

# A ROADMAP TO ANALYZING THE ROLE OF NATURE ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

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## INTRODUCTION

Nature exposure has been associated with positive outcomes for children, including improving cognition<sup>[1]</sup>, mental health<sup>[2]</sup>, and social outcomes<sup>[3]</sup>. Schoolyard greening is the practice of converting previously paved or built elements of schoolyards into greenspace. Scientific literature has demonstrated links between schoolyard greening and improved outcomes for students, such as increased attention restoration and prosocial behaviors<sup>[4]</sup>. Researchers from the University of Victoria's Buckler Lab have partnered with the BC Parks Foundation to examine upcoming school greening projects at several schools in BC. Five schools in four distinct regions of the province (Interior, Northern, Vancouver Island, Metro Vancouver) will receive schoolyard greening in collaboration with the BC Parks Foundation's Learning by Nature program. Buckler Lab researchers plan to study how the greening projects impact students and educators at the schools. In my involvement with this project, I prepared preliminary materials for qualitative analysis components and distilled project partners' interests in the study.



Recruitment poster designed for students at participating schools.

## METHODS

Partners in this project (n= ~75) convened on May 6, 2025 to discuss their interest in a potential study of school greening. Attendees included:

- Educators
- Government officials
- BC Parks Foundation staff
- Uvic Buckler Lab researchers
- Students K-12

All groups were given an opportunity to express the direction they would like the project to take and what they hoped might come from this research.

## RESULTS

Common themes emerged upon analyzing meeting notes from the partners meeting. Frequent desires for the project shared across groups included exploring how schoolyard greening impacts:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Educational outcomes and student engagement
- Environmental awareness and behaviors
- Social connections
- Physical activity
- Teacher workload

## DISCUSSION

Common desires for the direction of the project influenced study design and assessment tools to be used. Tools and metrics measured include:

- Before and after photos for schoolyard greenness
- SOPARC for schoolyard activity
- Teacher and student surveys for attitudes towards their environment and schools
- Accelerometers for physical activity levels

## REFERENCES

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