ways worth documenting. Yet the data also reminded us that numbers alone could not capture the full richness of children's experiences. Listening to their voices and observing their learning remained essential for a complete picture.



**Sketch Mapping:** On the left, a student's pre-program map of the space between school and the program site, showing minimal detail. On the right, the student's post-program map which now includes roads, trees, new knowledge like "Moth Forest," and landmarks such as the Tjilbruke Monument, as well as personal places like a favourite bench, showing both learning and a growing connection to the space.

### Sketch Mapping:

Pre-program and post-program sketch maps were used to explore children's knowledge of place, connection, and spatial awareness.

Many students were already familiar with Kingston Park Coastal Reserve, reflected in detailed pre-program maps. Post-program maps from about half the students showed deeper engagement and new learning, including added labels, keys, and references to landmarks, flora, and cultural features like the Tjilbruke Monument.

Some children included personal stories, such as places they fell, explored for crabs, or enjoyed journalling. Others shifted from car-focused to more pedestrian, nature-based perspectives.

While changes were sometimes subtle, the sketch maps revealed how time in place-based learning can deepen environmental understanding, build belonging, and provide a valuable visual record of learning that is often hard to capture through other means.

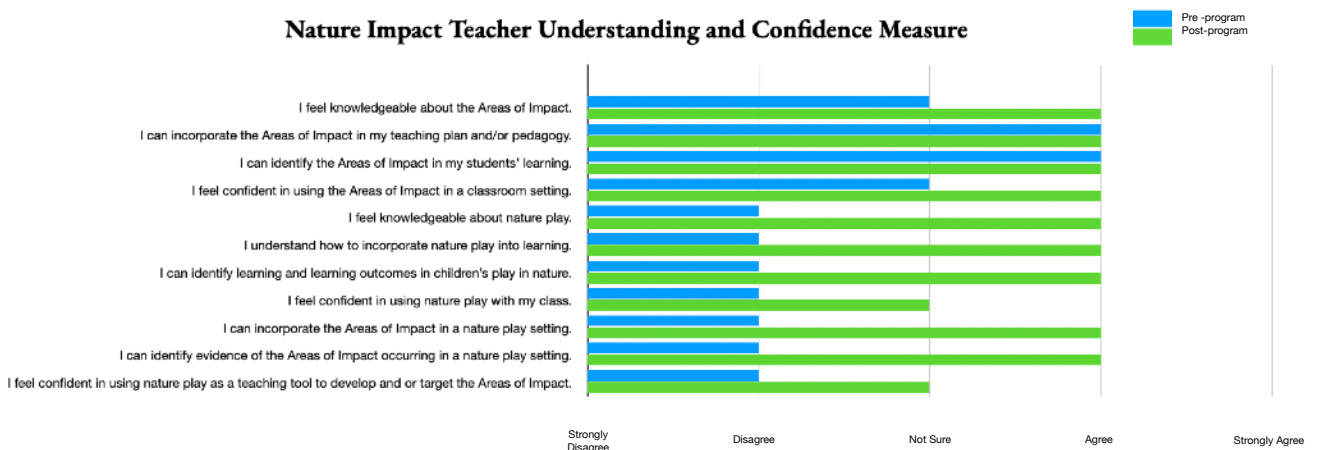
### Teacher Confidence Survey:

The classroom teacher completed the Nature Impact Survey to reflect on their confidence and ability to apply the Department for Education's Areas of Impact through nature play. Results showed clear and consistent growth across all measures related to nature play. By the end of the program, the teacher felt more confident planning, observing, and responding to student learning outdoors.

Opportunities to observe students during nature play, supported by the Observational Story tool, helped the teacher link what they saw to dispositions, capabilities, and curriculum knowledge.

In a post-program discussion, the teacher shared that seeing nature-based learning in action boosted their confidence and inspired new ideas. Activities like nature journalling and sound mapping engaged students more deeply than expected. The teacher valued the flexible, interest-led approach and is now exploring ways to embed these practices, including mentoring younger students and sourcing materials to continue outdoor learning. This highlights how modelling and hands-on experience can empower teachers to embrace nature pedagogy and nurture student agency.

**Nature Impact Teacher Understanding and Confidence Measure**





### Student Reflections:

There is always a possibility of bias when Nature Play SA facilitators ask children for their opinions, comments and feedback on a program. This is known as social desirability bias and is the tendency for people to align responses with social expectations, such as giving positive feedback to reduce the risk of offence to the facilitators.

It was reported to us by the classroom teacher that 15 students had chosen to write about the Thriving Learners program in their end-of-semester reports and are examples of unbiased reflections of the program as children were writing unprompted.

Children spoke of their favourite experiences: cubbies, making fires with flint and steel, marble runs on the beach, learning Kaurna language and culture, and nature journaling. Children mentioned pride in their achievements, and the understanding that learning could be fun and that play IS learning. This is best described in their voices:

*“During the first semester of 2025, I have really enjoyed Nature Play. I enjoyed walking down to Kingston Park and nature journaling and more. My most enjoyed part in nature play was learning how to light a fire with flint and steel - it was a great experience.”*

*“The achievement I am proud of this semester are my nature journaling...”*

*“This semester I have really enjoyed the Nature Play. I really liked being able to learn outside of the classroom in nature...”*

*“This semester I've enjoyed going and making fires at nature play sitting around the fire and drawing animals and learning a bit about Aboriginal language.”*

*“I also liked Nature Play because we got to learn fun things that we have never learnt before.”*

**“This semester I have enjoyed going to Kingston Park and making a marble run in the sand, whittling, starting a fire with a flint and steel and making a cubby with my friends.”**

### Summary:

For many children, the *Thriving Learners* experience was the highlight of their semester. Their deep engagement with the program led to rich, multifaceted learning grounded in local nature and a strong connection to place. Children experienced a sense of belonging and connection, where all emotions were acknowledged and accepted, and where expression was encouraged through spoken, written, and creative languages.

They engaged in play-based learning that challenged them and supported problem solving, self-pride, and appreciation for the natural environment. These experiences fostered agency through meaningful, inquiry-led learning that extended beyond the classroom and embraced a flexible, playful, and responsive teaching approach.

Their voices are loud and clear: when children are given opportunities to engage with nature through play, they connect deeply to their learning. They are inspired to ask questions, advocate for their needs, take pride in their efforts, and develop a strong sense of self and place in the world.

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