

*If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it. What's important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the **natural** world, to learn to love it and feel comfortable in it, before being asked to heal its wounds.*

*David Sobel (2008)*



# Nature-Based Pedagogy

## Learning in Nature At Lance Holt School

*Taking learning beyond our classroom walls by engaging and interacting with the local community and environment develops a sense of place and a sense of wonder about the natural world. These practices provide diverse and enriching programs for the students and promote a culture of belonging and connectedness to ensure the values of respect and concern for others and our natural environment are emphasised.*

*Kathryn Netherwood  
Coordinator Lance Holt  
School*

**Historical Perspective:** The founder of the school, Lance Holt, stated in 1970 that, "Education through real life experiences will be its theme. The emphasis will be on children learning through doing and seeing things for themselves, rather than memorising from textbooks." Nature-Based learning has therefore always been an integral part of the educational experience at Lance Holt School. In the past this was achieved through camps and excursions.

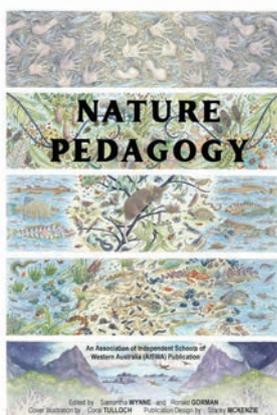
**Current Practice:** Over the past ten years at Lance Holt School we have deepened our commitment to providing children with a connection to nature and to learning with and in nature. We have introduced a series of nature based programs that take our children beyond the walls, starting with our urban environments and then beyond into natural wildspaces.

In 2012 early years teacher Debra undertook training from an international British organisation called Archimedes Forest Training in

*Perhaps more significantly, we believe that nature based activities more deeply engage our senses and create a learning medium which is not achievable in a normal classroom environment.*

*Robin Guttinger*

*Past Chair of School Council*



*Children have always been connected to nature. It is so often the adults round them who have lost the link.*

*Claire Warden (2010)*



*When we see a child playing with a flower, or in the dirt, or skipping, or playing tag, we should remind ourselves that what we are looking at is the child-like result of a deep and irresistible urge to interact with and have knowledge of the world and everything in it.*

*Hughes 2001*

conjunction with AISWA (Association of Independent Schools WA). This led to the development of our Bush Schools Program.

In 2012 Lead Teacher Samantha attended an AISWA Study Tour to the Forest Kindergartens in Scotland and attended an international conference on Nature Pedagogy with educators and academics from Northern England, Scotland and Norway. In 2013 Debra also attended the AISWA Study Tour and Conference to the Forest Kindergartens.

In 2014 we extended our nature programs with the introduction of Bathers Beach Wildspace program in Pre-Primary/Year One. In 2015 the Kindy class initiated an action research project that aims to explore how young children develop their ecological identify within an urban environment. In the upper classes learning within nature provides the context for a number of class projects where regular visits to natural ecosystems provide a context for the classroom program.

All school staff have attended Professional Learning with Claire Warden, an international leader, author and academic in Nature Pedagogy from Scotland. Claire visited our school to work with staff and attend our Bush School Program in August 2015.

Lead Teacher Samantha was contracted by AISWA as co-author and editor of the publication "Nature Pedagogy" (2015) which features research, links to the curriculum and stories from 9 independent schools who attended the 2012 Study Tour including Lance Holt School.

Early years staff have presented their work in Nature Pedagogy at conferences and in guest lectures at Universities and their work is featured by Claire Warden and AISWA workshops on Nature Pedagogy from an Australian context.

As educators we aim to make the learning of the children visible through documentation. We share the learning of our youngest students through photographs, their words, learning stories, teacher and student reflections and children's representations of their learning. This is recorded in Floorbooks so it can be revisited by children, teachers and parents. The Floorbooks show the extensive links to the curriculum and the planning of teachers. Our older students share their learning through their Bush School Journals and through the engagement with ICT.

As staff we continue to explore possibilities for getting children outside and have them engage with nature to deepen their connection not only to the natural world but to each other and to their learning.



# Bush School

I have been watching the benefits of Bush School for my daughter over the last two years, but it really struck me when she came home last week saying that they had learnt to light a fire. The fact that she was trusted to take this risk was so powerful. In this risk-adverse world it is very rare that kids are allowed to rely on their own judgement. Bush School has been the welcome exception. The skills this has developed in her are so important and are transferrable to all other facets of life.

Parent Quote

***On Fridays in Term 2 and 3 class teacher Debra and education assistant Libby and the Year 2 and 3 children spend the day utilising the natural environment to learn. The Bush School Program takes place each week at one of various locations in the Fremantle region.***

***Allowing children to become resourceful, responsible, respectful and resilient are key aims of Bush Schooling. The children are expected to come appropriately dressed in sturdy covered shoes and clothes that protect the body and very importantly, can get dirty! They carry with them in their backpacks their food and water for the day and an assortment of items they may need for the days planned activities. These may include bug catchers, magnifying glasses, bird guides, drawing boards, clipboards, paper, pencils, string, binoculars etc.***

***They take into the bush a trolley and a large toolbox, affectionately dubbed "Fat Max" (politically incorrect, but that's what this model is branded!) He holds a collection of tools such as hand drills, hammers, nails, files and various saws. The children are shown how to use them safely and effectively and have free access to them throughout the day.***

*Underpinning all of our Bush School work is the belief that children best learn through creative play. Being in the natural environment, utilising found resources and working together to solve problems and to investigate and discover, affords children the opportunities to reach the Achievement Standards of the Australian Curriculum in an integrated, real life manner.*

*Teacher - Debra*

*On arrival we begin by acknowledging the Wadjuk Nyungar People, the traditional custodians of the land, and discuss the days planned activities. Small groups of children erect 'hootchies', tarpaulins edged with a series of loops and press studs which can be tied to trees in a variety of ways to create shelter. These form a 'home base' and give the children a sense of being sheltered as a class and a sense of community.*

*Putting up the hootchies presents a series of challenges each week as weather conditions are considered, location chosen, knots are tied and adjusted and tethers fixed. The opportunities for creative problem solving, negotiations and discussion are numerous.*

*The activities at Bush School vary over the seasons and are balanced between the interests, engagements and questioning of the children and teacher initiated planned activities. These ensure that the curricular requirements and learning needs of the children are met.*

*At the end of the day the children pack away, leaving nothing in the environment except footprints. A circle is formed and time is taken to reflect on the learning of the day. Children are encouraged to take note of their feelings and thought processes and to share these with the group. The term 'Ah Ha' moments is used to describe the metacognition that takes place.*

*A further acknowledgement of country is said in closure of the day, giving thanks for the amazing opportunities, then tired and grubby and possibly with the odd scratch or splinter they head home, deeply contented and full of stories to share with their families.*





# Bathers Beach Wildspace

Each fortnight the children in Pre-Primary/Year One spend an afternoon at Bathers Beach our local West End beach. We believe that by providing the children with a natural play environment they will benefit socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically as well as developing a connection with the natural world and the environment.

Our Time At Bathers Beach aims to:

- Develop a sense of wonder;
- Have a high 'play affordance';
- Encourage children to determine the learning which will centre on their needs and will be play based;
- Provide the class with challenges they cannot experience in the classroom; and
- Create the context for the curriculum.



The afternoon's play is unstructured and child led. Planning with the children occurs prior to the visits and the children collect and carry the materials they need to carry out their play plans. Favourite activities include rock climbing, wave chasing, building cement factories, treasure hunting and creating art and sculptures with the natural 'loose parts' found on the beach. Each week a PP and Year 1 child are leaders and documenters, heading the line up to the beach and taking responsibility for recording the play and learning through photographs. Once back at school, the children will reflect on experiences and photographs with teachers and this informs staff curriculum planning. All documentation is collected and recorded in the class Floorbook.

# Kindy Nature Walks



How can children develop their ecological identity within an urban environment?

The Kindy Nature Walks were inspired by Ann Pelo's book *The Goodness of Rain* which is a meditation on the joy of connecting with nature whilst addressing the challenge of building our 'ecological identity' within an urbanised environment. The Nature Walks a yearlong 'teacher as researcher' project run by class teacher Juliet with the support of parent and academic Stefania. The project aims to explore how the children can make rich connections with nature by going on weekly walks around our block - within the constraints of our inner city landscape - over the course of the year.

The weekly walk around the block allowed the children to slowly and deliberately observe the world around them, noting its characteristics and its transformations over the year. Juliet supported the children's developing interests and document the learning.

*The child with a positive ecological identity has a sense of belonging in knowing that he or she is a part of nature versus separate from it, a sense of wonder in being in touch with what is beautiful and awe-inspiring in the natural world, and a sense of security (or healing) found "in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter" (Wilson, 2011)*



Nina: I love climbing the trees and finding really special things like the leaf with two pom poms on it.

Wellington: The nature walks are fun because you find really cool things from nature.



# Yr 4 River School



The river systems that connect our oceans and run through the surrounding suburbs of Fremantle offer new understandings and learning as children come to know the land and water systems at River School. The Year 4 Class alongside class teacher Christine have developed an ongoing relationship with the Swan River system around Bicton Jetty through a series of visits over the school year. Visits to Alfred Cove Nature Reserve, South Beach, Kent Street Weir and Kings Park have extended their understanding of the delicate natural balance of these ecosystems and how we impact on them and can care for them.

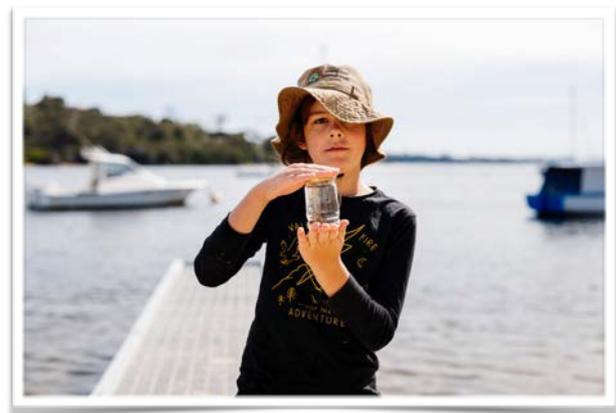
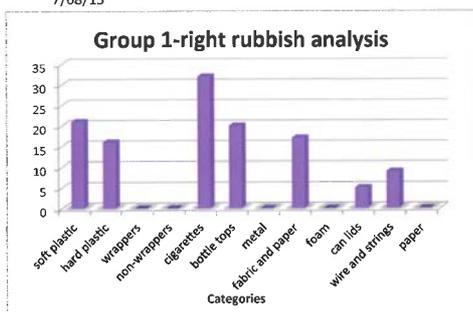
The children have explored how to look after the river and worked with the Swan River Trust to test the quality of the water, testing for salinity and water temperature. This provided students with meaningful and relevant connections to the curriculum. Other projects included rubbish collection and an analysis of the data gathered occurred in class using excel spreadsheets, and challenges such as making a boat out of natural materials and that could stay afloat for a minute.

After each visit the children record their learning experiences in their River Journals showing not only their engagement but their growing attachment and commitment to care for our river systems.



	Group 1-right	Group2-left	total
soft plastic	21	0	21
hard plastic	16	0	16
wrappers	0	16	16
non-wrappers	0	47	47
cigarettes	32	16	48
bottle tops	20	9	29
metal	0	1	1
fabric and paper	17	0	17
foam	0	1	1
can lids	5	0	5
wire and strings	9	6	15
paper	0	23	23

Scarlett  
7/08/15



# Yr 5/6

## Swan Coastal Plain



*I was really impressed how Seth incorporated the students learning via their own discoveries and engaging group and individual discussions while enjoying themselves on the various nature excursions.*

*Another highlight was how Seth encouraged the students interaction allowing them to feel confident in responding to any questions asked.*

*Parent*

Throughout the Swan Coastal Plain project the children extend their relationships with natural eco-systems by visiting three areas on the Swan Coastal Plain. These include a coastal environment, a wetland environment and an environment in the Perth Foothills. They explore the three environments looking at the differences in the eco-systems including the flora and fauna of three areas. They will be looking for specific adaptations to help survival as well as the effect of invasive species and the diversity of living things.

The children choose one of the environments to explore in greater detail, developing focus questions to research.

As part of this learning experience, we also incorporate an intensive study of Derbal Yerrigan (the Swan River) and learn about its cultural significance to the local Noongar people both in the past and present. This creates an appreciation of the culture of our First Nations People and gives them a different perspective on a resource of close to our school.

The Year 5/6 students present their data in a number of ways, using ICT skills, scientific reports and research to compile a detailed project about their chosen area of the Swan Coastal Plain.



# Tree Planting



The students have been participating in tree planting activities for many years to regenerate areas and contribute to reducing your carbon foot print. In conjunction with Climate Clever School Initiative and their partner Trees4Change they have worked on revegetation projects including: Yarloop (Bushfire Damage), Myalup (Coastal Dune Restoration) and Anketell (Resorting Banksia Woodland).

Students learn about the importance of the role plants play in stabilising the soil and stopping erosion. The students show a lot of pride in what they are doing and can see the importance of their role in the future of the environment.

The project also includes a Nyoongar Experience which enables students to spend time in the bush with a Nyoongar Elder learning about Nyoongar history and culture. This experience covers topics such as cultural significance of the land, types of bush tucker and the importance of family and culture.



*My children really enjoyed the tree planting. They both mentioned walking through the bush being their highlight. Thank you for giving our children such wonderful, rich learning opportunities.*

*Thanks Seth, my child had a great time - so proud of the 4000 trees!*

*My child had a great day. I love that our school continues to be involved with these kinds of projects.*

