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## Practitioner Inquiry Project Report

# Leadership opportunities & reflections

### Project title

Engaging Together in Nature

### Subtitle (if applicable)

In what ways do families and the Early Learning and Childcare educators provide nature experiences with and for children?

### Your name, role and setting

Daniel Champlin – Principal Teacher, Victoria Primary School and ELC

### 1. What are the implications of this research for:

- The team/setting as a whole
- Pedagogy
- Resourcing
- Policy
- The sector / your networks / management beyond your immediate setting.

(Please aim to write between 250 minimum and 500 words maximum, using the box below. Please do not disclose the identity of any individuals in your comments, as this form will be part of your colleague's public record of their project).

At Victoria, whether in an early years setting or in school, we understand the importance of the outdoors to the development of a child as well as their engagement with learning. It was important to Froebel and his principles but beyond that, we understand how significant it is for a child's wellbeing as a whole. We have recently made significant strides in improving our use of the outdoors, such as by engaging with CPD around fire lighting, excursions, The Hub outdoor training, etc, and thus this research is important for us a setting to help us reflect and develop our use of the outdoor even further. This is something we will continue to encourage, build, and develop. Our staff are all committed to providing the best possible start to our children, both in and outdoors, and they have all been very engaged in the many opportunities to develop our outdoor space for all.

One of the key implications from this project is supporting families with changing attitudes toward outdoors, such as the risk-taking or messiness aspects. By involving families in outings – or even in activities in our own outdoor spaces – and modelling languages and interactions, this research showed that there can be changes and improvements for families as a whole. Involving families again in our activities is something that has recently returned following the break due to covid, and so ensuring that this is a focus – particularly with outdoor activities – can help families to support their children in accessing outdoor spaces themselves in their own time too, as well as help to build relationships between the school/ELC and families.

**2. What value do you place on practitioner-research – and what more can be done in your setting/locality to enable it to continue as part of routine practice going forward? (100 word approx.)**

Our school and setting as a whole has always placed a lot of value on practitioner research and certainly this project has important messages for early years and our setting as a whole about both how to best involve families in the outdoors and in a more general sense, supporting our families with their own skills, knowledge, and confidence when it comes to outdoor activities with their children. As a result, we have been very proactive in inviting families in for a range of activities and outings, and we will continue to support our families as much as we can by building strong relationships.

We will ensure that the key messages from this project are shared across early level and that we continue to train staff members so all children can benefit from high quality outdoor experiences – both within our settings and at home too, supporting where we can.

**3. What have you learned as a leader through supporting this research / programme? (100 words approx)**

The key message from this research that I will ensure that I take forward is that while it is easy to think that something so fundamental to us at Victoria – outdoor learning and experiences – is something we all have in our practitioner toolkits, that actually it be more complicated than it looks. While we are thankful to be able to provide our children with these experiences within our own setting, their experience can be made so much more valuable if families are equally committed and engaged with these experiences, both within the setting and at home. It emphasises the importance of a positive, deep working relationship between our practitioners and home. I will continue to encourage and support staff with their own personal development particularly relating to the outdoors, and as an early level, we will ensure that families are involved as often as possible in our activities and supported wherever possible.

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