

Childcare with a breath of fresh air ^[1]

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EXCERPTS:

Preschool is about to get a breath of fresh air in Richmond.

Starting this fall, Nature Preschool, Richmond's first outdoor-based childcare program, will open at Terra Nova Rural Park.

Taking a step back from technological progression, Thompson Community Centre, Richmond Schoolyard Society and the City of Richmond have partnered to fund the non-profit daycare program.

Nature Preschool directors Emily Vera and Kate Dawson say that stimulating and encouraging a child's imagination is essential to a healthy development.

"The curriculum will be driven by what we're seeing on the natural landscape," Dawson said. "We will study all of the natural animals that inhabit that area, seasonal changes and paying attention to the gifts that nature has."

The program focuses on inquisitive learning, largely driven by the children's curiosity and what sparks their attention outdoors each day. Vera and Dawson hope to share the simplicity of nature while also creating a greater sense of community.

"It's very dynamic and exciting for us as educators and for the children and the families. There's a huge family component to building community," said Vera.

The program is geared to embrace the outdoors and aims to spend the majority of the scheduled time outside. A restored Edwardian cottage on the north dyke will be the classroom site of Nature Preschool. With a 63-acre backyard, Dawson and Vera were excited to offer gardening as part of the program.

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Parents have been receptive to the idea of the new program, feeling that outdoor activity and environmental education are important developmental aspects not regularly seen in preschools today.

"Comparing it to other preschools that my nieces and nephews go to, some of them didn't get any outdoor time," said Lisa Kanavaros, a local parent, at the program's open house last Wednesday. "There's no motor skill activities, where as this has a large focus on that,"

Dawson and Vera hope the children involved will come away from the program with a love of learning, a passion for the outdoors and a greater sense of community.

Amount of time spent outdoors will also help those parents who don't necessarily have the time to take their kids out during the day.

"I'm sure these children will be sleeping better than any other child with all that fresh air, it's just healthy," said Angela Lim, president of the Thompson Community Centre Association.

Children ages three to five year are welcome and encouraged to join. Registration begins March 12, 6:30 p.m. at Thompson Community Centre.

Program options run Monday through Friday. Visit www.richmond.ca/naturepreschool ^[2] for more information.

"It's building a curriculum with different materials. I think the end result is still the same, this is a different path and journey to getting to that end result," Lim said.

-reprinted from the Richmond Review

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

Tags: quality ^[4]

physical environment ^[5]

staff ^[6]

curricula and pedagogy ^[7]

- [1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/03/childcare-breath-fresh-air>
- [2] <http://www.richmond.ca/naturepreschool>
- [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860>
- [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality>
- [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/physical-environment>
- [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/staff>
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