

N.E.N.A.

NATURE
EDUCATORS
NETWORK
AUSTRALIA



Rationale

"If we want children to flourish, we need to give them time to connect with nature and love the Earth, before we ask them to save it." (David Sobel)

Research over the past decade has built up an impressive body of evidence demonstrating the value of connecting children with nature in a way that results in an increase in environmental knowledge, a deeper, more personal, understanding of the way their world functions, academic gains, and higher social and emotional functioning, especially in self-esteem, calculated risk taking and confidence.

Outdoor learning programs in schools are well established in Scandinavian countries, Germany and the United Kingdom. With the arrival of the National Curriculum in Australia with sustainability as one of its cross curriculum priorities, the scope for innovative, holistic outdoor learning is greater than it ever has been.

This has implications for playground design, for the use of vegetable and food gardens in schools and communities, for the design of meaningful outdoor educational activities in all Key Learning Areas.

For community based educators this means the scope for outdoor activities has an effective curriculum base within the school system, across all learning areas.

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Founding Ideas, Rationale,
Aims & Contacts



2012

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Outdoor nature education can be provided by classroom teachers, specialist teachers, Environmental Education Centres and external providers. Our aim is to provide a platform to allow all these groups to collaborate and share their knowledge to enrich nature education for all Australian children. With the implementation of the National Curriculum the time to act upon this is now.

Network Aims:

We wish to promote the benefits of outdoor play and learning in a natural environment. These benefits include:

- ✓ Strong gains in physical and cognitive development
- ✓ Learning to work together cooperatively, to take turns and to develop sound social skills
- ✓ Improving balance, coordination, fine and gross motor skills
- ✓ Developing problem solving skills, confidence and perseverance
- ✓ Developing an appreciation for, understanding of, and relationship to, their natural environment
- ✓ Developing self-risk assessment skills
- ✓ Overcoming apprehension of being wet and dirty
- ✓ Developing use of all senses.
- ✓ Developing language and communication skills
- ✓ Developing improved motivation, self esteem

We hope to become a group who:

1. Share ideas on how to integrate outdoor learning into the school curriculum for use by mainstream teachers and others. This includes programs that cover curriculum and non-curriculum outcomes.
2. Explore ideas on non- school based immersion in nature e.g. in family nature clubs.
3. Incorporate Indigenous perspectives throughout and respect the traditional conservation and environmental ideals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
4. Share ideas on developing playgrounds or bushland to support this work - including "natural bush" spaces, food forests, and veggie and herb gardens.
5. Develop and share integrated units of work based on the new National Curriculum.
6. Communicate using a range of Internet communication tools, starting with an email network and leading into a blog.
7. Meet as a SIG at state and national AAEE conferences or at other times as needs arise.



NENA is a Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Australian Association of Environmental Education (AAEE)



Please send any ideas, feedback, responses and information you may want to share to Amanda or Helen.

This information has been collated from people in the contact list and as time passes we will change it to suit the needs of the group.

Thank you to those who have already offered ideas and feedback.

Next Steps:

Ideas Gathering: Online Survey

Blog and online resourcing

Network weekend at "Wangat Lodge"

Thank you for working with NENA and AAEE.

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