



EXPLORE

NATURE - BASED LEARNING



A Day in the Life of an Explore Class



Students involved in this program will

- Experience **increased motivation, engagement, and success** with learning.
- Develop deep connections to nature and the environment
- Experience increased academic achievement.
- Experience learning that is meaningful and connected to the real world.
- Develop skills to overcome physical, emotional, and academic challenges.
- Become well rounded students who have a strong sense of community.
- Develop leadership skills to benefit their communities now and in the future.





Explore

What it is

- Engaging, hands on approach to learning
- Firmly grounded in the Alberta Program of Studies.
- Backed by an extensive field of research
- Building connections with the community and the land
- Developing students in a holistic manner (academic, social emotional, physical, resilience)

What it is NOT

- Outside all the time
- A Behaviour support/ learning disability program
- Only classic outdoor education
 - (survival skills etc)
- Free time/ unstructured
- Easy
- A new idea

Four Pillars of Explore



Place-Based Education

uses the surrounding community, local history and the natural environment as a foundation for the study of all subjects across the curriculum.

Experiential Education

uses experiences and focused reflection to increase knowledge, develop skills and build connections within the students and their community.

The First Peoples Principles of Learning

provides an Indigenous perspective and way of engaging with learning that is critical for students.

Outdoor Education

Provides opportunities for students to: learn new skills, develop confidence, foster resilience and problem solving skills, and connect with nature.



Academic Rigour and Planning

- Teachers develop rigorous long and short range plans
- Learning is designed using cross-curricular connections
- Teachers will find connections within the curriculum to provide opportunities for the learning to transfer
- Competencies are taught and reflected on through hands on experiences
- Learning is designed around the important concepts within the curriculum



Student Profile of an Explore Student

An Explore Student will:

- love the outdoors and the natural environment.
- be curious and eager to explore
- be willing to try new things and take risks.
- be energetic
- be willing to be a productive, positive, contributing member of the learning community.
- demonstrate responsible behaviour for learning
- **Make consistent safe choices when outside**





What will this look like for students

Expectations for students are exactly the same as when we are in the classroom.

- Respect yourself
- Respect others and our community
- Respect the environment
- Try your best
- Follow the expectation and instructions of the teacher
- Be safe

In addition to these expectations, on outdoor days, students must:

- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- Carry a backpack with supplies
- Use self care skills
- Make safe choices





Parent Profile of an Explore student

- Parents will:
 - be engaged in the learning process
 - check your email for communications
 - be responsible for transportation to and from school
 - be willing to support and volunteer
 - provide proper clothing, footwear and backpack for their child
 - Provide healthy lunches and snacks for your child
 - Advocating for the Explore program in community





What about a bathroom?



- Students are to be potty trained
- Throughout each outdoor day, classes will periodically be near town maintained outhouses for bathroom breaks, when available.
- If we are away from an outhouse, and a child needs to go, they will do a “wild pee” in a safe and discrete location.
- Students are taught principles of Leave No Trace, to minimize the impact on the environment.



Locations



- Natural areas surrounding the school
- The Sheep River valley
- Downtown Okotoks
- Community parks and pathways
- Community facilities such as the art gallery, museum, library, etc.
- Kananaskis Country





Cold Weather



- We will mitigate cold weather risks by ensuring students are dressed properly and teach students techniques for managing the cold.
- We will make decisions about weather and outdoor learning that will set students up for success.
- We will consider all factors of weather to make our decisions.
- Days can be easily adapted



Risks involved, and mitigation



Exposure

- Students will be taught proper layering and preparation before going out on hikes.
- Teachers will carry a tarp to set up an emergency shelter
- Teachers will reschedule outdoor days if weather is unsafe

Challenging or uneven terrain

- Students will be taught how to identify and mitigate risks in terrain and activities

Crossing road in town

- This means walking with their partner
- Walking behind their teacher
- Staying together, no gaps, keeping up
- Not walking on roads or lawn



Activity based hazards

- Students will be supervised by adults when learning more hazardous skills
 - Knife skills
 - Fire building





**Let's look at some
MYTHS
of the Explore Program**



- Myth #1 - We are outside all the time
 - We are inside a traditional class three days a week and outside up to 2, but it will be less for littles as they build stamina
- Myth #2 - Students won't be sitting at desk and using pencil and paper
 - We do sit at desks and work



- Myth #3 - Students are free spirits and can run all over the place on outdoor days
 - We have very high expectations for behaviour and students are expected to follow them
- Myth #4 - Learning outside is easy and comfortable
 - Learning outside is awesome, but is uncomfortable and students will learn to manage themselves
 - Students are expected to demonstrate resilience across various temperatures and landscapes
- Myth #5 - There are Educational Assistants to help my child
 - We have no EA support in the classroom currently



- Myth #6 - This is a learning disabilities and behaviour program.
 - This program can be beneficial for students with some learning disabilities
 - Students must be able to follow behaviour expectations, which are high due to the risk that students are exposed to
 - This is an alternative program under AB Education and cannot be a learning disability or behaviour program
- Myth #7 - There are others adults to help my child.
 - There is 1 teacher and 23 students. If you feel your child needs more support to follow expectation a traditional class may be better



- ① **Myth #8** - My child will have access to the bathroom
 - We will not always have access to an outhouse outside so students will need to be able to pee outside
 - Students are also expected to toilet themselves
- ① **Myth #9** - Safety is not a big deal
 - It is a huge deal. Your child must be safe for themselves and others when we are outside.
 - They must accept redirection and be part of the group always
 - Students need to behave in predictable and appropriate ways



- ④ Myth 10 - This program works for students who have uncontrolled medical conditions
 - We are often away from easily accessible places and uncontrolled medical conditions would make it unsafe for your child
- ④ Myth 11 - This program is great for students who have mobility issues and cannot walk far
 - Students in younger grades will walk 3 km a day and older grade up to 8km



Teacher/Leader Skill Set

- The teachers in this program will:
 - be certified with at least a 40 hour Wilderness First Aid course.
 - Be certified as a field leader through the Outdoor Council of Canada





Emergency Response



- Student will have Lost and Alone training
- Teachers will carry cell phone and backup battery
- Teachers will carry all parents contact information
- Admin team will be available to pick up a child
- Carry appropriate extra emergency gear
- Carry wilderness first aid kit
- Day Trips: Satellite messenger and VHF Radio
- Route Cards left with Admin



Gear



- A backpack with hip straps for support (contact us for sizing)
- Sturdy footwear
- Waterproof/ Breathable Rain jacket and pants AND/OR rain poncho
- Synthetic fleece jacket (warm mid layer - NOT COTTON)
- 1 set of synthetic long underwear, top and bottoms
- 1 pr. of synthetic quick dry pants (Track pants are OK)
- 1 short sleeve t-shirt (NOT COTTON)
- 1 back up pair of wool or synthetic socks (incase feet get wet or cold)
- Toque and neck tube/Buff
- Gloves for fall
- Waterproof mitts/ gloves for winter (warmer the better)
- At least 1L of water (screw top prefered as they do not leak in pack)
- Hat, Sunglasses, Sunscreen
- Healthy Lunch (must be a bag lunch that does not require a microwave)
- Energy snacks (pocket snacks)





Program Cost

Cost of Explore program for 2024/ 2025 is yet to be determined and will be different depending on the age of the student. We use the fee to:

- Provide learning opportunities on and off campus.
- Purchase outdoor learning tools for children.
- Purchase gear for outdoor experiences
 - Snowshoes,
 - Science tools,
 - Outdoor tools
- Cover bussing fees for out trips.
- Pay for emergency communication devices and service plans.





Volunteering Opportunities

- Helping on outdoor days and in classrooms when necessary
- Supporting individual teachers as they see fit
- Helping on day trips, camping trips





Transportation to EPPS

- No bussing to school will be provided
- Office can assist in connecting families about carpooling options from various communities and subdivision





Registration Process

1. Complete the district registration form.
2. Attend Open House and Screening
3. You will be placed on the waitlist
4. You will be contacted if there is a placement available for your child (late Spring)



Questions





Contact Information

- Email naturebased@fsd38.ab.ca for more information
- Call 403-938-4449 to connect with the office staff at Ecole Percy Pegler School



Thank you for coming tonight!