

EVALUATION PLAN

The project evaluation will provide a framework to understand how a renewed Outdoor Learning Classroom and Amphitheatre space impacts our visitors and their perception of this place. The project evaluation will be available to project funders and stakeholders to assess the relative success of the new renewed space at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre.

Overview

Evaluation Objectives	Data	Indicators of Success
The new Outdoor Learning Classroom and Amphitheatre motivates Nature Centre visitors to spend additional time outside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation • Onsite survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in relative duration of use of space • Increase in variety of activities/space usage • Visitors indicate interest in spending time outside
The new Outdoor Classroom motivates teachers to use outdoor learning spaces in their teaching practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face interviews with Teachers • Onsite survey of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers understand benefits of outdoor classrooms • Teachers indicate interest in utilizing outdoor learning spaces for their classes
The new Outdoor Classroom facilitates visitor connection with nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation • Onsite Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors respond positively when asked about their experience in the Outdoor Classroom space • Visitors spend more time outside when visiting the Nature Centre • Visitors indicate interest in returning to Outdoor Classroom space
There is an increase in visitation to the Nature Centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of visitors to the Nature Centre is increased • Number of booking requests for the Outdoor Classroom space is increased • Number of outdoor interpretive elements available to visitors is increased

Evaluation focus

Our evaluation will primarily focus on five user groups of the Outdoor Learning Classroom and Amphitheatre space at the Nature Centre, including:

- Teachers and students
- Drop-in visitors
- Facility rental user groups
- Nature Centre Volunteers
- Nature Centre Staff

Methods

- **Face-to-face interviews** with teachers attending the Nature Centre with Field Trip classes
 - o To be completed by Nature Centre staff.
 - o Questions to focus on teacher's knowledge of outdoor classroom spaces, how to activate outdoor learning spaces, any noticeable difference in student behaviour (outdoor classroom versus indoor classroom), and whether the teacher is more likely to utilize outdoor classroom in future lesson plans.
- **Direct observation** of visitors in the space
 - o To be completed by Nature Centre Exhibit Roving volunteers and staff.
 - o Observations to focus on: the number of visitors utilizing the Outdoor Classroom space (aside from Nature Centre programs), types of usage, relative duration of use, and commentary on accessibility of the space.
- **Onsite Survey**
 - o To be completed by facility rental groups, and Nature Centre staff and volunteers.
 - o Survey questions will assess user opinion on the accessibility and comfort of the space, whether their usage requirements were met, and how likely a user would be to utilize the space in the future.
- **Statistical analysis**
 - o To be completed by Nature Centre staff.
 - o Comparing statistics from before and after renovation for total on-site visitation and total field trip program visitation.
 - o Comparing metrics of before and after: total Outdoor Classroom seating capacity, total accessible seating availability, total embedded interpretive elements in space.

Analysis and Interpretation

Face-to-face interviews will be conducted randomly with 20 visiting classes between September and June (minimum of 2 interviews per month). Nature Centre staff will meet with Teachers to conduct short (10 minute) standardized interview. Staff will take notes during the interview and

will summarize information provided for clarity and length. Information will be compiled and analyzed to identify patterns or commonalities in response as well as noteworthy observations.

Direct observation will be conducted by Nature Centre Exhibit Rover Volunteers and Staff as part of the daily statistics through the month of July – both before and after the space has been renewed. Observation notes will track any relative increase in space usage, type of usage, and relative duration of space use.

Onsite survey will be conducted by the Facility Rental Coordinator as part of existing evaluations completed by rental user groups. The survey will be administered for 6 months after project completion with any user group that has booked the space. In addition, Nature Centre staff and volunteers will be asked to complete the same survey within 6 months of completion of project. Information will be compiled to understand how different user-types assess the space's functionality and accessibility.

Statistical evaluation will be conducted by Nature Centre Information Assistant as part of the end-of-year analysis. On-site visitation for the Nature Centre for the year prior to construction will be compared with visitation for the year after construction. We will compare school field trip visitation and overall drop-in visitation to the Nature Centre. Further we will do a qualitative comparison of the total site capacity and embedded interpretive features.