

Creative Nature Play Space – Oval Stage 3

Dear Parents/Carers

We have been engaging in whole school discussions regarding new directions to support our Business Plan and the next phase of providing students with a school environment that actively engages them in a variety of creative ways external to the classroom.

It is widely acknowledged that access to creative natural play spaces is vital to physical and social emotional health of all children. While we are conscious of providing this for all our children, we are also conscious of meeting the National Quality Standards (NQS) for Early Childhood Learning to ensure we are fully supporting the standards and quality of our learning areas.

Through the mandatory NQS we are required to meet the standards set for years K – Year 2. One main area we have been reviewing the last 2 years is the ***Quality Area 3 – Physical environment****is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children’s learning and development.*

To continue to enhance this area for all children, we have developed a planning focus group that consists of parents, staff and students to discuss and plan ways to develop the space around the oval creating an *active and creative learning playground*, supporting rich play and engagement.

The focus group aims are to

- Be positive, creative and collaborative
- Be able to meet on a need basis
- Bring some knowledge and skills to the project
- Communicate to the community in a positive, open and transparent way
- Be actively engaged in all facets of the project
- Value everyone’s input

The Focus group will continually provide planning updates to the P & C, School Board, children, staff and community to ensure there is opportunity for feedback. As we get into the building stages, we will also be looking for parents who would be prepared to help out in other ways offering their expertise or skills in areas that will support the building of the *active and creative learning playground*; community help is always greatly appreciated and highly valued.

This is a community joint venture with the grateful support of the P & C. We are super excited in working together to provide this wonderful new area for our children.

Kim Fraser Jemma Weidinger Benita Gionvanni Melinda Cockerill Barb Greyling
Principal Parent Parent Teacher Teacher



Churchlands
Primary School

Respect • Resilience • Engage • Excel

Childhood experiences

Where to start? Your own childhood may be a good place!

Think about those happy times when you were young and played (often unsupervised) in the bush, collecting nuts (a.k.a. artillery or money) or building cubbies (a.k.a. a cave or a mansion). Or when you dabbled in a creek, built a dam, or skipped a stone. Or that sense of achievement when you climbed a big old tree – and managed to get back down again.

The benefits of those experiences may not be tangible, but, intuitively, you know they were an important part of your upbringing. Well, you're right. And there is research to prove it.

What the research says?

Kidsafe WA has summarised some of the current research in the area of nature-based play:

- Children who play regularly in natural settings are sick less often. Mud, sand, water, leaves, sticks, pine cones and gumnuts can help to stimulate children's immune systems as well as their imaginations.
- Children who spend more time outside tend to be more physically active and are less likely to be overweight.
- Children who play in natural settings are more resistant to stress; have lower incidence of behavioural disorder, anxiety and depression; and have a higher measure of self-worth.
- Children who play in natural settings play in more diverse, imaginative and creative ways and show improved language and collaboration skills.
- Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other.
- Bullying behaviour is greatly reduced where children have access to diverse nature-based play environments.

"Play is our brain's favourite way of learning."

Diane Ackerman
(American author)

Why build a nature-based playground?

- ❖ Really fun and kids love them. They can get dirty, create, climb, splash.
- ❖ Beneficial for all students at CPS from Kindy to Year 6.

Researchers at the University of WA have found that natural playgrounds provide children with more opportunities than typical pre-formed playgrounds to develop gross-motor skills. In their [literature summary](#) of what makes a good play area they noted that contact with nature has been associated with a number of health benefits for children, such as improved cognitive function, increased creativity, improved interaction with adults, reduced attention deficit hyperactivity disorder symptoms and reduced rates of aggression.

In addition, the [report](#) 'Children's contact with the outdoors and nature: a focus on educators and educational settings' prepared by the [Children & Nature Network](#) synthesises research and studies that focus on the impact of nature education and educational settings.

Summary of key benefits

- Children who play regularly in natural settings are sick less often. Mud, sand, water, leaves, sticks, pine cones and gum nuts can help to stimulate children's immune system as well as their imagination.
- Children who spend more time outside tend to be more physically active and less likely to be overweight.
- Children who play in natural settings are more resistant to stress; have lower incidence of behavioural disorders, anxiety and depression; and have a higher measure of self-worth.
- Children who play in natural settings play in more diverse, imaginative and creative ways and show improved language and collaboration skills. Single use, repetitive play equipment becomes boring quickly.
- Natural, irregular and challenging spaces help kids learn to recognise, assess and negotiate risk and build confidence and competence.
- Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other.
- Bullying behaviour is greatly reduced where children have access to diverse nature-based play environments.
- Symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder are reduced after contact with nature.

Focus area

West and East side of the oval.

Design

- There may be some areas that will require professional design and building to ensure the school is within the OSH safety guidelines. (large tree logs, climbing frames, ropes)
- Focus group to develop a draft plan of ideas.
- Students to be involved in planning and review of these ideas to value add to.
- Focus group to develop a plan for what can be achieved at the school level and what required professional assistance.
- Engagement of a few reputable companies to assist in developing further the plan especially for some aspects that require professional assistance and costings for this.
- Focus group to ascertain the final plan and seek input and support from the community.
- Keep students, staff and community updated.

Funding sources

- P&C (the main focus on this year's fundraising efforts have been targeted towards the nature play project and stage for undercover area).
- CPS – School Contribution
- DUCKS (assistance with labour +/- materials, great opportunity to do a particular section of the nature play area).
- Consideration of parents voluntarily willing to contribute \$\$ towards the project
- Possible donations from wider community (logs, wooden blocks, stumps etc).

Professional Designers – For some Ideas and quotes

- Nature Based Play (excellent examples on website and lovely equipment!), local in O'Connor <https://www.naturebasedplay.com.au/>
- [Nature Play Solutions](#)
- [The Landscape Guys](#)