



Mentally Healthy WA

## Mentally Healthy Schools [Primary]

### BEING ACTIVE

# Introducing nature into the classroom

Nature-based learning opportunities are important for children as they provide engaging, hands-on, authentic experiences, that enhance students' curiosity, creativity and imagination. Outdoor activities enable students to connect to their environment, by observing their surroundings and investigating nature, including plants, animals, land, water

and weather patterns, leading to a greater understanding of how the world works. This leads to better understanding of Science and HASS related concepts, improved engagement, motivation and behaviour.

Learning and playing in nature can help to improve children's social and emotional development by building resilience, confidence, fostering social connections and nurturing creativity.

**The Western Australian Curriculum (years 1-6) links to outdoor education in various ways, particularly in HASS, HPE, Science, Art and Technologies. We have gathered curriculum linked ideas for each year group and listed them overleaf to make it easier to implement nature-based learning in your classroom.**



# Here are some suggestions on how to provide learning experiences in nature

## Year 1

### Activity

Visit a local park or national park and observe and record characteristics of different plants.

### Content descriptor



**Science** - Living things have a variety of external features (ACSSU017).

### Activity

Focus on weather and seasons, observe weather conditions at different times of the day and learn about the characteristics of each season.

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - How weather (e.g. rainfall, temperature, sunshine, wind) and seasons vary between places, and the terms used to describe them (ACHASSK032).

## Year 3

### Activity

Go on a nature walk and classify different rocks, leaves and plants based on characteristics.

### Content descriptor



**Science** - Living things can be grouped on the basis of observable features and can be distinguished from non-living things (ACSSU044).

### Activity

Fundraise or apply for a grant to develop and maintain a school garden project, to learn about sustainability, gardening and food production.

### Content descriptor



**Technologies** - Types of food and fibre produced in different environments, cultures or time periods, including the equipment used to produce or prepare them (ACTDEK012).

## Year 2

### Activity

Visit a local farm, station or market to learn about animals or where food comes from and how it is produced.

### Content descriptor



**Science** - Living things grow, change and have offspring similar to themselves (ACSSU030).



**Technologies** - Food and fibre choices for healthy living (ACTDEK003).

### Activity

Visit a local historical site and learn about the history of the area.

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - The history of a significant person, building, site or part of the natural environment in the local community and what it reveals about the past (ACHASSK044).

## Year 4

### Activity

Visit a local fresh water source to learn about the water cycle and water conservation (humanities and social sciences).

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - The natural resources (e.g. water, timber, minerals) provided by the environment and different views on how they can be used sustainably (ACHASSK090).

### Activity

Take an excursion to a local cultural heritage site, cultural centre or museum to learn about different cultures and their traditions (humanities and social sciences).

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - The diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the ways they are connected to Country/Place (e.g. land, sea, waterways, skies) and their pre-contact ways of life (ACHASSK083).

## Year 5

### Activity

A class art project that involves using natural materials, such as leaves, sand, nuts, shells, etc.

### Content descriptor



**Art** - Development and application of artistic techniques and processes with: texture (textures created with a variety of tools, materials, and techniques; patterning) to create artwork (ACAVAM115).

### Activity

Volunteer to clean up a local area, such as a park or beach and collect rubbish.

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - Why people work in groups to achieve their aims and functions, and exercise influence, such as volunteers who work in community groups (e.g. rural fire services, emergency services, youth groups) (ACHASSK118).

## Year 6

### Activity

A science investigation involving plant growth (e.g. different liquids on plant growth, different volume of liquid or different light exposure).

### Content descriptor



**Science** - The growth and survival of living things are affected by physical conditions of their environment (ACSSU094).

### Activity

Go on a bush tucker trail or tour, cook damper and learn about bush foods and medicine.

### Content descriptor



**Humanities and Social Sciences** - The world's cultural diversity, including that of its indigenous peoples who live in different regions in the world, such as the Maori of Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the Orang Asli of Malaysia and Indonesia (ACHASSK140).



**Technologies** - Principles of food preparation for healthy eating (ACTDEK022).

# On Country Learning experiences

On Country Learning (OCL) is a pedagogical approach that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to connect more deeply to their culture through hands-on learning experiences. OCL is a strength-based practice that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the opportunity to succeed, which has significant benefits for students' social and emotional health, including increased confidence and self-identity. OCL fosters a culturally inclusive environment and moves away from the silos of Western Education. Jackson-Barrett and Lee-Hammond (2018) found

**“Nurturing children’s cultural identity and wellbeing enabled participating children to have their identities valued and celebrated in their education”(p.96).**

Not only are there social and emotional benefits, OCL experiences have reportedly contributed to improved attendance and educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. OCL can also be implemented with non-Aboriginal students to increase their understanding of Aboriginal culture and history.

OCL experiences can fit into various areas of the curriculum and relates directly to the Cross-Curriculum-Priority ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures’. Some OCL ideas to get you started:

1. Invite local Elders or community groups into the school to share knowledge on the following:
  - Bush tucker foods and their characteristics
  - Bush medicine and how it works
  - Traditional recipes and cooking
  - Learning about the land and waterways
2. Learn local Aboriginal language for plants, insects and animals and take the students on a nature walk to find plants and insects
3. Learn about and visit local Aboriginal significant sites
4. Organise regular outdoor yarning circles

**Most importantly, speak to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or organisations for their assistance in developing the OCL program to ensure your OCL activities are relevant to your local context.**