

GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE OUTDOORS: ESSENTIAL TO A MODERN CURRICULUM

SHAPE HAPPY, BRIGHT, WELL-ROUNDED
STUDENTS WHO ARE PREPARED FOR
THE WORLD BEYOND SCHOOL.





Australia's young people are spending more time indoors using technology, and less time outside exploring nature and the world around them.

The current landscape of young peoples' learning differs greatly from the way in which our parents, and even we, learned at school.

Time spent outdoors has plummeted. 2019 research indicates Australia's young people are getting outdoors no more than twice per week. Planet Ark's 2011 survey found 72% of parents played outdoors every day in childhood, compared to just 35% of their children playing outside daily.

As of 2011, less than 20% of Australia's young people climb trees as a part of their play.¹

A 2017 global Outdoor Classroom Day study found while Australia leads the world in prioritising time spent outdoors at school, there's plenty of room for improvement.

Currently, 58% of Australian primary schools allocate more than an hour per day for outdoor time, the most in the world. This, however, does mean 42% of Australia's primary schools are allocating less than one hour per day of outdoor time – less than most maximum-security prisons.

Despite this, 97% of Australian teachers believe being outdoors develops students' social skills, focus, and fine motor skills. 85% believe outdoor lessons make students more engaged, and 65% believe outdoor education improves behaviour.²

Whether a one-day excursion or a years-long sequential program, the benefits of outdoor learning for our young people are undeniable. It is crucial to get students out into nature with a contemporary curriculum design, to foster happy, bright, well-rounded students who are prepared for a world beyond school!

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▼ Grampians National Park, Victoria



BEHAVIOURAL BENEFITS

The impact of outdoor education on the behaviour of young people is profound.

By getting out into nature, young people and adults are calmer and happier. Adolescents who spend just one day learning in nature report lower levels of stress and anger, with results especially strong in students with behavioural issues. Just one day!¹

In addition to this, students who conduct science experiments in nature have been shown to exhibit a significant reduction in aggressive or rude behaviour.

Research shows students don't necessarily need to be immersed in a natural environment to feel the positive effects of nature. High school students who simply have views of nature from their classroom have lower criminal behaviour levels, and even adding plants into a classroom has been shown to increase friendliness and reduce sick days and misbehaviour.²

This is reflected in the recent decision by Berrinba East State School to move classes outside in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously struggling with major behavioural incidents, the school saw an immediate improvement upon moving classes outside – violent incidents dropped by 75.5%, and suspensions reduced by 40%.³

1. Roe, J., Aspinall, P. (2011). The Restorative Outcomes of Forest School and Conventional School.
2. Matsuoka, R. H. (2010). Student Performance and High School Landscapes: Examining the links.
3. Hartley, A. (2020). [abc.net.au/news/outdoor-lessons-at-primary-school-quell-student-bad-behaviour](https://www.abc.net.au/news/outdoor-lessons-at-primary-school-quell-student-bad-behaviour)

HEALTH BENEFITS

While many of us can personally attest getting outdoors gives us a sense of satisfaction, the impact it has on physical and mental health is widely documented and incredibly powerful.

Studies conducted by Planet Ark in 2016 found spending time in nature markedly reduces a person's chance of developing a range of diseases, including:

- ▲ Diabetes by 43%
- ▲ Cardiovascular disease and stroke by 37%
- ▲ Anxiety disorders by 31%
- ▲ Depression by 25%
- ▲ Asthma by 23%

People who reside in areas with high levels of greenery are also 40% less likely to be overweight or obese; this is partly due to a higher propensity to exercise when within green space, and also due to outside exercise providing much greater feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction – increasing motivation to get moving.

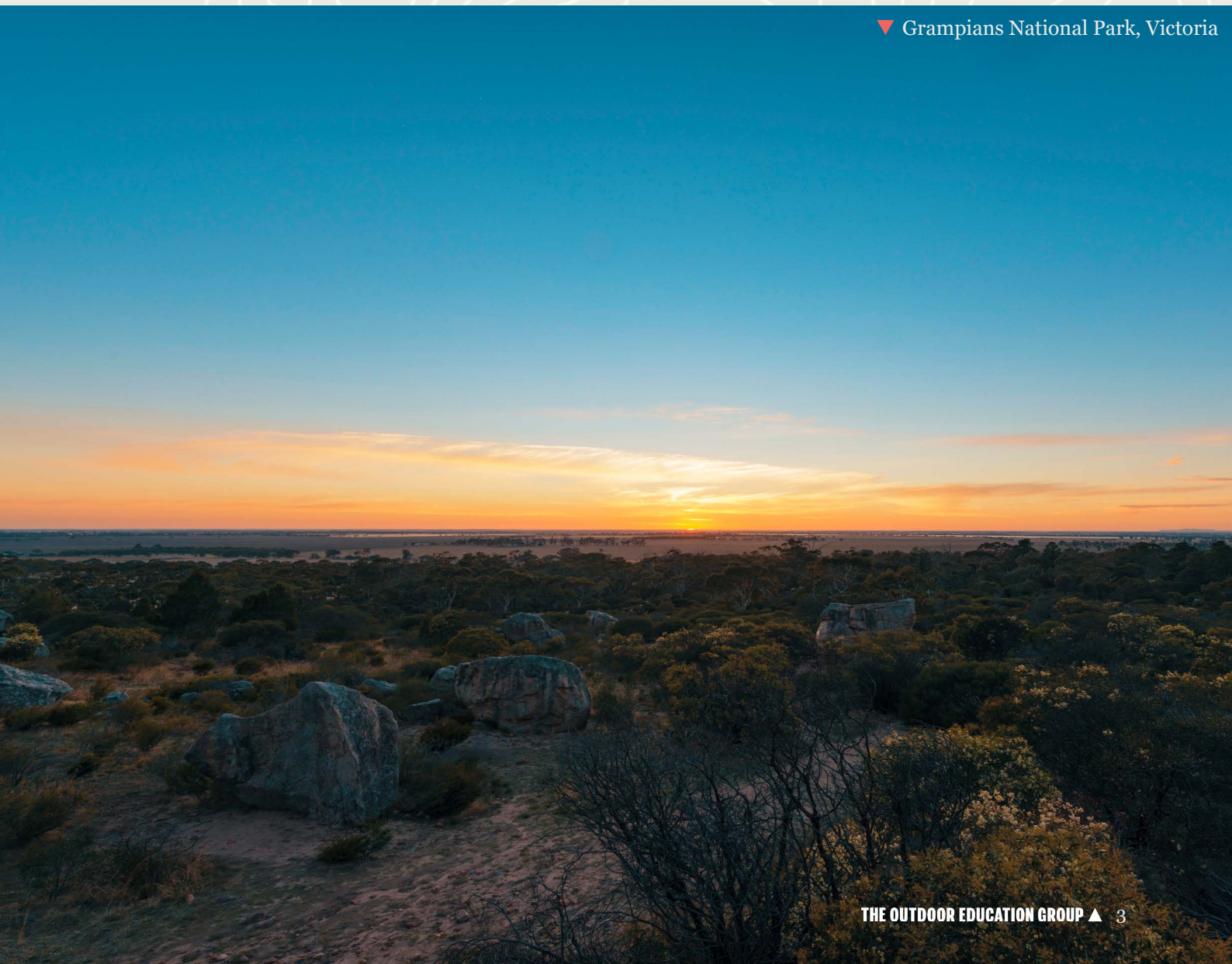
Exposure to nature also has a substantial bearing on our mental health. In fact, when immersed in the natural world, people struggling with mild to major depressive disorders show a significant elevation in mood, as well as a considerable increase in their motivation to recover.¹

Just 10 minutes spent in a natural environment is enough to significantly lower blood pressure and elevate mental health and wellbeing.

As students exhibit increasing levels of anxiety and depression, the natural antidote is to get them outdoors and engaged in experiential learning, to learn and grow, as often as we can. Allowing young people to explore the natural world helps reduce their health issues, nurtures their mental health and encourages them to foster healthy habits early in life.

1. Berman, M.G.; Kross, E.; Krpan, K.M.; Askren, M.K.; Burson, A.; Deldin, P.J.; Kaplan, S.; Sherdell, L.; Gotlib, I.H.; Jonides, J. (2012). Interacting with nature improves cognition and affect for individuals with depression. 300-305

▼ Grampians National Park, Victoria



QUANTITATIVE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

Incorporating outdoor education into a child's learning will not only improve their behaviour and health. Time spent outdoors has been proven to significantly affect the quantitative measure of students' academic results.

A study conducted across 40 US schools found upon implementing a framework known as the Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC), students reported better performance on standardised measures of academic achievement in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.

When academic test results were compared, 92% of EIC students outperformed their peers 100% of the time.



1. Lieberman, G; Hoody, L (1998). Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning
2. Dankiw, K; Tsiros, M; Baldock, K; Kumar, S (2020). The Impacts of unstructured Nature Play on Health

73% of schools within the study reported an increase in student grade point average following the introduction of EIC programs, and 77% reported higher scores on standardised tests.¹

More recently, a 2020 study found time in nature consistently improved young peoples' levels of physical activity, health-related fitness, motor skills, learning, and social and emotional development. The study also showed nature exposure may deliver improvements in cognitive and learning outcomes, including young peoples' levels of attention and concentration, punctuality, constructive play, social play, as well as imaginative and functional play.²





“The Outdoor Education Group are a hands-on organisation. The level of communication and willingness to adapt to ensure each child has a great experience sets them apart from other camp providers we’ve worked with.”

BEN CATALANO, FORMER DEPUTY PRINCIPAL, ST MARTIN DE PORRES

BEYOND SCHOOL


The benefits of outdoor education extend far beyond schooling years, particularly regarding its impact on students' soft skills - transferable abilities invaluable across many jobs, as opposed to niche technical skills.

In a 2019 Oxford University Press survey, when asked which soft skills they believe to be most critical to future career success, Australian students responded with:

- ▲ Complex problem solving
- ▲ Critical thinking
- ▲ Creativity

These students aren't wrong. A 2018 report determined students whose formal education included enterprise skills found work 17 months faster than their peers. Enterprise skills are also incredibly valuable to students from lower socio-economic areas. The same study found students from lower socio-economic areas who had learned enterprise skills obtained full-time employment faster than students from higher socio-economic areas without enterprise skills.¹

1. The Foundation for Young Australians (2018). The New Work Reality. FYA.

A low-angle shot looking up at a person ziplining through a dense forest canopy. The person is wearing a helmet and harness, suspended on a rope. The trees have green and yellow leaves, and the sky is visible through the branches. In the bottom left corner, the back of a person's head wearing an orange helmet is visible.

Experiential learning outdoors is directly correlated to much stronger soft skills in students. When introduced into 40 US schools, environment-based learning resulted in 95% of educators reporting an increase in critical thinking, a 98% increase in creative thinking, 97% increase in problem-solving and strategic thinking, and 94% saw an increase in higher-order thinking.²

Young people are also much more likely to develop responsible attitudes towards risk if they have early exposure to dealing with risky situations. The outdoors allows students to experience graduated risk at their comfort level and learn how to self-assess risk in a monitored environment – a crucial skill for career development.³

2. Lieberman, G; Hoody, L (1998). Closing The Achievement Gap - Using the Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning.
3. Nature Play SA (2017). Learning Outdoors: Benefits & Risks. Blackwood

REDLANDS SCHOOL



SCHOOL:
Redlands



LOCATION:
Cremorne, Sydney,
NSW, Australia



STUDENT BODY:
Approximately 1,700

Redlands has seen the noticeable impact of considered and progressive outdoor learning.

Redlands already had a deep faith in the power of outdoor education, having provided camp experiences for their students since 1920. For many years, Redlands worked with numerous providers across year levels, however encountered challenges in ensuring learning was impactful, connected and consistent for their students.

▼ Mount Alexandra, New South Wales

“This year’s camp was amazing and a fantastic way to end our experience. It was different to previous camps, and I am glad that I did it because I learnt how far I could push myself. I developed friendships with the other students and teachers in the group.”

YEAR 11 STUDENT, REDLANDS

Redlands analysed the gaps in their programming and understood there was an opportunity to improve the student experience, challenge level, and delivery method.

Having worked with The Outdoor Education Group for more than 20 years, Redlands were confident they had a understanding of their vision, values, culture, and objectives.

Redlands tasked The Outdoor Education Group with developing a contemporary sequential suite of programs, wherein learning was connected, challenging and addressed their three objectives:

▲ **To deliver broad life experiences, promoting the school's vision of life-readiness and letting your light shine.**

▲ **Opportunities for social and emotional personal development and growth.**

▲ **Experiences in varied and dynamic natural learning environments.**

The Outdoor Education Group provided Redlands with a seamless program design, aligning with the school's objectives and delivering a connected and challenging outdoor education sequence with responsive opportunities for students development from one year to the next.

Since partnering with The Outdoor Education Group, Redlands have seen over 17,000 students participate in 157 outdoor education programs.



▼ Pretty Beach, New South Wales

“This year’s camp was truly amazing and a fantastic way to end our experience. It was different to previous camps, and I am glad that I did it because I learnt how far I could push myself. I developed friendships with the other students and teachers in the group.”

YEAR 11 STUDENT, REDLANDS



THE IMPACTS OF REMOTE LEARNING

We would be remiss to discuss the benefits of learning in the outdoors without considering a time when connecting to nature was not possible – the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns of 2020 and beyond.

Within a matter of days, our schools went from business as usual to a complete transition to online learning, with students beaming into class from their living rooms or bedrooms.

While the technical challenges of online learning were apparent very early on, what we couldn't have imagined was the immense impact extended periods of online school and remaining indoors would have on students of all ages.

A national survey conducted by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne in 2020 explored the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning across all educational sectors.





Within the survey, 75% of teachers across Australia were concerned remote learning would have damaging effects on students' emotional wellbeing; they anticipated this manifesting in anxieties, feelings of disconnection, withdrawal from interaction with others, and missing their friends.

These teachers also made predictions around social and emotional learning taking a more prominent role in school curriculum when students return to in-person learning, to make up for this disruption.

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

It's not just teachers who are predicting significant disruption due to remote learning.

From January to April 2020, 2,567 people aged 5-25 reached out to Kids Helpline regarding COVID-19. The top five concerns raised by these young people were:

- ▲ Mental health concerns
- ▲ Social isolation
- ▲ Education impacts
- ▲ Impacts on family life
- ▲ Changes to plans and usual activities

During these conversations, young people expressed stress, frustration, anger, sadness, loss, grief, and feelings of being trapped.

Young adults and teenagers tended to raise issues related to COVID-19 within the context of their existing mental health struggles, such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, self-harm, and suicidality.

Regarding impacts on education, many young people mentioned their struggle with the online delivery of school for a number of reasons – boredom, distractions at home and difficulty concentrating to name a few.

Several high school students disclosed they felt overwhelmed with the amount of work assigned to them via online study and had significant anxiety about falling behind in their studies. In some cases, the subsequent stress of this pressure had also led to conflict with parents.

From the early information we have, it is clear in the coming years, school curricula will need to raise its focus in these areas to make up for lost time in building students' enterprise skills and their academic performance.

ISOLATION FROM PEERS

Early childhood and primary students have missed crucial years of their social and teamwork skills development, and high school students have been more stressed than ever while isolated from their peer groups.

Outdoor education programs are the logical and ideal solution for these issues in a post-COVID education landscape. Given the proven impact outdoor learning has on, not only students' enterprise skills and happiness, but also to remedy any interference with their academics due to remote learning.





After spending almost 2 terms online learning and socially distanced from friends, it was literally a breath of fresh air for our students to participate in The Outdoor Education Group's program. Students could no longer rely on their devices for entertainment or communication, and instead I witnessed their creative thinking, teamwork and leadership skills come to the fore.

**ZOEY COLLINGS, TEACHER,
ST MICHAEL'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL**



GET YOUR STUDENTS LEARNING IN THE OUTDOORS

Since our foundation in 1984, The Outdoor Education Group have educated and cared for over 2 million students (and counting). We work with students across the country to bring education to life in the outdoors and support them in becoming future-ready.

We provide unique experiences in Australia's most diverse and beautiful environments; from on-site incursions, site-based camps, extended journeys to 30-day expeditions, we have the right experience for your school community.

We are proudly a for-purpose organisation, who are passionate about our mission of making learning outdoors accessible to all young Australians; to support this ambition, we offer a diverse range of experiences, so students from all walks of life are able to participate and benefit from outdoor learning.

MORE THAN JUST CAMPS



CENTRE-BASED CAMPS

We guide students through immersive adventure activities, challenges and exploration at our residential camp venues.



JOURNEYS

Multi-day journeys in unforgettable environments are crafted to suit age, ability and the learning outcomes required by your school.



SEQUENCES

Students experience varying and age-appropriate adventures, enabling growth and development from one year to the next.



INCURSIONS

Develop key learning outcomes with simple outdoor education experiences delivered on school grounds for convenience.



EXCURSIONS

Single-day excursions allow for student development and growth through experiential learning in local natural environments.



METRO JOURNEYS

Multi-day journeys created for metro areas build and harness vital skills while discovering natural environments close to home.



DUKE OF EDINBURGH

We create challenging courses encouraging students to put themselves to the test through a variety of hands-on activities.



DAY CAMPS

Camp Wombaroo, NSW, provides a convenient alternative to traditional holiday care with fun and stimulating outdoor activities.



DISCOVER THE PERFECT EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR STUDENTS TODAY

Whether you are expanding your existing outdoor program or commencing outdoor learning for the first time, introducing outdoor education into your school curriculum can be a massive project!

The good news, however, is introducing (or expanding) outdoor education into your curriculum doesn't need to be painful, overwhelming, or stressful. The Outdoor Education Group has delivered outdoor

education to Australian students for more than 36 years.

We provide immersive and unforgettable experiences designed to introduce your students to new environments, new challenges, and new ways of thinking.

We believe all young people deserve to be equipped with the skills they need to positively impact society. We use the natural world to enhance your curriculum, enrich

student learning and strengthen essential capabilities such as leadership, resilience, self-belief, communication, social cohesion, and critical and creative thinking.

If you are ready to bring your curriculum to life in the outdoors and equip your students with the skills they need to make life-long positive impacts on the world around them, our team will recommend the right program for your desired learning outcomes.

**THE
OUTDOOR
EDUCATION
GROUP** ▲
OEG.EDU.AU