Learning by Nature: Nature Parks

The Learning by Nature initiative is a partnership between the Vancouver School Board (VSB) and the BC Parks Foundation that creates outdoor learning spaces where students can connect with nature, learn through experience, and develop lifelong stewardship values.

Program Overview

Background

BC Parks Foundation - Learning by Nature Initiative

The BC Parks Foundation's Learning by Nature initiative is a province-wide program that supports students in connecting with, learning about, and enhancing nature on their school grounds. Through outdoor learning spaces, habitat restoration, biodiversity projects, and student-led environmental action, the program helps transform school grounds into living classrooms that foster environmental stewardship, well-being, and place-based learning. Learning by Nature is delivered through partnerships among governments, school districts, Indigenous communities, and private-sector supporters, with a long-term vision of connecting every school in British Columbia to nature and conservation action.



Students at Vancouver Technical Secondary's school garden

The initiative is funded through a collaborative public-private partnership led by the BC Parks Foundation (BCPF), with support from the Government of Canada through the Climate Action and Awareness Fund, the Province of British Columbia, proceeds from the BC Parks License Plate Program, and contributions from private-sector and philanthropic partners.

VSB Founding School District Member

BC Parks Foundation - Learning by Nature Initiative

In 2024, the VSB officially signed on to the Learning by Nature initiative as one of five founding school districts. The first initiative was the Spark Grant program, which saw $60,000 in funding distributed to approximately 20 schools to undertake work that would increase biodiversity and enhance student leadership.

Following the success of the Spark Grant program, Learning by Nature launched its Nature Park funding stream, supporting the creation of transformative nature-based learning environments on school grounds designed to increase biodiversity, strengthen student connection to nature, and provide dedicated areas for outdoor education.

These initiatives contribute meaningfully to VSB's Environmental Sustainability Plan objective to "support and improve outdoor focused spaces and activities at schools."

David Lloyd George Elementary

Vancouver School Board



Nature Park at David Lloyd George Elementary

Project Background

Located at David Lloyd George Elementary School (DLG) in Vancouver's Marpole neighbourhood, VSB's second Nature Park represents the southern-most school site in the growing network of outdoor learning spaces. The project was uniquely positioned to leverage the final phase of the school's seismic replacement project.

Following the completion of the new school building, the removal of the original school created an ideal location for the Nature Park. Integrating the project with broader site redevelopment efforts maximized efficiencies, reduced site disruption, and transformed a previously developed area into a welcoming outdoor learning environment. The project also provided an opportunity to celebrate the school's history through the creative reuse of architectural elements from the original building.

Project Highlights

Site Area: 600 m²

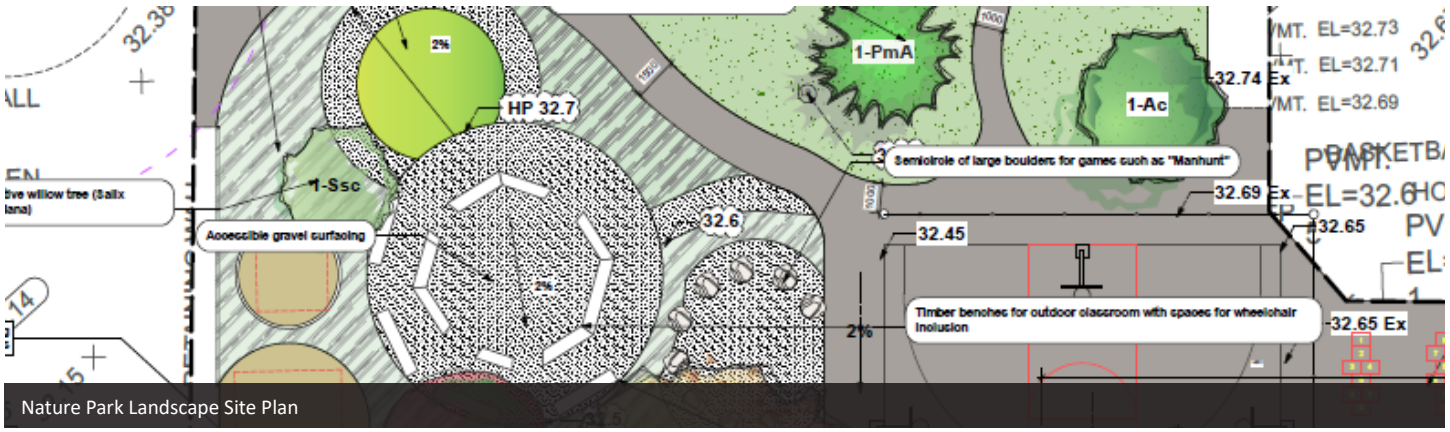
Total Project Cost: $84,000

Stewardship Fund: $10,000 (anticipated)

Project Timeline: 8 months from co-design to completion

Budget Breakdown:

- **Design:** $11,000
- **Furnishings and Features:** $26,000
- **Installation and Plant materials:** $47,000



Nature Park Landscape Site Plan

David Lloyd George Elementary

Vancouver School Board

Student Co-Design

A key feature of the Learning by Nature program is its emphasis on student and staff participation in the design process. Through a collaborative co-design workshop, students, educators, VSB staff, project consultants, and representatives from partner organizations worked together to develop a shared vision for the space. The resulting design reflects the priorities and aspirations of the school community while supporting outdoor learning, environmental stewardship, and student well-being.



Students participating in the engagement sessions

Installation and Features

Construction of the Nature Park was completed in Spring 2026 following the removal of the original school building. The approximately 600 m² accessible outdoor learning space includes:

- Primary gathering circle with timber bench seating
- Secondary gathering circle with natural boulder seating
- Wooden activity table
- Pollinator- and woodland-focused planting beds featuring native plant species
- Several new trees, including native maple and willow species
- Open grassy area supporting gross motor play and outdoor learning
- Accessible spaces designed to support outdoor education, biodiversity, and student engagement



Outdoor classroom featuring timber seating logs