



## **Use of Outdoor Spaces for Instructional Time: Progress Report**

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 31 March, 2021

**Report No.:** 03-21-4058

### **Strategic Directions**

- Transform Student Learning
- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the progress report on the use of outdoor spaces for instructional time be received for information.

### **Context**

On February 3, 2021, staff presented a report to the Board of Trustees that outlined a plan to support the use of outdoor spaces during instructional time. The following report serves to provide an update on the progress made to date.

### **Outdoor Learning Web Portal**

Recognizing the need to coordinate messaging and support learning in the outdoors for all TDSB schools, staff have developed a web portal to house outdoor learning resources for school-based staff and families.

In developing the Taking Learning Outdoors web portal (see Appendix A) both the Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee and the TDSB's Joint Management-Labour Environment Committee were invited to provide input.

This web portal provides current information for educators, including research, resources and best practices, to help them take teaching and learning outdoors. Staff

are also encouraged to share their outdoor learning in action with #TDSBoutdoors on social media to inspire other educators interested in trying new learning opportunities outside.

Families play an important role in getting students outdoors and moving. The Family Resources section of the Taking Learning Outdoors web portal encourages and supports families in spending time outdoors together by providing tips for preparing for the weather, resources for why and how to get started as well as a comprehensive list of activities for families to enjoy in the city.

The outdoor learning web portal is intended to be a living site and will continue to be developed and refined as gaps in information are identified and feedback is generated.

### **All-season outdoor learning spaces**

To support all-season outdoor learning at TDSB schools, new outdoor spaces are planned for implementation in 2021. Further information regarding the selected schools will be provided in the May cycle of meetings. The types of projects that are in development include the following:

#### **1. Armour stone and accessible pathways at elementary schools**

- Schools in need of outdoor seating in the highest-risk neighbourhoods for COVID-19 identified by Toronto Public Health and with high external challenges based on the Learning Opportunity Index (LOI) have been prioritized for these projects.
- Provision of new armour stone seating and AODA-compliant accessible pathways to enhance outdoor learning spaces.
- Principals will be given the option to choose between three outdoor classroom layouts (see Appendix B for layout options).

#### **2. Large-scale outdoor learning projects**

- In-house construction projects already in the design queue were prioritized. The majority of selected schools have high external challenges based on the LOI.
- Provision of new AODA-compliant kindergarten and junior outdoor areas with all-season learning features.

#### **3. Log seating projects at elementary schools**

- Schools in need of outdoor seating with high external challenges based on the LOI have been prioritized for these projects.
- Provision of log seating to enhance outdoor learning spaces.
- Through an in-kind donation the City provides quality logs to the TDSB, which are then milled on-site at 1 Civic Centre Court administration site.

## **Long-term plan for supporting the use of outdoor spaces**

In the May cycle of meetings, staff will present a report to Board outlining a long-term plan for encouraging and supporting all schools to use outdoor spaces for instructional time throughout the day. More details on the planned all-season outdoor learning projects described above will be included in this report.

### **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

**May 2021** – Present long-term plan, including associated costs, to PSSC and FBEC.

**December 2021** – All-season outdoor learning spaces to be installed at all selected schools.

### **Resource Implications**

N/A

### **Communications Considerations**

To promote the use of the Taking Learning Outdoors web portal and encourage its use by various audiences, a communications plan has been developed. Beginning in March 2021, a variety of TDSB communication channels will be used to promote the web portal to Trustees, school-based staff and parents/guardians.

### **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

P033 – Excursions

P028 – The Environment

PR511 – Excursions

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Taking Learning Outdoor web portal
- Appendix B: Outdoor classroom layout options

### **From**

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Appendix A

Outdoor Learning Web Portal (<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/learningoutdoors>)

The header features the TDSB logo (tdsb Toronto District School Board) on the left. On the right, there are navigation links: Find Your School, New to Canada, Policies, Media, About Us, Staff, Employment, Leadership, and Contact Us. Below these is a search bar with the text "ENHANCED BY Google" and a "Translate" button. A horizontal navigation menu contains the following items: Home, Early Years, Elementary School, High School, Adult Learners, Parents, and Community.

# Taking Learning Outdoors

The video player thumbnail shows the "TDSB Learn Outside" logo, which includes a stylized tree with orange and yellow leaves, a blue bird, and a play button icon. Below the logo is the text "LEARN OUTSIDE" and the "tdsb.on.ca" logo. A "Copy link" button is visible in the top right corner of the player interface.

Outdoor spaces, including the schoolground, can foster authentic learning and should be considered an extension of the classroom. The TDSB has a long history of supporting outdoor learning, both through its [EcoSchools program](#) and [Toronto Outdoor Education Schools \(TOES\)](#). Learn more about how you can promote outdoor learning as an educator, caregiver or member of the school community.

**Why Take Learning Outdoors?**

**Resources for your School**

**Resources for your Class**

**Resources for your Family**

**Outdoor Learning and COVID-19**

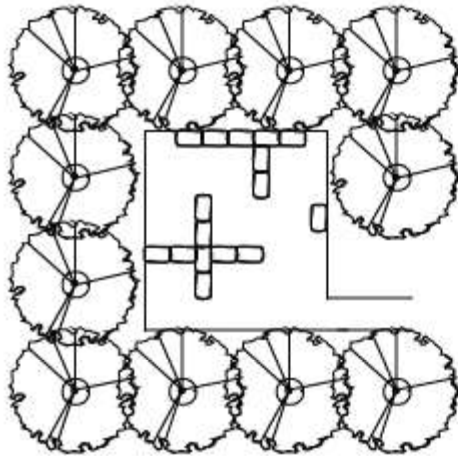
**Appendix B**

Outdoor classroom layout options

**TDSB OUTDOOR CLASSROOM OPTIONS**

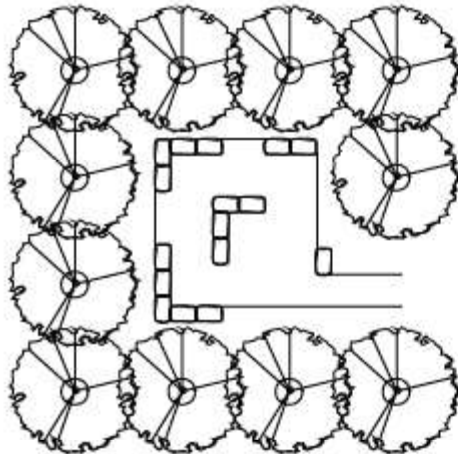
*Preliminary Concepts*

*March 2021*



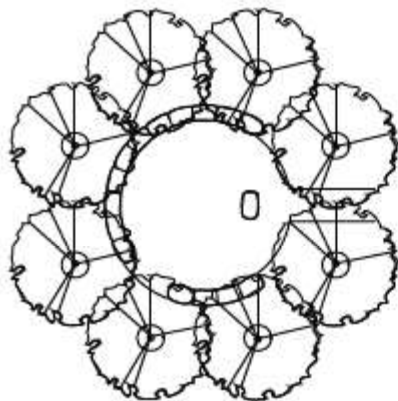
**1.0 BREAK OUT CONCEPT**

- Asphalt pathway (AODA compliant)
- Approximately 16 armourstones (seating)
- Barrier-free wheelchair seating areas
- All armourstones are to be a minimum of 2.00m apart unless connected
- Deciduous trees shown for illustration only and may be installed following classroom construction (southern exposure priority)



**2.0 TRADITIONAL CONCEPT**

- Asphalt pathway (AODA compliant)
- Approximately 16 armourstones (seating)
- Barrier-free wheelchair seating areas
- All armourstones are to be a minimum of 2.00m apart unless connected
- Deciduous trees shown for illustration only and may be installed following classroom construction (southern exposure priority)



**3.0 CIRCLE CONCEPT**

- Asphalt pathway (AODA compliant)
- Approximately 16 armourstones (seating)
- Barrier-free wheelchair seating areas
- All armourstones are to be a minimum of 2.00m apart unless connected
- Deciduous trees shown for illustration only and may be installed following classroom construction (southern exposure priority)