Cultivating Pedagogy: Exploring the Influence of Intentional Time Spent Outdoors on Pre-Service and Novice Educators' Teaching Practice and Philosophy Development

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine how intentional time spent outdoors impacts pre-service and novice educators' teaching practice and the development of their teaching philosophy. Current literature surrounding outdoor education is focused on the impact participation in outdoor education has on students and educators' thoughts on its implementation. Qualitative research methods were used for this study, including narrative research design, allowing participants' voices to remain at the center of the data. Through the completion of a nature journal over the course of a four-week intervention period, four participants had the opportunity to engage with the natural world. Each participant was either a pre-service or novice teacher working in different school boards and positions. A semi-structured focus group interview was also conducted, which allowed participants to share their experience creating their nature journals. The resulting data of this study, including the results of open-ended pre- and post-surveys as well as a semi-structured focus group interview, were analyzed using narrative research methods that highlighted participants' experiences, beliefs, and understandings. Through their participation in this study, the teachers identified the impact that spending time outdoors had on themselves and their teaching practice, including positive emotional associations, and they highlighted the issues currently surrounding outdoor education in elementary school systems such as a lack of knowledge, understanding, and external factors including weather and location. The study indicates a connection between spending time outdoors and shifts in teaching practice and personal teaching philosophy. The study further identifies areas of future research to explore this connection.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Canada has a long history of outdoor education, although the practice has only recently seen a rise in the current formal education system (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). Many outdoor educators have highlighted that "Canada's Indigenous peoples lived spiritually with the land in a manner that they attempt to duplicate with their students" (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022, p. 491). Thus, Canada's first introduction to what we now formally call outdoor education began prior to the arrival of the first Europeans, with the Indigenous peoples who lived off the land (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). The actual education practices of Indigenous peoples in Canada are hard to define due to the "diversity of the land and its people[; however], Indigenous education has always centred around the land as first teacher" (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 133). Historically, Indigenous education was integrated with daily life, learning opportunities were found while people participated in activities like fishing, hunting, and gathering, and were closely integrated with "the needs of the land, family, and community" (Bowra et al., 2021, p. 133). After the arrival of Europeans, attempts were made to eradicate Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and education systems. As a result, education that emphasized students' relationship with the land and its importance was all but eradicated until outdoor education began to be informally reintroduced in the nineteen hundreds (Bowra et al., 2021; Priest & Asfeldt, 2022).

Outdoor education found roots in Canada with the import of programs such as the "'Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Camp in 1889" (Purc-Stephenson et al., 2019, p. 365) and the Boy Scouts in 1907 and Girl Guides by 1910, both in Ontario, from Britain (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022; Purc-Stephenson et al., 2019). These programs were influential in the rise in popularity of organized summer camps in the 1920s (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). Ontario also saw an increase in organized camping, including "canoeing and backpacking expeditions" (Priest &

Asfeldt, 2022) at the same time. Outdoor education further gained popularity through "national park protection and early conservation efforts…to preserve nature and promote sustainability in the face of unregulated resource depletion" (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022, p. 493). Organizations such as the Canadian Forestry Association, the Commission of Conservation, the Hudson's Bay Company, and others initiated programs and made recommendations to help preserve Canada's wilderness and animal populations (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). The combination of these efforts and the rise of organized summer camps saw the creation of programs such as the Junior Forest Warden training program, the Junior Forest Ranger program, the Ontario Camping Association, and nature programs such as those held in Algonquin Park, all of which helped to promote spending time outdoors and nature conservation (Ontario Parks, 2018; Priest & Asfeldt, 2022).

The transition of outdoor education from camp environments to formal education settings occurred "[b]y the 1950s, [when] special summer school [programs] in conservation education had been organized in Ontario and Manitoba" (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022, p. 495). Much of the growth of outdoor education in the education system was observed "between 1950 and 1980" (Purc-Stephenson et al., 2019, p. 366). At this same time, summer camps started to be designed with specializations in subjects similar to those found in schools, including sports, music, and art (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). Ontario also saw the organization of "the first outdoor education conference…at YMCA Geneva Park on Lake Simcoe" in the 1960s (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022, p. 495). The transition from summer camps to the formal education system was made by creating the "first school-based residential outdoor education [program]" in Toronto in 1960 (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022, p. 495) following the education debates, including the desire to reduce American influence on Canadian education and the publication of reports such as *Report of the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario* (1950), *So Little for the Mind* (1953), and the *Hall-Dennis*

Report (1968), that were occurring during this time across society (Clausen, 2013; Joyce, 2012). The success of this program and the Albion Hills Conservation Field Centre, established in 1962, led to the creation of similar programs in other area boards in Toronto and other provinces (Joyce, 2012; Priest & Asfeldt, 2022).

School-based outdoor learning has since gained popularity both in execution and research. Canada has seen the creation of numerous outdoor learning programs outside of school that have provided opportunities for educators to integrate outdoor learning into the formal education setting (Priest & Asfeldt, 2022). With the creation of these programs and the interest in outdoor education, research has begun to increase in Canada and internationally (Ardoin et al., 2018; Asfeldt et al., 2022). Researchers have found significant data to support outdoor education as having a positive influence on connections to place (Berg et al., 2021; Rios & Brewer, 2014), interpersonal skills (Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Purc-Stephenson et al., 2019; Taş & Gülen, 2019), and personal growth (Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Norwood et al., 2022; Priest & Asfeldt, 2022; Rios & Brewer, 2014).

The present literature surrounding outdoor education has been expansive on the impact of student participation in outdoor education programming. Alternatively, there has been little research on the impact of outdoor learning on teachers and how this time spent outdoors can impact their beliefs about education and teaching practices. There is research surrounding educators' thoughts about taking their classes outside (Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Norwood et al., 2022; Schmidt & Mussman, 2023) as well as literature discussing the impact of participation in some form of outdoor education programming during teachers' college (MacEachren, 2022; Warkentin, 2011). This research does not discuss the impact of time spent outdoors on educators' beliefs and the development of their teaching philosophies. Furthermore, current research

highlights the issues, perceived or otherwise, that teachers face when implementing outdoor education practices (Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Norwood et al., 2022; Schmidt & Mussman, 2023), highlighting a present issue of a lack of ongoing educator learning about outdoor education and a lack of teacher preparation for integrating these practices.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how spending time outdoors impacts preservice and novice teachers' understanding of their practice. Additionally, this research further explored the impacts of this time spent outdoors on teachers' development of their teaching philosophies. This study aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) How does intentional time spent outdoors impact pre-service and novice teachers' perspectives on their practice? and (2) How does intentional time spent outdoors influence the development of a personal teaching philosophy?

Researcher Positionality

My interest in and passion for outdoor education resulted from my Bachelor of Education degree and my first year in the Masters of Education program. I am a white settler Canadian who grew up in a suburban environment. From a young age, I had a desire to spend time outdoors, whether this was going for walks, playing at the nearby park, or building forts in the snow in my front yard in the winter. While my parents attempted to support and foster this desire to be outdoors, unfortunately, my family did not have the resources to truly support this drive. As a result, my outdoor experience was limited to my time as a camp counsellor, playing in my small yard, and going for walks around the neighbourhood to find better green space. In high school, my parents decided to adopt two horses, and we began to go for trail rides and spend time at the

barn with the horses or maintaining the trails. While we often sought time at the barn, my high school obligations and new work commitments once again restricted the time I spent outdoors.

Despite what felt like minimal experience with outdoor activities, I still had an underlying passion for the outdoors that persisted with me throughout university. I often spent time outdoors hiking alone or with friends, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in 2020. However, it was not until my Bachelor of Education degree that I began to appreciate the educational value and potential of outdoor learning. Two years later, I experienced the positive impacts of spending time outdoors for myself. In my Bachelor of Education degree, I was enrolled in a mandatory course titled "Environmental Education", where we learned the requirements for taking students outdoors, important things to consider when teaching outdoors, and the benefits of outdoor learning. As a result of this course, I became more interested in incorporating outdoor education into my teaching practice. This course mainly influenced my desire to pursue my Master of Education degree in Environmental and Sustainability Education.

My focus in my Master of Education degree has been on environmental and outdoor education, emphasizing how learning outdoors can impact student achievement and development. In the first semester of my program I was enrolled in three courses, the maximum course load for the program. Additionally, I was a graduate assistant for a professor in the Bachelor of Education program, I was a supply teacher, and I took on a thirteen-day long-term occasional position in a class with many behaviours. In addition to my student and work life experiences at the time, I simultaneously went through some tough personal experiences. The first semester of my program was challenging and tiring, mentally, emotionally, and physically. During this semester, two of my courses contained assignments that required me to spend time

outdoors multiple times a week. I could document this time outdoors in various ways, including a nature journal, poetry, or photography. Over the course of the semester, I looked forward to this time outside, a moment to pause and reflect on the things occurring during that time of my life. While I only needed to spend fifteen to thirty minutes completing the activity, oftentimes, I would spend an hour outside and even plan to hike before or after the activity. I spent two to three hours a week outdoors, which was a big commitment given my full schedule.

The following semester I was only enrolled in two courses, and my personal and work life was much less busy. However, I found myself more stressed during this time. My to-do list was never-ending, and I struggled to keep up with the semester's workload. One significant difference between the first and second semesters was my time spent outdoors. Neither of my courses in the second semester required me to spend time outdoors, so I found it more difficult to allocate time to going outside. Towards the end of the semester, I began to give myself more time to spend outdoors, most often hiking, and once again my stress levels began to decrease. I noticed that when I allowed myself to spend time outdoors my stress levels decreased and I could better manage my workload. Not only that, but I began to appreciate the importance of integrating spending time outdoors into my teaching. I saw how it impacted me, and my understanding of my teaching beliefs changed to incorporate outdoor education. This led to my desire to complete this research, as I wondered if other student teachers and novice educators experienced a similar shift in thinking about their developing teaching practice and philosophy as a result of spending intentional time outdoors.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Research on outdoor learning has greatly expanded over the past three decades in various ways. There has been an increase in the implementation of outdoor learning practices, with Canada alone having "over 165 outdoor and nature-based learning programs" between 2018 and 2019 (Krigstin et al., 2023, p. 1), as well as an increase in research on this topic internationally (Ardoin et al., 2018, p. 1). This field of study covers a wide range of topics, including, but not limited to, environmental education, place-based education, wild pedagogies, and outdoor education. These topics are heavily debated among scholars due to the wide breadth of activities and learning objectives included in outdoor learning (Asfeldt et al., 2022; Potter & Dyment, 2016). Asfeldt (2021) highlights this debate as he discusses "whether [outdoor education] is a discipline or a method of teaching" (p. 15). He concludes that "there is no one template of [outdoor education] in Canada" and that it is instead "a method of teaching where we can achieve the goals of a wide variety of emerging and traditional disciplines" (Asfeldt, 2021, p. 15). This idea of there being a wide variety of disciplines within outdoor education is reflected in the literature surrounding outdoor learning practices. The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) published a research summary to assist in the understanding of outdoor education (Humphreys, 2018). Within this document, Humphreys (2018) highlighted, intentionally or otherwise, the variety of activities and learning objectives included just within their understanding of outdoor education. These include education for curriculum, environment, character, and well-being where each pillar highlights different learning outcomes depending on the intention of the outdoor education programming (Humphreys, 2018). The term environmental education is often used to describe many types of outdoor learning; however, it is formally defined as a means to enhance ecological knowledge, with a focus on ecosystems and

human interaction with the physical environment within these ecosystems (Asfeldt et al., 2022). Place-based education focuses on developing a connection to a place by visiting one's local community (both physical and cultural) and looking at the human interactions within this community (Reid, 2019; Webber et al., 2021). Similarly, wild pedagogies emphasize the role of the learner as "part of the subject matter, and they themselves become part of the learning process" (Krigstin et al., 2023, p. 2). This form of education challenges the "dominant cultural ideas about control" (Jickling et al., 2018, p. 161). The goal of wild pedagogy, much like place-based education, is to foster a connection to the natural world and to recognize one's role within the relationship (Krigstin et al., 2023, p. 1). Outdoor education is regularly used as an umbrella term when discussing these different types of outdoor learning. The term outdoor education refers to "organized learning that takes place outdoors" (Asfeldt et al., 2022, p. 1511), whether this means strictly teaching standard curriculum content outdoors or engaging with the environment throughout learning. For the purpose of this literature review, the term outdoor education will be used to describe intentional time spent learning outdoors.

Much of the present literature on outdoor education, including the terms discussed herein, emphasizes the qualities that make a teacher a good outdoor educator (Blenkinsop, 2014; Devine et al., 2013; Palavan et al., 2016) and what constitutes a good outdoor education program (Devine et al., 2013; Jeronen et al., 2009; Norwood et al., 2022; Özdağ & Lane, 2014). There is a vast amount of research on the impacts of participation in outdoor education programming for students of various ages (Berg et al., 2021; Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Norwood et al., 2022; Rios & Brewer, 2014; Taş & Gülen, 2019) and on educators (MacEachren, 2022). While there is research to illustrate the impact of outdoor education on educators, much of this research focuses on teachers' observations of students or their feelings toward lesson

planning for outdoor education (Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Norwood et al., 2022; Schmidt & Mussman, 2023). Teachers' personal beliefs and experiences are important in their development as educators; however, there is little data in the literature on the impact of intentional time spent outdoors on educators and how this impacts the development of their teaching perspective and philosophy.

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching philosophies underlie all of the conscious and unconscious decisions educators make in the classroom and act as a guiding compass for choices regarding course design, assignments (or assessments), and tests (Beatty et al., 2009, p. 103). Beatty et al. (2009) describe five major shared educational philosophies that can provide a foundation for teaching philosophy statements. These are "idealism, realism, pragmatism, existentialism, and critical theory" (Beatty et al., 2009, p. 107). While each of these major shared educational philosophies is unique in definition, the associated teacher applications identified by Beatty et al. (2009) can be similar in application. For this reason, while educators will likely ascribe to a single philosophy, the choices educators make regarding course design, assignments, and tests may also be similar to other philosophical applications. Each of these philosophies has associated teacher applications, and while teachers may ascribe to one philosophy over another they may use teaching strategies from other philosophies in their own practice as well.

Beatty et al. (2009) effectively defines each of these five major educational philosophies, including practical applications in the classroom setting. Educational practice informed by idealism seeks to draw out underlying knowledge that already exists within students (Beatty et al., 2009). Similarly, realism draws on sensory data and the mind's interpretation and subsequent understanding of this data (Beatty et al., 2009). Educators with this underlying philosophy

emphasize the social and natural science disciplines with the understanding that knowledge, values, and beliefs are based on observable, natural laws. Pragmatism, also known as experimentalism, is based on the understanding that values change as culture changes because they are not permanent but relative and situational (Beatty et al., 2009). While idealists and realists seek an innate knowing and structure in how humans understand and interact with the world, pragmatists recognize that human understanding of the world is created through environmental experiences (Beatty et al., 2009). In education, this philosophy is presented through dialogue with students and critical examination of how humans interact with the environment, including what this means for our understanding of reality. Existentialism and critical social theory are similar to each other in their resistance to traditional classifications of educational philosophy. Existentialism emphasizes personal reflection, specifically surrounding heightened emotions and their correlating events, as existentialists recognize that this is what allows reality to be understood (Beatty et al., 2009). In education, existentialist understandings may present as a rejection of multiple-choice exams or research articles and instead emphasize experiential learning, encouraging students to have input and choice in their own education and understanding. Alternatively, critical theory focuses on society, specifically, it critiques the structures present in society and their reproductions (Beatty et al., 2009). This philosophy explores the dynamics of power and social relationships, placing emphasis on the roles students play in society and the subsequent expectations placed upon them as a result.

Each of these major shared teaching philosophies impacts the emphasis teachers place on the structure and design of their classrooms as well as course content. In terms of classroom structure and design, critical theorists, who explore power and dynamics, would likely have a design that challenges the power educators hold in the classroom. This could be constructed

through desk placement, the removal of desks, or where the educator places themselves within the classroom; for example, sitting among the students instead of standing at the front of the room. This could further include giving students choice in assignments and the creation of their learning or learning environment. Similarly, pragmatists, who focus on participative knowledge and dialogue, may have a desk arrangement that resembles a circle and allows for ample group discussion. Regarding course content, idealists and realists emphasize drawing knowledge from within and through observation of the natural world and laws present in the environment. These philosophical understandings emphasize eternal knowledge, or universal and natural laws, that is not only found within but also formed through observation and understanding (Beatty et al., 2009). Educators who implement these philosophies accentuate drawing out knowledge and observing these laws, relying on their innate knowledge to develop an understanding of these observations. In the classroom, this may look like going outside and observing how the weather changes or the interactions of bugs and animals within the environment. Shared educational philosophies can provide a foundation for educators to develop a personal teaching philosophy.

A personal teaching philosophy provides a description of a teacher's understanding and conceptualization of teaching and rationalizes their teaching practice (Beatty et al., 2009). That is to say, a teaching philosophy statement provides "a coherent approach to teaching and [enables] teachers to reflect on what they do, how they do it, and why they do it" (Tlali & Lefoka, 2023, p. 4). Personal teaching philosophies can be based on, or built upon, shared educational philosophies; however, personal teaching philosophies are inherently unique to individual educators. Teaching philosophies echo one's personally held beliefs, they reflect the values an individual teacher holds and how these influence their understanding of teaching and learning, the role of students and teachers, as well as the "goals and values of education" itself (Beatty et

al., 2009, p. 100). The creation of a teaching philosophy grants teachers the chance to identify their own beliefs regarding education, and these philosophies are recognized as tools that allow teachers to question and further develop or change their teaching practice (Beatty et al., 2009; Fung, 2005; Tlali & Lefoka, 2023). Underlying assumptions about teaching and learning are also revealed through the development of a strong teaching philosophy statement, which allows for these assumptions and values, and the bases for these, to be critically examined (Beatty et al., 2009). The creation and maintenance of a teaching philosophy requires active reflection as teachers gain experience and grow both personally and professionally, which may shift their perspective on their practice and their teaching philosophy. Beatty et al. state that "[t]he *process* of reflection…is as important as, and sometimes more important than, the actual content of the end-product statement because it promotes self-awareness" (2009, p. 100).

Teachers can further analyze their teaching philosophy to situate themselves within the larger teaching community, giving context and perspective to their teaching practices, such as within one of the five major shared teaching philosophies defined previously (Beatty et al., 2009). Creating a teaching philosophy statement allows teachers to evaluate and reflect on their understanding of education and how this impacts their practice. Furthermore, when educators understand their teaching philosophy and practice, they can align themselves with other educators who share these beliefs. For example, teachers with a pragmatist philosophy may struggle in a school setting where their peers and administrators greatly align with realist or idealist philosophies.

Teaching philosophies are created in much the same way as they are maintained, through the process of active reflection. Active reflection on one's beliefs and understanding is necessary to create and revise a teaching philosophy statement (Beatty et al., 2009; Tlali & Lefoka, 2023).

According to Beatty et al. (2009), “descriptive lists of questions regarding one’s beliefs about students, the role of the teacher, and the outcomes of higher education” (p. 100) are most commonly used when creating a teaching philosophy statement. The creation of a teaching philosophy does not only come from teachers reflecting on their practice and understanding of the education system but also from their personally held beliefs. Individual beliefs are fundamental to identity, which are then taken into account when creating a teaching philosophy, as it is nearly impossible to separate one’s self from one’s teaching practice (Devine et al., 2013). Creating a strong teaching philosophy helps teachers plan their programming to minimize the contradiction between their beliefs and their practice (Devine et al., 2013). Reflective practice is the key component when creating a teaching philosophy statement. Furthermore, teaching philosophies should not remain stagnant, as educators’ interests, beliefs, and understandings change over time so should their teaching philosophy. As important as it is for educators to create a personal teaching philosophy statement, it is necessary to reflect on this statement over time as beliefs and practice change as teachers gain experience (Beatty et al., 2009; Mihaela & Alina-Oana, 2015; Tlali & Lefoka, 2023).

Teaching Practice

Teaching philosophy statements provide an anchor point for teaching practice. Teaching is inherently personal, meaning educators’ beliefs and understanding of education, which shape their teaching philosophy, are the foundation for teaching practice. Researchers have documented a correlation between teacher beliefs, teaching philosophy statements, and teaching practice (Beatty et al., 2009; Blenkinsop, 2014; Devine et al., 2013; Fung, 2005; Mihaela & Alina-Oana, 2015). Teaching practice is not only influenced by teachers' beliefs and teaching

philosophy but also by educators' experience in teacher education programs (Fung, 2005) as well as the education system itself (Fung, 2005; Devine et al., 2013; Jefferies, 2016).

The main form of training educators in Canada is teachers' college, also known as a Bachelor of Education, through university programs. Student teachers begin by being trained at their university before experiencing teaching opportunities in the classroom through their teaching practicum. Fung (2005) highlights the disconnect between the development of personal teaching practice and the system in which teachers are educated, comparing this current model of teaching practicum, where student teachers move their education from university lecture halls to a classroom setting, to that of an apprenticeship. This form of education misdirects student teachers as it promotes direct modelling of their mentor teacher's teaching style and removes the opportunity for student teachers to develop their own style of teaching and problem-solving (Fung, 2005). Current practicum experiences, and research, document that the goal of many practicum placements are focused on "striving to complete the required observation hours" as opposed to exposing student teachers "to the full range of schools' activities and procedures" (Debreli, 2019, p. 445). Practicum experiences that both expose student teachers to broader experiences within the school and have a positive relationship between student and associate (or mentor) teacher lead to positive relationships and thus more positive practicum experiences overall (Debreli, 2019; Izadinia, 2017). Mihaela & Alina-Oana (2015) found that educators early in their teaching career, including student teachers, are more likely to see changes to their teaching practice than those established in the education system. Within the current system, student teachers are often being shown traditional standards of teaching practice and are being influenced to adopt these teaching styles. While student teachers can adjust their teaching style as they gain experience in their classrooms, the style they adopt becomes more routine and,

therefore, comfortable the longer they follow the practice. That is not to say that once a teaching style is established it cannot be changed; though the change is greater and more easily recognized earlier in a teacher's career.

Teaching practice is not only influenced by teacher education but also by the education system itself, which teacher education, in its present form, reaffirms. The current formal education system in Canada involves teaching students about the world and life without giving them the opportunity to experience it themselves (Krigstin et al., 2023). Primary and secondary education emphasizes the importance of "developing skills such as reasoning, measuring, analyzing, and judging" (Jefferies, 2016, p. 188) through memorization. This standard of education measures intelligence "by the ability to hold knowledge as memory, to analyze, and to conceptualize information" (Jefferies, 2016, p. 188) as opposed to having true understanding and experience. This education system is based on the idea of there always being a right answer, one that the student must find and that the teacher already knows (Jefferies, 2016). This structure relies on external validation for students, and educators, to be deemed successful.

Ultimately, this approach to education, which recognizes knowledge as something that exists outside of the individual, "can lead to disconnect between learning and nature" (Krigstin et al., 2023, p. 1). Students are not being taught to inquire and seek out information from their environment. Instead, students are being taught that their environment needs to be controlled by teachers in school and that they can learn by listening to educators speak without the direct experience of what is being taught (Jefferies, 2016). Education in this context is familiar to teachers, as it is likely the education they received, and in this system, they found success. Furthermore, this is the system into which student teachers are entering, they are taught how to succeed as educators in classrooms where the understanding is that "words can and do teach"

(Jefferies, 2016, p. 118). This system then influences teaching practice through the evaluation of student teachers' performance, as they must demonstrate success in this system to become certified educators.

Outdoor Education

Outdoor education is often used as an umbrella term for different types of education that occur in nature and involve learning about the environment. In the present literature, outdoor education is an umbrella term defined as any learning that occurs in the natural environment, whether or not this learning is intentional and regardless of the degree of the experience (Robertson, 2014). That is to say, the experiences in outdoor education can be little, such as observing a bug walking in the grass, or large, learning about local plant life and creating a pollinator garden, and still be considered outdoor education (Robertson, 2014). Furthermore, this could include education for curriculum, where "the experiential nature of outdoor education relates curricula to real life situations and the complexities of our natural surroundings[,]" education for environment, where students are being exposed to the natural environment and can foster "personal connections, knowledge, skills[,] and a lifelong environmental education[,]" education for character, in which experience outdoors "provide[s] opportunities for both personal and interpersonal growth[,]" and education for well-being, the understanding that "outdoor education promotes the lifelong physical, emotional[,] and spiritual wellbeing of participants" (Humphreys, 2018, p. 7). Outdoor education further emphasizes humans' relationship with nature and helps nurture and establish this connection for the individual (Taş & Gülen, 2019, p. 123). Much of the research conducted on outdoor education has focused on elementary and secondary school students; thus, the known impacts of outdoor education are often discussed in relation to the outcomes for school-aged children. Researchers have found that outdoor education

is positively related to not only children's mental and physical health, including emotional control, social interactions, and unwanted school behaviours but also academic performance (Chang, 2020; Johnson & Mackie, 2023; Norwood et al., 2022; Palavan et al., 2016; Taş & Gülen, 2019).

Behavioural Impacts

Broadly speaking, the literature surrounding outdoor education suggests that educators and researchers notice a decrease in negative behaviours and an increase in positive behaviours when students participate in outdoor education programming. Norwood et al. (2022) outline the connection between learning environments, whether indoor or outdoor, and their ability to support, or not support, cognitive function. They go on to discuss how natural environments have less distracting stimuli and thus have "less strain on cognitive resources" (Norwood et al., 2022, p. 307). With less stress on students' cognitive resources, there is a decrease in instances of students getting distracted, and they are less likely to exhibit unwanted classroom behaviours (Norwood et al., 2022). Louv (2005) also discusses the research related to the positive association of a connection to, or association with, nature with "mental, physical, and spiritual health" as well as "attention-deficit disorders" (p. 3). In a study by Berg et al. (2021), teachers noticed less teasing in their classrooms and a general absence of behaviour issues. Johnson and Mackie (2023) also found that the decrease in negative behaviours extended into the classroom, as pre-k students appeared calmer during transitions and instructional times.

Participation in outdoor education programming has also affected positive student behaviours. Most notably, outdoor education is associated with an increase in physical activity (Berg et al., 2021; Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Oberie et al., 2021a) as well as cooperation and friendship building between students (Berg et al., 2021; Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2012; Taş & Gülen,

2019). These results are associated with "the type of learning that occurs outdoors[, which] tends to be student-led, active, and meaningful" (Berg et al., 2021, p. 173). This structure allows students to engage with one another in their learning and develop their social skills while participating in physical activities.

Academic Achievement

Current research also documents increased student engagement when participating in outdoor education. Norwood et al. (2022) found that, compared to indoor learning environments, students "were more engaged in the outdoors" (p. 300) despite educators describing their outdoor lessons as comparable to those conducted indoors. Similarly, Taş and Gülen (2019) found that students who participated in their outdoor program discussed the activities positively with minimal statements of dislike for the activities expressed during participation. The activities students participated in during Taş and Gülen's outdoor education programming were described positively by students, whether the goal of the activity was team building or curricular connections. Students found the learning opportunities in outdoor education programming more meaningful, allowing them to connect beyond the curriculum to their lives (Berg et al., 2021). This positive engagement further allows students to participate in activities that stimulate all of their senses and provide the opportunity for greater engagement with curriculum content that speaks to various sensory modalities. Research shows that outdoor education is connected to increased achievement in the sciences as it often encourages or includes experiential learning (Rios & Brewer, 2014; Taş and Gülen, 2019) and authenticity in language learning and student inquiry (Johnson & Mackie, 2023). Rios and Brewer (2014) found that students who participated in a school gardening program achieved higher science scores than those who did not participate,

indicating that outdoor education-inspired programs, such as gardening, can lead to increased academic achievement.

Increased Connection to Nature

Outdoor education has also been shown to help students develop a concrete understanding of curriculum connections and a connection with nature (Berg et al., 2021; Rios & Brewer, 2014). The more time spent indoors, specifically at school, where children spend a large portion of their day, the less opportunity students have to connect to the natural world and recognize themselves as part of the natural world (Louv, 2005). When students have less opportunity to spend time outdoors they are not given the chance to have "experiences with nature that help them develop a personal connection with the environment" (Cormell & Ivey, 2012, p. 38), further highlighting the ever growing divide, or lack of time spent outdoors, between nature and children (Louv, 2005). Students today are taught about the "global threats to the environment" but have less physical connection to or contact with nature (Louv, 2005, p. 1). Berg et al. (2021) illustrated the ability of students to develop a connection to nature through their study involving grade 3 students in Western Canada. Students who participated in this study developed a connection to a specific tree due to the design of the outdoor education program. Berg et al. (2021) found the participants recalled visiting their tree on their own time, introducing the tree to their family, and that the students began to speak positively about nature and show respect to and for the earth. The development of a connection between the student and their selected tree highlights the connection the students made to nature, as shown through their discussions with parents and others later on. This connection with nature also helps students to begin to care about the environment as something separate from humans (Berg et al., 2021), as children with a strong connection to nature begin to become empathic for the natural world

(Tsevreni, 2021). Opportunities for positive experiences with nature "in early childhood have been seen to be important for the development of nature sensitivity" (Jeronen et al., 2009, p. 18). Outdoor education programming at all grade levels helps foster this sense of connection and stewardship in many ways, whether through the implication of place-based education strategies, outdoor play, or implementing tools such as nature journaling. These opportunities further allow for students to recognize themselves as a part of nature, making connections to self, others, and their community.

Outdoor education that utilizes place-based education techniques allows students to develop a connection to nature and self as well as a respect for the environment. Place-based education nurtures these connections through students' interactions with their local environment. Similar to outdoor education, place-based education uses one's local environment, natural and built, as well as the surrounding community, as a means of expanding on and enhancing learning (Özdağ & Lane, 2014). Özdağ and Lane (2014) found that elementary students began to care about the land around them and develop a desire to protect the environment as a result of their participation in place-based education programming. This drive is reflected in students' responsible behaviour towards nature after their experience in the study (Özdağ & Lane, 2014). Place-based education utilizes students' local environments to help students make connections to nature, self, and their community, connections that can last beyond the school year into their adolescent and adult years as well. Rios and Brewer (2014) found that these connections can greatly impact students throughout their lives, including influencing their career choices. Participation in place-based and outdoor education programming can have lasting effects on student attitudes, behaviours, and decisions as they utilize the skills and experiences they have had throughout their lives.

Current research also includes understanding the impact of participation in outdoor education activities on post-secondary students. MacEachren (2022), the program coordinator of "the Outdoor & Experiential Education…program at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada" (p. 102), found that, when given the opportunity, students would choose to write about their experience in the Deep Ecology Campfire event, one of the events of the program that "emphasized a deeper appreciation for the more-than-human world" (p. 103). MacEachren found that students would frequently revisit the activities at the Deep Ecology Campfire event, specifically when "exploring the disconnection from the natural world they feel in most of their educational course work" (2022, p. 106). The student teachers who participated in the event experienced a greater connection to nature, which is discussed as the more-than-human world. This further highlighted the disconnect they feel in traditional school environments, both throughout their primary and secondary education and their post-secondary studies.

Tsevreni (2021) and Warkentin (2011) have both conducted research involving post-secondary students' participation in outdoor education programming, emphasizing the use of nature journals to develop a connection to their local environments. Tsevreni (2021) utilized nature journaling at a University in Greece to understand and explore the relationship between students and the more-than-human world. Results of the study showed that students became more aware of the world around them and spoke of appreciating the relationships they began forming with the more-than-human world (Tsevreni, 2021). Students were given the opportunity to develop a connection with nature through their participation in this study, and this sustained interaction led to them becoming more aware of the more-than-human world around them. Furthermore, participants described their interactions with nonhuman nature as tranquil and experiencing a sense of harmony (Tsevreni, 2021). These descriptions support the notion that

outdoor education experiences impact not only students' academic performance but also their attitudes and behaviours. Similarly, Warkentin (2011) explored the ability of post-secondary students to develop a connection with nature in an urban setting. The study had students visiting Central Park in Manhattan, New York, once a week. Initially, the students doubted their ability to observe and connect with nature in such a populated, urban environment (Warkentin, 2011). Throughout the study, participants began to notice the more-than-human world surrounding them and, over an extended period, could identify changes to the environment and patterns in the more-than-human activity (Warkentin, 2011). The connection post-secondary students develop to nature often occurs through the recognition of the nature deficit they have experienced in school, and their growing ability to recognize the more-than-human world in a seemingly entirely urban environment.

Teacher Perspectives on Outdoor Education

Despite outdoor education, in its various forms, being highly regarded as having a positive influence on student's academic achievement, behaviour, and connection to nature, educators tend to be apprehensive about implementing this form of programming into their classrooms. Some of the barriers to outdoor education implementation include teacher comfort (Berg et al., 2021; Norwood et al., 2022; Oberie et al., 2021a; Özdağ & Lane, 2014), familiarity with the indoor classroom (Norwood et al., 2022), and teacher knowledge of outdoor education (Dyment & Potter, 2021; Palavan et al., 2016). To successfully implement outdoor education programming, teachers "need to be comfortable with and supported in taking students outside" (Özdağ & Lane, 2014, p. 200). Research suggests that teachers are generally apprehensive about taking students outdoors because of a lack of comfort in taking students outdoors to learn; the outdoor environment is new and unstructured in the typical school setting that is based on

performative learning an external validation. Berg et al. (2021) noted that "a perceived loss of control" (p. 173) is one of the main anxieties teachers face related to participating in outdoor learning. Teachers are often worried about the possibility of things going wrong, and this anxiety of what could go wrong has an influence on the actual experience of teaching outdoors when programming is implemented (Norwood et al., 2022). This general anxiety many educators have about teaching outdoors can lead to what educators may feel are failed attempts at outdoor education, where teachers do not feel their lessons are as impactful or positively impacted by being outdoors, meaning that teachers are choosing not to return to outdoor education programming as a result of this anxiety (Norwood et al., 2022). However, successful implementation of outdoor education programs involves students, and educators, being given the time and support to develop an understanding of outdoor education (Özdağ & Lane, 2014).

Teacher comfort further relates to educators' and students' familiarity with the indoor learning environment. The unstructured nature of outdoor education is perceived as a barrier for teachers, especially considering their familiarity with the structure associated with indoor learning (Berg et al., 2021; Oberie et al., 2021a; Oberie et al., 2021b). Outdoor education challenges the norms of a traditional classroom setting. In a study conducted by Norwood et al. (2022), teachers described indoor learning as more practical in the current school system when compared with outdoor education as it provides more tangible results. Furthermore, teachers in this study also revealed a preference for indoor teaching "as it took less planning and preparation" (Norwood et al., 2022, p. 304). Few schools are designed with outdoor education in mind, meaning there is no established or permanent place for outdoor learning. The lack of efficient facilities for outdoor education, including access to weather appropriate outdoor clothing for all students, dissuades teachers from using outdoor education practices on a grander

scale (Oberie et al., 2021b; Palavan et al., 2016). Furthermore, if educators want to take their practice outdoors, the preparation is likely left to them because of this lack of facilities. Educators can create a permanent space to keep almost all the necessary resources and materials when teaching indoors. Alternatively, educators must plan ahead when teaching outdoors and ensure they bring the required materials outdoors. Thus the task of preparing spaces for students to learn is increased as educators must account for both indoor and outdoor areas and the risk of forgetting something or feeling unprepared may increase.

Finally, lack of teacher knowledge about outdoor education is a significant barrier to outdoor education programming. Palavan et al.'s (2016) study revealed "that more than half of the teachers [who participated in the study] have never heard of outdoor education before" (p. 1887). Even participants who knew of outdoor education did not have a strong understanding of the concept, and this overall lack of information was determined to be one reason why teachers were not integrating outdoor education programming (Palavan et al., 2016). In fact, many educators described outdoor education as activities that happen outside of school or class, with teachers that do use outdoor education programming describing field trips as their main form of implementation. These include "field trips to museums, factories, supermarkets, meteorological institutions, natural sites; family visits/home visits; and student performances/displays" (Palavan et al., 2016, p. 1888). Due to outdoor education being marginalized in the formal education system, educators do not have the knowledge or resources to implement outdoor education practices within their classes successfully.

Outdoor education programming is also often misunderstood in post-secondary education programs. Dyment and Potter (2021) identified a lack of understanding of "[outdoor education's]...achievable[, tangible] learning outcomes and research contributions" as one reason

for the decline and closure of university outdoor education programs (p. 7). Dyment and Potter found that many participants expressed frustration by the misperceptions of their supervisor's understandings of outdoor education as "outdoor education 'for' activity, and not…as education 'through' activity" (2021, p. 7). Participants in this study also identified the shift in outdoor education programming within the past three decades as part of the reason for this misunderstanding, as outdoor education for older generations was likely more focused on recreation than academic achievement (Dyment & Potter, 2021). Instructors and professors in post-secondary education programs face similar challenges to educators in elementary and secondary education; there is minimal knowledge of the benefits of outdoor education. This is both a result of outdoor education being rather new to Canada's formal education system, as well as a lack of exposure to outdoor learning as something educational as opposed to recreational (Dyment & Potter, 2021).

Conclusion

The literature summarized in this section shows a clear indication of a positive relationship between outdoor education and student behaviour, interest, and academic achievement. Research is currently growing both in Canada and internationally as outdoor education becomes more common in the formal education system. Despite the growth in research, there is still little research on the impact of outdoor education on pre-service teacher candidates and teachers themselves, specifically regarding the impact time spent outdoors has on teachers' teaching philosophies and perspectives of their teaching practice.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Present literature on outdoor education emphasizes the impact on students' behaviours, academic achievement, and connection to nature, as well as teachers' perspectives on outdoor education implementation. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of intentional time spent outdoors on teachers' perspective on their teaching practices and the development of their teaching philosophy. The following research questions were explored throughout this research: (1) How does intentional time spent outdoors impact pre-service and novice teachers' perspectives on their practice? (2) How does intentional time spent outdoors influence the development of a personal teaching philosophy?

This study consisted of three different means of data collection over the course of an eight-week period between February and April in Ontario, Canada. There was a sample size of four participants, one pre-service teacher and three novice teachers who were in various teaching roles (occasional teacher, long-term occasional teacher, outdoor educator) at the time of this study. The four participants first completed a questionnaire to understand their relationship with the outdoors, after which they spent time outdoors and completed a nature journal over the course of four weeks. Participants then completed a questionnaire containing some questions from the original questionnaire as well as new, open-ended questions before participating in semi-structured focus group interview online via Zoom (see Appendix A for sample questions). This study's structure allowed data to be collected by comparing the pre- and post-questionnaires, participant nature journals, and the responses during the semi-structured focus group interview. The following methodology chapter will detail the approach and design of the study in detail, including the participants and sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis techniques.

Research Design

This study examined the impact that intentional time spent outdoors has on pre-service and novice teachers. Qualitative research methods are often described in opposition to quantitative methods, where instead of focusing on numbers, researchers will focus on words (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This juxtaposition is further supported by the closed-ended versus open-ended questions often used in quantitative and qualitative research methods, respectively (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) define qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Qualitative research methods provide the opportunity to study behaviour and interactions that may not be well suited for surveys (Silverman, 2011). The aim of this research was to understand how spending time outdoors impacts participants' thoughts on their own teaching practice and teaching philosophy development. This problem is inherently personal in nature, requiring opportunities for participants to document and discuss their views, opinions, and experiences throughout the duration of the study. Qualitative research methods highlight individual experiences and perspectives and seek to understand them, the emphasis of the research is on the meaning participants give to the experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, according to Merriam & Tisdell (2016) qualitative research employs the understanding "that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (p. 23).

I employ a basic qualitative research design. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), basic qualitative research is a qualitative study that is not grounded within, or declared as, a specific type of qualitative study and instead relies on the primary goal of uncovering and interpreting specific meanings. In addition to basic qualitative research methods, I also

incorporated narrative research design in this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Narrative research involves the researcher studying and inquiring about individuals' lives, with an emphasis on the stories individuals tell about their lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This form of research often involves the researchers asking "one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13) as it is through stories that "we make sense of our experiences,...communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 33-34). Participants created a nature journal as part of the study, where they documented their experiences outdoors over the course of the research process. Nature journals were chosen as part of the intervention method because they have been shown to help people understand, experience, and value the more-than-human world (Tsevreni, 2021). Nature journals further encourage participants to take note of their surroundings and engage with their environment. Not only have nature journals been found to have a significant impact on children's connection to nature and sense of wonder but researchers have also found that nature journals have similar impacts on post-secondary students as well (Tsevreni, 2021). More specifically, Tsevreni found that nature journaling provided an outlet for post-secondary students to "overcome the hustle and bustle of their daily life" (2021, p. 19). Busyness is often seen as a qualifier to success, and time for self is seen as unproductive, leading people to resist, or not take time, for themselves. The keeping of a nature journal helped to ensure that participants remained centralized in the study and their experience as they took time to foster a connection with nature, and thus with themselves as well (Porter & Couper, 2023). As a part of their nature journal participants found themselves looking inwards at their thoughts, feelings, or emotions at the time, or outwards to their environment, as well as back into the past and forward to the future. These forms of reflection are discussed as four directions that narrative inquirers

consider when studying experience (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). Nature journals also provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their experience outdoors in a meaningful way for themselves. Participants ultimately created a narrative while creating their journal, which was told through words, poetry, and imagery including photographs and drawings. Narrative research design also allowed for the participation of the researcher in the creation of an emerging understanding and collaborative narrative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lindsay & Schwind, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants

This study included one pre-service teacher in their first year of study in a Bachelor of Education program and three novice educators, where novice means they are in their first three years of certified teaching practice. After gaining approval from the Research Ethics Board, I sought participants through my present personal connections, including my graduating class of B.Ed. students. I also created posters that were posted at the Heritage Place campus of Lakehead University, Orillia, and sent a mass email to current students informing them of the study and inviting them to participate. Because of my role as a graduate assistant in the Bachelor of Education program, I ensured that interested participants were not students in any of the classes in which I was a graduate assistant to eliminate the possibility of coercion in the study.

This study also recruited participants using a snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling involves asking participants "to tell their friends and acquaintances about the study" (Emerson, 2015, p. 166). Those interested in the study or who may have known a peer who met the participant requirements to participate were asked to inform their friends and acquaintances about the study.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to their involvement in the study, participants were provided with an information letter (Appendix B) detailing the purpose of the study as well as what was required of them as a participant. Participants were also informed of what information would be collected, how this data would be used, and where it would be stored. Participants were then required to sign a consent form (Appendix C) before beginning the study. This consent form ensured that I had explicit consent from all participants to record the audio and video of the focus group interview. It further detailed that data would be stored on a password-protected hard drive in a locked filing cabinet for 7 years before being destroyed. Psuedonyms were also used to ensure confidentiality in survey responses and nature journal submissions between participants and anonymity in the final written thesis (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). These documents ensured that participants could give their informed consent to participate in this study. This study was approved through Lakehead's Research Ethics Board.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through a pre- and post-survey, one semi-structured focus group interview, and the voluntary submission of completed nature journals. The pre-survey was completed prior to participants spending time outdoors (see Appendix A for pre- and post-survey questions). The purpose of this survey was to understand how participants describe their interest in spending time outdoors, if they consider themselves to be someone who enjoys spending time outdoors, and whether or not their current teaching practices are impacted by their time spent outdoors. Following the four-week intervention period, participants completed a post-survey. This survey had more open-ended questions asking participants about their experience spending time outdoors, and whether or not they feel this may impact their teaching practices. Participants

completed the post-survey prior to participation in the semi-structured focus group interview to ensure that participant responses were their own and based on their experience without the influence of the conversations that occurred during the group interview.

A semi-structured focus group interview was also conducted for data collection. The aim of this study was to understand how time spent outdoors impacts pre-service and novice teachers' perspective on their teaching practice and development of their teaching philosophy. Focus groups provide the opportunity for people to describe their own views, opinions, experiences, or understandings (Wilkinson & Breakwell, 2004). In this study, the use of a semi-structured focus group interview with guiding questions provided the opportunity for discussion to arise based on participant interest and experience. The interview occurred virtually via Zoom within three weeks of participant completion of the nature journals and was attended by all four participants. During the hour and a half long focus group interview, participants had the opportunity to share their nature journals if they chose, although most chose to speak more broadly about their experience in response to the questions. All participants were given enough time to have a chance to respond to questions. The focus group was recorded with participant consent obtained prior to the study. The interview was recorded with participant consent via Zoom and saved to a passworded external hard drive.

Nature journals were also completed by participants and used as data based on participant consent. The nature journals provided an opportunity for participants to not only participate int their own active reflection but to also actively experience the natural world during their time outdoors (Tsevreni, 2021). Participants were given instructions via an introductory email (Appendix D) for the completion of their nature journal to encourage them to engage with the natural world and their journal in a meaningful way. This included examples of forms of

documentation, such as poetry, writing, photography, and drawing. They were instructed to complete their nature journal during their time outdoors. All participants completed a nature journal and could submit their nature journals for data collection and analysis; however, this was not a participation requirement. While the nature journals would likely offer data that would contribute to the study's overall results, the study aimed for participants to have an authentic experience with their time spent outdoors and personal documentation. If I requested participants to submit their nature journals, they may not have had as authentic of an experience as they may have wanted to provide the correct answer or because they did not want to engage with the outdoors in a way that may lead to more personal documentation. Therefore, nature journals were collected based on participant consent. If they decided later on, before publication, that they no longer wished for their nature journal entries to be included, their journal entries were removed. Two participants submitted their completed nature journals as data for this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this study was analyzed using thematic analysis as an inductive approach. An inductive approach is used to help "build concepts, hypotheses, or theories" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17) using interview responses, survey responses, and submitted nature journals to generate themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thematic analysis involves locating a recurring or common theme among the collected data (Silverman, 2011). The themes identified in this research were generated from the data obtained during the study, meaning the themes were drawn from lived experiences in the natural world, not from existing theory or constructionist frameworks. Prior to deciding on a coding method to apply to the collected data I had to consider my own involvement in the study (Saldana, 2015). Within this study, I was an active member as I gathered data and facilitated the semi-structured focus group interview,

which involved developing some sense of trust with the participants. After collecting and transcribing data it was analyzed using in vivo coding in order to emphasize the language participants used to describe their experience (Saldana, 2015). This form of coding helped to ensure that the two submitted nature journals were emphasized, and that the voices of the participants remained central to the results (Saldana, 2015). Data was manually coded using a splitting approach to capture the breadth and depth of participant experiences (Saldana, 2015). To manually code the interview transcript and submitted nature journals I first transcribed and printed out the transcript and highlighted words and short phrases that captured the essence of participant responses to the interview questions and their nature journals. The splitting approach involved splitting "the data into smaller codable moments" (Saldana, 2015, p. 21) and resulted in my initial analysis having 77 codes after my initial analysis. Using these codes, I began to group them into subcategories based on commonalities between the codes. This led to the creation of 11 subcategories, including weather, lack of understanding, change in mindset, and shift in perspective (Appendix E).

Conclusion

To summarize, this study focused on examining how spending time outdoors can impact pre-service and novice teachers' perspectives on their teaching practices and the development of their teaching philosophies. Qualitative research methods were used in the design of the study, with a further focus on narrative research methods, to emphasize participants' voices and the understanding and value they place on the experience. This study was conducted using a combination of pre- and post-surveys and a semi-structured focus group interview, as well as the analysis of participants' submitted nature journals. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret the data collected.

Chapter Four: Findings

Three main themes emerged from the data during my analysis of the participants' responses to the pre- and post-surveys and focus group interview questions as well as the resulting discussions during the focus group interview. Additionally, two participants submitted their nature journals, which were then also analyzed in relation to their content and participant responses to the surveys and focus group discussion. The first theme focuses on the impact of spending intentional time outdoors. This includes the space the outdoors provides for us to reflect, as well as the impact spending time outdoors has on education and student emotions and behaviours. The second theme relates to the relationship between spending time outdoors and the understanding and implementation of one's teaching philosophy. Finally, the third theme involves the barriers teachers face regarding outdoor education. Each participant had a unique experience surrounding outdoor education depending on their role in the education system, and each role had similar and unique obstacles they needed to overcome to implement outdoor education. The participants also discussed potential solutions to these barriers, expressing a desire for there to be more education provided in the Bachelor of Education program to help educators overcome these obstacles.

Participant Overview

The participants in this study came from a variety of backgrounds and were all in different roles within their teaching careers. There were four participants in this study under the pseudonyms Alex, Brandon, Christine, and Danica. Key information regarding the participants is noted in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Overview

Participant	Age	Enjoy Spending Time Outdoor	Approx. Time Spent Outdoors	Teaching Status	Teaching Role	Nature Journal Entries
Alex	25-34	Y	16-18h/week	Novice Teacher	Elementary Supply Teacher Outdoor School Teacher	Written journal activities (5 senses, observations); active reflection on teaching
Brandon	25-34	Y	1h/day	Novice Teacher	Elementary Supply Teacher	Written reflection on teaching
Christine	25-34	Y	1-2 h	Novice Teacher	Grade 5 Teacher	Poetry; active reflection on life and nature
Danica	25-34	Y	2 - 10h/week	Pre-Service Teacher		Photography and creative writing; active reflection on nature and life

There were many similarities among the participants regarding their relationship to the outdoors and current roles in education. Additionally, all of the participants attended, or were attending, the same Bachelor of Education program at an Ontario university. Alex and Brandon graduated from teachers' college within the past three years and both worked as supply teachers in their respective elementary school boards. Alex also worked at an outdoor education centre in Eastern Ontario. Christine was also a novice teacher; however, she worked full-time as a Grade 5 teacher in a long-term occasional position. Brandon and Christine work in a school board in Central Ontario. At the time of this study Danica was in her first year of the BEd program and in

her second 5-week teaching placement. All of the participants described themselves as people who enjoyed spending time in the outdoors, although there was variation between participants regarding the amount of time they spend in the outdoors, especially given the time of year (winter) this study was conducted. The participants also enjoyed partaking in similar outdoor activities, including walking, hiking, relaxing, and camping.

Theme One: The Space the Outdoors Provides

Over the course of this study, participants were invited to spend intentional time outdoors and create a nature journal that served as a form of documentation of, and engagement with, their time outdoors. The nature journals could be completed in whatever way participants felt comfortable and felt would capture their unique individual experiences. Alex, Brandon, and Danica all completed written journal entries as part of their nature journals. Alex and Danica also included photographs and one other means of connecting, including interacting with the five senses and creative writing, respectively, as a part of their nature journals. Uniquely, Danica decided to write her journal entries after engaging with the outdoors, explaining that she "just wanted to be outside and just see what would kind've happen while [she] was outside." Brandon similarly documented his time after engaging with the outdoors; however, he completed the journal while still outside before returning indoors. Christine chose to practice poetry writing and drawing for her nature journal, although she also found herself "reflecting a lot more" during her time outdoors.

Each participant touched on the idea of the outdoors providing a space to be with and connect to self, for them to acknowledge or do something, whether this was to acknowledge their own emotions and experiences or to actively reflect on their day, life, or nature itself. Through the post-survey and focus group interview responses, as well as the discussion during the focus

group, participants discussed the outdoors as a space that provides them with different opportunities and perspectives. For example, Christine found herself reflecting more while writing and that she "was able to really ground [herself] and also…hone into [her] emotions and put that in [her journal]." Similarly, Alex used his five senses to help "[ground him] in where [he] was" before documenting his thoughts during the nature journal as a "stream of consciousness just writing down [his thoughts] in an actual journal." Ultimately, the concepts of the outdoors as a space to reflect on one's day, emotions, career, and nature itself emerged through survey responses and focus group discussions. Comparably, participants also acknowledged spending time outdoors as a means to escape the busyness of daily life. For example, Alex described his relationship with nature as a means to "escape from the civilized world." Finally, each participant acknowledged their own positive emotional associations with spending time outdoors. Alex and Christine were further able to observe these positive emotions in their students as well.

A Space to Reflect

Reflection, and the opportunity to reflect, were common themes throughout the nature journals, survey responses, and the focus group interview discussion. Every participant used this experience as an opportunity to actively reflect, whether it be on their teaching, outdoor education, or their day in general. Additionally, participants discussed how the nature journal and intentional time spent outdoors heightened their observation of the changes in nature and its impact on themselves and others. Through their connection to nature participants were able to recognize this as a connection to self as well.

For Brandon and Alex, the nature journal itself became a tool to guide their reflection. Both Brandon and Alex used a journal format to document their time outside and focused on

actively reflecting about their day and teaching. Brandon would use his time outside as a reflection on his day supply teaching. He said:

> I just reflected on my day…supply teaching, on what went well, what didn't go well,...if there were any issues I'd reflect on how I could do better next time and, if it was a great day, I could reflect on how to…recreate that my…next day supply teaching.

In his post-survey response, Brandon also mentioned how he would further use the time he spent outdoors and his nature journal to think about what he was looking forward to in the next school day. Brandon also felt there was a correlation between his reflection and the weather. He said in his post-survey response that on days "[w]hen it's very cold outside, I feel like it makes [my] outlook on [my] teaching perspective indifferent." On cold days he found he wrote less and was more inclined to go back inside than to spend more time outdoors.

Alex also "took [the nature journal] very literally so [he] just went out to nature and journalled." He focused on the topic of outdoor education and used the time to "[reflect] on my past week of teaching or [discuss] any thoughts I had about outdoor education." Alex further felt that he could think more clearly during his time outside as opposed to the general "go go go" and busyness of everyday life. Additionally, Alex highlighted the difference between going outside for work versus for personal enjoyment. In the focus group discussion, he described this experience as "a chance to…do something for me..in nature." He further compared this to his work in education, stating that "[going outside] was still awesome and beautiful and super peaceful then, but I'm still in charge of thirty kids. So it's a very different environment than just chilling in the backyard, able to just sit and…[be] with my thoughts." Through his answers to the survey questions and responses during the focus group discussion, Alex actively reflected on his

experience and the difference between going outside for enjoyment and reflection versus for work.

Similarly, Christine found that her time outdoors and the creation of her nature journal allowed her to stop and think, take a moment to pause and let herself actively reflect. When asked if she enjoyed creating her nature journal, Christine explained that this experience gave her a purpose to spend time outside and prioritize herself. She found she had "a purpose and a reason to make myself go and do it" and was not putting off spending time outside for another day. She further described that while she may not have been discovering things about herself during her time outdoors, she was uncovering emotions and making connections between what was happening around her and how it was impacting her internally. She said:

> I was…not discovering things about myself but…finding pieces of me within nature and uncovering…feelings I was feeling without really realizing I was feeling those things. Like I found being in nature and writing really helped me realize that and make connections to what I was seeing, feeling, et cetera outside versus what I've been seeing and feeling…on the inside.

Christine described the experience as not so much a change within herself but that the intentional time spent outdoors allowed her to "pay attention to the difference that nature makes" on herself. This idea was further highlighted in other conversations as well, such as Brandon and Alex in their post-survey responses saying that it was easy to integrate this experience into their schedules, but their active reflection made them realize how their behaviours and attitudes change when they haven't been outside.

Similar to Alex, Danica used this time to reflect in a multitude of ways. While she did not mention reflecting on her personal day or feelings by name, she did say in her post-survey

response that she "was able to reflect on ways to implement outdoor education." When not reflecting on outdoor education she used the time to be outside and "just see what would…happen while [she] was outside." Her experience was similar to that of Christine's, where she would find herself paying attention to things that she would not normally notice. About her approach to her time outside she said:

> I tried to have a little bit of that mindset of just being very open and just seeing different things and kind've wondering well what would a five year old see out here and what would a five year old be interested in while I'm out here just to…really kind've get rid of all of those adult…constraints and just…open myself up a bit more to what…is actually there.

After her time outside Danica would then complete her nature journal entry, reflecting on what emotions or memories came up for her during her time outdoors. Her nature journal entries varied in content, and the reflection within them was illustrated through her creative writing choices. For example, in her first journal entry, she reflected on the health of the Earth, including the impact humans have on the Earth and the new knowledge she has recently acquired "that one person scrolling TikTok puts the equivalent of 2.63 grams of equivalent carbon into the air every minute." In her next entry, she talks about the "anniversaries of important events" and the observations she has of the world around her. Her following journal entry highlights her connections to nature, she observed and recalled:

> The flowers are poking out of the ground. I am trying to remember what they are but cannot. They remind me of the trilliums that used to grow at our cottage. I remember being 7 and thinking it was pretty important that the provincial flower grew on our lawn. It made the land extra special.

While many of Danica's reflections in her nature journal were not explicit, they highlighted her desire to connect to nature through her reflection on her past relationship with the Earth.

Escapism

The concept of escapism arose during the focus group discussion and in Alex and Danica's nature journals. During the focus group discussion, Alex referred repeatedly to the "go go go" of life and spoke of his time outdoors in opposition to this description. Where in life "you can get caught up in the hustle and bustle…of job and money" Alex declared:

> the forest doesn't care about that at all, you can just go and hang out and listen to the birds and the wind and just breathe and relax and I think that's what nature's always been to me, has been that sort've escape from the civilized world sort've deal.

During the focus group discussion participants were in agreement with Alex's description of the outdoors being an "escape from the civilized world" and frequently juxtaposed nature to the hustle and bustle of daily life. This idea was further alluded to by Danica when she positively described her mind as feeling empty sometimes when she was outside. Her positive association of her mind feeling empty, or free from thought, reflects that not only is the outdoors associated by participants with being an escape from the responsibilities of daily life but also from the thoughts in one's own mind.

Positive Emotional Associations and Observations

Each participant reported the observation of their own positive emotional associations both with the outdoors and as a result of spending time outdoors. As each participant considered themselves as people who enjoy spending time outdoors, the participants already had an understanding of the impact of spending time outdoors. In their post-survey responses and during the focus group discussion participants did recognize just how much spending time outdoors

impacted their emotions. While they may have always felt the emotional impact, this experience highlighted these positive emotional associations in ways the participants may not have previously recognized.

All four participants associated spending time outdoors with positive emotions. Brandon and Christine described their overall moods as being happier. Brandon further reported in his survey response that he recognizes that "being outside for me is a good break for mental health." Christine also reported being less stressed when she spends consistent time outdoors and described one instance where she "felt very heavy…and then…my body just felt lighter being outside." Similarly, Danica felt that her mood was lifted and she had less stress after spending time outside. She also reported a change in her mindset regarding what it means to spend time outdoors. When discussing this shift, she said:

> I started [this activity] off really ambitious thinking…I'm gunna go to all these different trails, I'm gunna try all these different places and then you know just being in teachers' college I would have…five assignments due this week and…I always had my daughter with me…when I'm not in class… It just got to the point where everything was so hectic. I'm like you know what, we're just going out in the backyard. And that actually turned out to be so great…because it kind've…just changed my mindset about what it means to go outside. Like…it doesn't have to be this big excursion where we get everything packed up and we go somewhere else like I can just go outside and just enjoy nature.

Danica further saw this mental shift in her creativity. She described feeling more creative and less worried about the quality of her writing, even claiming: "I feel like I've found maybe an alleyway to help me…navigate creative writing again." Christine also described a shift similar to the one felt by Danica; however, it was to a lesser degree. Unlike Danica, Christine has

continued to write poetry throughout her adult life, so while she did not find a new avenue to stimulate creativity she did find a way to create different styles of poetry including eco poems.

Uniquely, Alex and Christine had the opportunity to not only observe these positive emotional associations within themselves but within their classes as well. In Alex's role as a teacher at a forest school, he was able to witness the changes in students based on the way the students' teacher described them and then the way Alex saw the students behave in the forest. Regarding this change, Alex said:

> the amount of times that kids come in and, teachers say 'hey this kid is bouncing off the walls usually' and then they are the calmest one in the bunch. Like there's just something about being in nature that changes [their behaviour].

Alex documented another incident like this in his nature journal as well. He reflected on his day teaching a group of grade 1 and 2 students from an alternative school at the forest school. Both he and the other educator were worried as "there were a lot of behavioural issues and special learning needs in the group." Despite their worry, Alex described this group as "one of the most engaged groups I have ever taught." The students actively listened to instructions and authentically engaged in the lessons.

Similarly, Christine was able to see positive changes in her students' observable emotions during her time teaching grade 5. While not at a forest school, Christine implemented wellness walks and mindful moments outside throughout the day with her students. She found that this time outside helped to "center [the students] and then bring them back…and have them feel more…prepared for learning." Furthermore, she noticed her students actively reflecting during these times outside based on conversations they would initiate with her during outdoor time at the end of the day.

Theme Two: Outdoor Education as a Means of Implementing Teaching Philosophy

Each participant shared their teaching philosophy in their survey responses and during the focus group interview. Alex described his teaching philosophy in his pre-survey response as a desire to inspire and create lifelong learners. Regarding this, he said:

> I want to inspire curiosity and wonder to create students who enjoy inquiry and research later in their educational paths. I want my students to love learning and to want to continue to learn for the rest of their life. I believe in teaching to, not at, the students. It is rewarding for me to share my wisdom and receive new wisdom along the way as we, as student and educator, go on our own educational journeys together.

In his responses during the focus group interview, Alex elaborated on this definition of his teaching philosophy and connected it to his experience with and passion for outdoor education. He described his own teaching journey as being "a path of education" in that he feels he is constantly learning. He explained that he loves "that feeling of sharing that knowledge with somebody and seeing…the light in someone's eyes of learning something new." In connection with outdoor education, Alex described the outdoors as "a place of wonder, and…so much inquiry and curiosity comes from nature," which naturally supports his teaching philosophy of inspiring lifelong learners.

Similarly, Danica's teaching philosophy is founded in "[instilling] an innate love of learning in every student" with the hope of setting her "students on a fulfilling path of life-long learning." In the focus group interview, Danica shared her belief that it is more important to "give [students] the skills to want to learn and how to learn and how to acquire their own research in what they're interested in" as opposed to just spewing facts at the students in the hopes they memorize them. Danica's teaching philosophy does not incorporate outdoor

education, and throughout the focus group interview she did not begin to draw her own conclusions about whether outdoor education could help her implement her teaching philosophy or not. This could relate to the fact that at the time of this experience, she had not yet participated in the same environmental education course that each of the other participants, including myself, had completed. Danica did state that she was "not quite sure how [her teaching philosophy] ties in with nature and studying outdoor ed, but maybe that will form over time." She also expressed that she was more interested in and excited about outdoor education after participating in this study.

Brandon and Christine's teaching philosophies both emphasized being a caring educator. In his survey response, Brandon highlighted the importance of students growing not only academically but also personally and socially. The goal of his teaching philosophy is to help students "slowly become active and caring members of society." To do this, he said

> I always try to come across as a teacher that doesn't let things slide…, but also someone that shows respect and a caring attitude towards students that come from a variety of different social and family backgrounds.

In the focus group discussions, Brandon discussed that his teaching philosophy is hard for him to define but that it highlights the things he values, such as reciprocated respect, kindness, and empathy. He also discussed some of the difficulties creating and implementing a teaching philosophy as a supply teacher because of the difference between supply teaching and his placement experiences with an associate teacher in the room. While it has taken him some time to become comfortable as a supply teacher, he does find that his approach of reciprocated respect works well for him in this role.

Finally, Christine stated in her survey response that her teaching philosophy is centered around developing positive relationships with students. This "includes being a kind and inclusive teacher" who establishes trust with her students. Christine recognizes the importance of creating "an opening and welcoming learning community" that includes student input. In the focus group discussion, Christine elaborated on the idea and importance of belonging and a welcoming learning environment. She stated that she feels that if students do not feel welcome and do not have a kind teacher that "they will not be successful,...they won't be engaged in learning because…they're just not able to be…focused in that, if they're not feeling like they belong in that space." Referencing her experience with her class this year, Christine described how kindness, one of the most important aspects in her teaching philosophy, is often thought of as "being kind to each other." However, in discussions with her class, Christine described how "kindness can also be being kind to…your environment, whether that's inside the classroom, making sure you clean up after yourself or just being kind to the outdoors." She further discussed how kindness can help establish a connection to and a sense of belonging within nature, highlighting the connection to nature as a connection to our self. This perspective was unique to Christine's teaching philosophy. While she is still in the process of drawing connections between her teaching philosophy and outdoor education, she highlights the importance of connecting with nature and how, from there, we can begin to learn from nature from a place of kindness.

Every participant expressed an interest in integrating or utilizing outdoor education in their teaching practice, whether this be to implement their teaching philosophy or due to their understanding of the impact of spending time outdoors on emotions and behaviours. Considering each participant was aware of what this study was looking to investigate, how intentional time outdoors impacts teachers and their perspective on teaching and their teaching philosophy, some

of the participants did begin to draw connections between their own teaching philosophies and their experience with and perspective of outdoor education. For Alex, this experience solidified the idea "that outdoor ed is super important, and, is all of those things that I want from education. All wrapped up in a nice little bow." He elaborated "that this experience has really…pushed me towards actually chasing that dream…[and] not just letting it go into the wind."

As each participant described themselves as people who enjoy the outdoors, more specifically in the warmer months, their perspectives were generally positive towards outdoor education and its impact on their teaching philosophy. Despite this, it was not until our focus group discussion that Christine specifically began to draw connections between her teaching philosophies and how outdoor education could help her achieve her ideal learning environment. She described that this experience has helped her to see the connection between outdoor education and her teaching philosophy, as well as the opportunity for her to "teach the kids…about my philosophy [and] also how they can embody that within nature." For Danica, who began to try to draw connections between her teaching philosophy and outdoor education, there was no clear connection made by the end of the focus group discussion. She did describe that she is "more excited now after this, hearing all [of the participants'] ideas" to learn about and implement outdoor education.

Theme Three: Obstacles Surrounding Outdoor Education

When planning to go outside, whether on your own or with a class of students, there are many things to consider before heading outside. While sometimes it can seem very simple just to go and spend some time outdoors, some educators feel that there is a boundary between themselves and the outside world. For example, Danica worked to deconstruct this barrier during this study when she found that going outside "doesn't have to be this big excursion" and that she

and her daughter could just get dressed for the weather and head outdoors. Danica had to break down her idea of the outdoors and spending time outside needing to involve a big excursion; she could just go outside into her yard and enjoy nature and feel its impact. Despite each of these participants recognizing the importance of spending time outdoors both for themselves personally and as educators, as well as for their students, there was an almost constant conversation surrounding the obstacles of outdoor education. For these educators, who have had their own mindset shifts over the course of their education, experience, and participation in this study, taking their students outside was still discussed as a somewhat daunting task. The themes of weather, location, fear, and a lack of knowledge and understanding of outdoor education were alluded to in their survey responses and discussed in depth during the focus group interview.

Weather and Location

The most commonly addressed obstacle to spending time outdoors was the weather and location. Each participant referenced the weather in some way, either in their survey responses or during the focus group discussion. The discussion surrounding weather was often negative or about a lack of good weather. For example, when asked if spending time outdoors impacts their teaching practice, Brandon responded saying "it impacts in a good way if the weather is manageable" but "when it's very cold outside, I feel like it makes [my] outlook on [my] teaching perspective indifferent." This observation was reflected in his thoughts regarding the activity and his nature journal. Brandon described two of his outdoor excursions positively, saying he was actively reflecting and was able to write approximately one page outside before going back inside. The other two days, however, had terrible weather and "halfway through [his] walk [he] wasn't reflecting anymore on [his] teaching day" and he only wrote a few sentences when he returned home. Brandon further explained that while he enjoyed the activity overall, he felt the

weather negatively impacted his experience; he would have gotten more from his participation had the weather been nicer. Danica also highlighted that during this time of year, it gets dark earlier, so after working during the day, and therefore most of the daylight hours, it becomes more difficult to spend time outside on days other than the weekend. As a result, she found that she struggled to incorporate time to go outside prior to her mindset shift regarding what it means to spend intentional time outdoors.

Alex's responses in the focus group discussion reflected thoughts similar to Brandon's. As a result of how Alex interpreted and planned for this study, he determined that he would go outside every Friday for the four weeks. He did this to ensure that he had a specific time to reflect and complete his nature journal, as he already makes a conscious effort to go outside as often as possible. Consequently, there were two Fridays in a row when the weather was terrible, and Alex "didn't want to go outside at all." This relationship between the weather and one's desire to go outside was also reflected in his nature journal responses when he described "late winter/early spring [as] the worst time to be outside" and how this often leads to wet, cold, and miserable students.

Similarly, Christine described getting outside as difficult due to the unpredictability of the weather. She also described the impact the weather had on taking students outside, specifically during the time of year in which this study occurred (late February and early March), as the school where she works has a yard that becomes what she described as "an ice rink" or, due to the melting, becomes a mud pit. Not only does this become a safety consideration for the teacher, but administrators also begin to close these areas if they are deemed unsafe for students, meaning the space where teachers can take their students outside becomes limited.

The discussion of weather as a barrier is also connected to location, where location means the place where one lives, such as a city or country, and the location of the school at which one teaches. As mentioned by Christine, this includes the geography of the school at which you teach. Some schools may have small schoolyards or limited yard access depending on the time of year, they may be close to local parks or further away, they may be on or near a busy street, and many other location factors that may impact the drive and ability of a teacher to take their students outdoors. Danica mentioned concern regarding access to enriching outdoor spaces and how "there's a difference between going to a park that's maybe across a busy road" versus having access to an enriching space on school grounds, whether it be a public or alternative school.

Location is also important for teachers wanting to take themselves outdoors. Danica mentioned that when she was a younger adult, she did not want to spend much time outdoors. She was unsure of the reason but mentioned that it may have been "because of where [she] was living" as she "didn't really like being out in that area." Additionally, Danica has found that she has started to move "away from a busy town life," which may have also impacted her relationship with spending time outdoors. When listening to Danica describe her aversion to spending time outdoors because of where she was living, I found myself internally agreeing with her, as a huge limitation in my own engagement with the outdoors is where I live. I feel uncomfortable going outside where I live and am not in an area where undeveloped outdoor space is easily accessible. I find myself spending more time outside, no matter the weather, when I visit my parents, who have a small backyard. Danica mentioned a shift in mindset about what it means to spend time outdoors, and she identifies her proximity to the water and her access to nature as a part of what helped foster this shift.

Fear

One of the most talked about perceived obstacles for the participants was fear, whether this was fear of something going wrong, such as a student going missing or getting injured, fear of consequences should something go wrong, and a general fear of taking students outside that appears to stem from administration and board rules. Christine explained that while she has signed permission forms from every parent allowing her to take her class for community walks she had yet to take them off of school property for a walk at the time of this study. She attributed this decision to a fear "of losing a kid or…a kid running off or getting hit by a car." These worst-case scenarios had her wondering what would happen should these things occur, what would happen to the student and to herself as the responsible adult. Danica mirrored this thought, stating that, "nobody wants to be responsible for someone's worst nightmare happening." As a result, Christine often finds herself counting students all the time, especially as she feels the pressure of parents and her administration to ensure student safety. While maintaining student safety is an expectation at all times the unstructured environment of outdoor education, and the potential for unknown or unplanned situations to occur, becomes a limiting factor when choosing whether or not to implement outdoor education practices.

Alex, who has the most experience with teaching outdoors in this group, also found that during his first year teaching outdoors, he was constantly counting and ensuring he could see and account for all of his students. He found himself being very protective, and he would attempt to prevent issues from happening by, for example, telling students not to stand on logs. As he has gained experience teaching outdoors, he has found that he has allowed for more interaction with the outdoors and being okay with students taking calculated and relatively safe risks by, say, balancing on a log. He has learned not to prevent issues from happening but instead, be prepared

if they do happen. As a result, Alex advocated for learning to use the fear of taking students outdoors as a means of guiding our decision-making. He described fear as "a really powerful tool,...it helps us decide a lot of stuff" and that the issue does not stem from fear itself but from getting "locked in our fear."

Many of the fears addressed in this focus group discussion are rooted in a lack of teacher knowledge regarding outdoor education, as well as a perceived lack of understanding from coworkers, administrators, and parents. These ideas were addressed in some length through the focus group discussion and in three of the four survey responses and one nature journal.

Lack of Knowledge. Three of the participants first learned of outdoor education during teachers' college. Two of these participants learned about it through their environmental education course, which was also when I first learned about outdoor education, and the third participant had not yet taken the course at the time of this study, but had learned about outdoor education through discussions with other teacher candidates and teachers. The fourth participant, Alex, was the only participant in this group who learned about outdoor education prior to teachers' college, albeit the knowledge was through someone close to him participating in an outdoor education course. He learned more about outdoor education in teachers' college and has since continued to learn about outdoor education through participation in the 2023 Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario conference and his work at a forest school. Brandon has also continued to expand his knowledge of outdoor education through his participation in a Simcoe County District School Board winter outdoor education program. None of the participants discussed their own participation in outdoor education programs as a young student.

Christine and Danica both expressed a lack of knowledge surrounding outdoor education. Christine felt that she did not learn a lot about outdoor education in her Bachelor of Education

program and expressed a desire for more incorporation of outdoor education in the program. She explained that teachers need to be shown how learning outdoors can be connected with the curriculum, as she thinks a lot of the fear surrounding outdoor education has to do with "the fact that teachers feel like they aren't implementing enough curriculum when they spend so much time outside." Danica also stated that she feels she does not know a lot about outdoor education and almost seemed overwhelmed by the amount there is to learn, saying that "I feel like I don't know a lot about it, and I feel like there's a lot to know." Alex acknowledged these ideas as well as he discussed that he senses a lot of fear surrounding outdoor education because of a lack of knowledge about the outdoors itself. He talked about how the inability to identify trees and other plants impacts educators' willingness to incorporate outdoor education, which stems from a misunderstanding of what outdoor education can be. When talking about personal descriptions and understandings of outdoor education, Danica mentioned that she never considered the idea of outdoor education meaning "just being outside." She continued on to say that she "always, kinda thought of [outdoor education] as…learning how to contribute to the outdoors and…how we're all kind've in an ecosystem of…humans and nature" but that there was something nice in the idea of outdoor education meaning to go outside and do math.

A General Lack of Understanding. The final fear talked about in the focus group discussion was the perspective of coworkers, administrators, and parents regarding their understanding of outdoor education. Alex, Christine, and Brandon all highlighted that if you take students outside too much, there is a feeling of judgment from those around you. Christine felt that "outdoor education is not valued and teachers are judged if they take their class outside too often," and Alex mentioned that, as a supply teacher, he feels he is perceived as "goofing off" if he takes a class outside. Christine continued that she feels this judgement could also stem from

people not knowing how to implement outdoor education. Alex expressed his excitement about having his own classroom one day because it would allow him more "autonomy over those decisions" regarding outdoor education. As a supply teacher, Alex mentions that he feels the educators in the schools he goes into do not know his experience with outdoor education and the toolbox he has curated to make the outdoors educational, thus the perspectives of other teachers may be that he is not following plans and has nothing to do, so he instead goes outside. This puts Alex in a vulnerable position as he is dependent upon external validation for advancement and acceptance in his career.

Brandon, who is also a supply teacher, similarly mentioned the feeling that "there's a stereotype…[that] if you let your kids outside they're not gunna learn anything, they're not gunna work, they're just gunna be goofy." During the focus group, he reflected on his own experience as a student in grade 10, where his teacher would take them outside for a work period. He recalled himself and his peers seeing this as a privilege, and he felt "more focused as a student being outside than…inside." He also reflected on his environmental education course during teachers' college, recalling that "when we were outside, everyone was engaged and interested in the content." He explained that on some days his cohort would have "three classes back-to-back six-hour days, and halfway through the second class…[he] was zoned out" but that "there wasn't a time when [he] wasn't engaged outside." Despite this recognition, he still feels that in his role as a supply teacher, the implementation of outdoor education is looked at more negatively. Still, he hopes to be able to incorporate it more in his own classroom.

In Summary

Each participant in this study identified themselves as someone who enjoys spending time outdoors prior to their participation, and they recognized the positive emotional impact of

spending time outdoors on themselves. Through the course of this study, they began to draw connections between the outdoors and their own emotions, discoveries of oneself, and impact on students if they had the opportunity to observe students during this experience. Participants also began to recognize or foster connections between their teaching philosophy and outdoor education. They expressed interest in incorporating outdoor education into their teaching practice, whether as a means of achieving their teaching philosophy or for the benefits of spending time outdoors alone. Despite the interest in outdoor education from each participant, the issues of weather and location, fear, and a lack of knowledge and understanding were identified as barriers to implementing outdoor education to their desired extent in the current public school system. During the focus group interview, each participant expressed an interest in learning more about and incorporating outdoor education, illustrating that intentional time spent outdoors and discussions surrounding outdoor education can impact educators' perspectives of their teaching practice.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Over the course of this study, I found myself regularly reflecting on my guiding research questions and grappling with the idea that my participant pool may not effectively provide insight into these questions. Each of the participants identified as people who enjoyed spending time outdoors prior to beginning this study and mentioned that they did not need to adjust their schedule much to incorporate the thirty minutes a week of time for their nature journals. Despite my apprehension, the resulting data indicates that intentional time spent outdoors can and does impact teachers' perspectives on their teaching practice and the development of their personal teaching philosophy. Furthermore, the participants' active reflection as a result of their time outdoors and the completion of their nature journals further impacted their perspective on their teaching practice and their own analysis of their present teaching philosophy. The following chapter discusses each of the themes that emerged from the data in relation to my guiding research questions. I further connect these themes to the literature analyzed in the second chapter, as well as relevant new literature as a result of emergent themes that were not considered prior to the completion of the literature review. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study and future research opportunities regarding the impact of intentional time spent outdoors on teachers' perspectives of their teaching practice and personal teaching philosophy, as well as ways to minimize the current barriers to implementing outdoor education.

RQ1. How does intentional time spent outdoors impact pre-service and novice teachers' perspectives on their practice?

Participants' perspectives on their teaching practice were impacted in a variety of ways through their engagement with their time outdoors and participation in this study. Despite each participant identifying as someone who enjoyed spending time outdoors prior to beginning this

study, the themes of positive emotional associations and active reflection were discussed repeatedly. Over the course of this study, participants observed positive emotions in themselves related to their time spent outdoors, and for two participants, these positive emotions were observed in their students as well. Furthermore, participants were able to actively reflect on their teaching practices and the education system itself. The idea of self-discovery and uncovering parts of oneself in nature were also important topics within this study. These themes were revealed by participants through the creation of their nature journals and their intentional time outdoors. As a result of their participation in this study, participants were able to identify the effects spending time outdoors had on themselves and begin to translate these ideas into their teaching practice and perspective on their practice, both through their experiences and reflection.

Despite each participant having a positive perspective on spending time outdoors and actively incorporating time outside in their daily or weekly schedules, they engaged with the outdoors in a relatively new way through the creation of their nature journal. These nature journals, along with their active reflection on outdoor education, provided a new avenue for connection with the outdoors and identifying the impact their time outside has on themselves and their teaching practice. Nature journals help foster a sense of connection with nature and help to understand one's own thoughts (Cormell & Ivey, 2012; Porter & Couper, 2023; Terada, 2023). In this study, Christine chose to use her nature journal as a means to explore eco-feminism-themed poetry, allowing her to further connect to nature and how it makes her feel. Similarly, Alex used his nature journal as a means of grounding himself within the space where he was completing his journal using his five senses. Each participant ultimately approached their nature journal using their own knowledge of outdoor education; however, this often led to an observation of or connection to the natural world. Cormell and Ivey (2012) argue that one reason

people do not have personal connections with nature and the environment is the result of a lack of experience with nature (p. 38). They discuss that nature journals provide an opportunity for students to make connections to self as nature as the creation of the nature journal encourages students to notice and document small details that may otherwise be overlooked, and document their thoughts and feelings while spending time outdoors (Cormell & Ivey, 2012; Terada, 2023). While each participant in this study indicated they had a connection with nature prior to their participation in this study, as they all enjoy spending time outdoors, they further discussed a shift in this connection, or their understanding of it, as a result of creating their nature journal. For teachers who do not already have a strong connection to nature, nature journaling may provide an opportunity for them to foster this connection and explore the impact of spending time outdoors, much like it does for students.

The nature journals further provided a space for participants to document their reflections during their time outside. Three of the four participants spoke about actively reflecting on their teaching during their time outdoors. Brandon used his time outdoors to intentionally reflect on his day teaching, and Alex used his time to reflect on his ideas of outdoor education, which often included his observations and reflections on his time teaching at the outdoor school. Similarly, Christine used the time outdoors to reflect on her own connection to nature, which included her understanding of how spending time outdoors impacts her and her teaching practice. The fourth, Danica, mentioned reflection, although in a broader sense, as her experience was more aligned with personal reflection and a shift in what it means to spend time outside. She also used the nature journal as a means to reflect on her experience with nature throughout her life and how this connection continues to have an impact on her relationship with nature. Overall, each participant was able to reflect more deeply through the completion of their nature journal and

actively recall what they reflected on in each session. Porter and Couper (2023) highlight the importance of journaling and its ability to "help connect theory and practice" (p. 29) and facilitate reflective practice. Each participant remained at the centre of their experience, actively reflecting on their own experiences before further applying their knowledge of outdoor education to connect their experiences and interpretations with the practice of implementing outdoor education.

Each participant also identified positive emotional associations after spending time outside, whether this was by identifying a positive emotion such as patience, calmness, or general happiness, or the absence of a negative emotion such as sadness. After completing this experience and discussing their observations and reflections in the focus group, participants demonstrated a desire and willingness to incorporate outdoor education into their teaching practice. Mihaela and Alina-Oana (2015), Devine et al. (2013), and Blenkinsop (2014) all state that a teacher's perspective on teaching is based on their prior experiences and education. Participating in an experiential learning activity such as this exposes teachers to a new experience. Every participant in this activity engaged with the outdoors in a new way that led to new discoveries about themselves, allowing them to foster a connection to self, and the world around them, including the impact of spending time outdoors. These discoveries were further analyzed and understood during the focus group interview, where participants had the opportunity to reflect on their time outdoors and discuss their experience in relation to other participants' experiences. While each participant may have had a preconceived idea about outdoor education and its connection, or lack thereof, to their teaching practice, this experience exposed them to new ideas. Not only were participants able to engage with the outdoors in a different or new way, some also participated in nature journaling for the first time and were

further able to discuss their experience with other participants. Through the focus group discussion, participants were exposed to other perspectives regarding spending time outdoors and discussed these in depth with like-minded peers. Focus group discussions allow for participants to not only share their ideas with the researcher, but also hear the perspectives of other participants who have knowledge on the topic, or experience, and "perhaps refine their own views in light of what they have heard" (Hennink, 2014, p. 3). Focus groups further allow participants to ask their own questions, or clarifications, "thus increasing the clarity, depth, and detail of the discussion" (Hennink, 2014, p. 3). Personal ideas have been found to have a significant impact on individual teaching practice; they are what make each teacher unique as they are important factors that impact the ideal teacher someone aims to be (Fung, 2005; Mihaela & Alina-Oana, 2015; Devine et al., 2013). Through this study, participants indicated that their perceptions of outdoor education, and what it means to spend time outdoors, shifted as a result of their experiences and the experiences discussed by other participants.

Christine and Alex, who had first-hand experience incorporating outdoor education into their program in some capacity, expressed an interest in increasing outdoor education in their teaching practice. Similarly, Brandon and Danica acknowledged a desire to incorporate outdoor education into their practice, with nature journals being a means of doing so, although they alluded to a lack of experience and knowledge as a barrier to this change. Since teaching practice is influenced both by teacher education programs and the education system (Devine et al., 2013; Fung, 2005; Jefferies, 2016), the present lack of exposure to outdoor education means that teachers are less likely to witness the positive effects of outdoor education. Fung (2005) also discusses the significant impact of associate and senior teachers' practice on novice and student teachers' own practice. During the focus group discussion, there was no indication of experience

with outdoor education in their practicum placements, so while the question was not directly asked, it can be assumed that no participant had experience with an associate teacher who implemented outdoor education during their placement. Danica did note that her placement at the time of this study was supposed to incorporate outdoor education; however, at the time of the focus group interview, minimal outdoor education occurred due to a busy schedule in the classroom. Outdoor education was put to the side in this instance as the busy schedule and completion of more traditional tasks in the classroom, driven by perceived curriculum barriers and the demands of meeting curricular expectations, were the marker of success for the educators.

Despite having an interest in outdoor education and a passion for spending time outdoors, each participant still expressed a shift in perspective as a result of participating in this study, as they were able to have a new experience in the outdoors that provided the opportunity for active reflection and further discussion regarding this experience. This shows that intentional time spent outdoors has the potential to impact teaching practice through reflective practice and positive emotional associations. In instances where participants do not identify as people who enjoy spending time outdoors or do not have a substantial interest in outdoor education, this study indicates that intentional time spent outdoors in opportunities such as this one could give teachers a new experience that may further lead to a shift in perspective.

RQ2. How does intentional time spent outdoors influence the development of a personal teaching philosophy?

Personal teaching philosophies are a reflection of teachers' personal beliefs, interests, goals, and values, which are developed over time and refined and maintained through reflection (Beatty et al., 2009; Mihaela & Alina-Oana, 2015; Tlali & Lefoka, 2023). As we gain more

experience and knowledge, these beliefs and values are subject to change, thus impacting our teaching philosophy (Beatty et al., 2009). However, if our teaching philosophy is to change, we must first have the knowledge of our own values and beliefs and actively reflect upon and question these beliefs to change our teaching philosophy statement (Beatty et al., 2009; Fung, 2005). In their pre-survey responses each participant were asked if they already ascribe to a personal teaching philosophy and to then describe their teaching philosophy. Responses ranged from shaping lifelong learnings, or instilling a love of learning, to being a kind and inclusive educator who emphasizes trust and relationships. As described by Beatty et al. (2009), Mihaela and Alina-Oana (2015), and Tlali and Lefoka (2023) these philosophies reflect each participants personal beliefs and values. However, as people who enjoy spending time outdoors and are interested in outdoor education, none of the teaching philosophies included outdoor education, or a connection to the outdoors, as a part of their philosophy. After participating in this study, which included actively reflecting on their understanding of outdoor education and the impact of spending time outdoors, participants indicated either a change in their teaching philosophy or their approach to implementing their teaching philosophy.

As people who spend a lot of time outside, each participant was already acquainted with the outdoors and, to some degree, outdoor education. Despite this, the idea of uncovering oneself, reconnecting with parts of oneself that were once thought to be lost, and an opportunity to critically reflect on one's teaching day were all topics discussed during the focus group interview. Through participation in this study, the participants were able to find a space to reflect while spending time outdoors, which led to critical analysis and reflection of their teaching philosophies. Teaching philosophies are created and maintained through active reflection. The participants all had the opportunity to critically reflect on their own environmental perspectives

and further discuss these observations during the focus group interview. Each participant entered the study with an idea of what their personal teaching philosophy was, as highlighted in their pre-survey responses. Throughout the duration of this study, the participants began to reflect on their initial philosophy while incorporating their experiences with the outdoors. This intentional time spent outdoors, as well as the opportunities for conversations with other like-minded educators, allowed participants to reflect on their practice and their philosophy. Furthermore, this experience provided each participant with the opportunity to begin to reimagine what their teaching philosophy may evolve into as they continue through their career and should they begin to emphasize outdoor education.

Emergent Themes

Two themes emerged from the data during my analysis that were significant to the findings and subsequent discussion. The first theme that emerged was barriers to outdoor education, which were the reasons why each participant felt hesitant to incorporate outdoor education into their daily practice. These barriers include fear, whether it be of implementing outdoor education incorrectly or something going wrong while outside; location, including access to enriching outdoor spaces, weather, and geographical location; a lack of knowledge, such as knowledge regarding what outdoor education is and how to effectively incorporate it while still maintaining curriculum standards; and a lack of understanding, perceived or otherwise, from coworkers, administrators, and parents, leading to a lack of support. While it was not unexpected for this theme to emerge, the consistency in which these barriers were discussed was surprising, especially considering the participants in this study all have an affinity for outdoor education. As discussed in the literature review, teachers need to be comfortable taking students outdoors, which includes being supported by the environment, coworkers,

administrators, and parents (Oberie et al., 2021a; Özdağ & Lane, 2014). Norwood et al. (2022) found that there is the presence of general anxiety when it comes to outdoor education; however, these anxieties tend to emphasize potential issues as opposed to actual issues the teacher has experienced. Alex, Brandon, and Christine all discussed the negative perceptions of teachers who take their classes outside, describing the feeling of being perceived as unprofessional or lazy by peers and administrators. Berg et al. (2021) recognized that "a perceived loss of control, loss of expert status, and/or working relationships" were a major anxiety around outdoor education (p. 173). Orberie et al. (2021a) also highlighted this barrier to outdoor education, noting educators feelings of constraint in traditional teaching practices as well as little or no support from administrators. The participants in this study reflected these anxieties, with a general anxiety regarding lack of knowledge of outdoor education and a fear of the repercussions if something goes wrong; these were consistent topics of discussion throughout the focus group. With exposure and access to education about outdoor learning, it could be possible to overcome these barriers to outdoor education. Given that each of these participants appears willing to learn more about how to implement outdoor education to overcome these barriers, it seems possible that greater exposure to outdoor education in post-secondary programming could help eliminate these barriers for those who are not as motivated to learn more about outdoor education.

The second theme that emerged was the concept of escapism. This theme was not anticipated prior to this study and arose naturally from participants' discussions regarding their relationship with the outdoors. Escapism is not a new concept; Tsevreni (2021) alludes to this concept in her research as students described "nature journaling as a way to overcome the hustle and bustle of their daily life" (p. 19). These ideas were reflected by participants in this study, with the addition of the feeling of escaping from the realities of everyday life or the hustle and

bustle. Escapism has a long history in research in many different fields. Presently, there is a lot of literature surrounding escapism in relation to video games, where escapism is "defined as the pursuit of escaping from real life into another fictional world" (Marques et al., 2023, p. 2). Escapism is used to avoid thinking about or dealing with real-life problems by distracting oneself and avoiding unpleasant thoughts (Pupi et al., 2024). While nature itself is not fictional, the ideas surrounding nature and the relative disconnect between humans and the natural world, and thus a disconnection to self, could be construed as fictional. In a recent study by Büsken (2024) that analyzed escapism in relation to cottagecore, "an internet aesthetic prevalent on a multitude of social media [platforms]" (p. 9), a recent increase in a desire to escape from reality, including "capitalism, sexism, xenophobia, the patriarchy, heteronormativity, and the internet" (p. 10), has been observed on social media through the rise of cottagecore. Escapism can also be considered a means of relaxation in addition to avoiding responsibilities and problems (Igorevna, 2015).

This emerged theme highlights the current disconnect between humans and nature, which is emphasized, and almost encouraged, in the current formal education system in Canada (Krigstin et al., 2023; MacEachren, 2022; Oberie et al., 2021a). "The requirement for principal approval to schedule and plan outdoor learning" (Oberie et al., 2021a, 256) and the lack of fundings allocated to resources for outdoor learning hinder the ability of educators to incorporate outdoor education into their practice. Furthermore, with the amount of programs in place for students they are often "required to be in proximity to the classroom at specific times" to receive their individualized programming (Oberie et al., 2021a, p. 257). For the participants in this study, who all identify as people who enjoy spending time outdoors and have varying degrees of desire to incorporate outdoor education, the concept of escapism, and finding a space unaffected by daily annoyances and responsibilities, was interwoven throughout their discussion of their

experience creating a nature journal outside. If this disconnect is present in a group of people who enjoy spending time outdoors and who seek to foster a connection to the natural world, what is this disconnect like for those who do not identify as people who enjoy spending time outdoors? The presence of this theme reveals the need for more research regarding the apparent disconnect between humans and the natural world, and what type of relationship is being fostered when trying to create this connection.

Future Research

While outdoor education is not new in concept it is still gaining traction in the formal education systems. This research illustrates that intentional time spent outdoors has an impact on teachers as individuals and as educators, which in turn impacts their teaching philosophy and practice. More research is needed to determine if the influence of intentional time spent outdoors is true in most cases, specifically for teachers who do not identify as people who enjoy the outdoors or have little to no interest in outdoor education. Furthermore, additional research may include seeing how many teachers who participate in studies such as this carry their new-found understanding of outdoor education and its benefits into the classroom beyond the completion of the study.

Each participant in this study expressed their concerns regarding the obstacles that face teachers when implementing outdoor education. To explore these obstacles, researchers could investigate these barriers to determine if they are perceived or supported by external factors. For example, participants identified the feeling of being judged as a reason for being apprehensive about taking their students outdoors. Further research could help determine the foundation of these barriers in order to find and develop ways of combating or dismantling these obstacles.

Additionally, this research supports spending time outdoors as a means of developing and modifying one's teaching philosophy and practice both through positive emotional associations and active reflection. However, these positive associations were hindered by participants lack of knowledge and exposure to outdoor education. Future research could assess the impact of participation in university level outdoor education courses, as well as the implementation of outdoor education practices in all curriculum courses.

Limitations

This study was not without its limitations. The design of the study had participants completing a nature journal that potentially contained valuable information about how the participants interacted with the more-than-human world during their time outdoors. However, the aim of this study was also to have participants engage authentically with the outdoors and their nature journals. As a result, if participants believed they were required to submit their journals they may not have engaged in as personal a manner as if it were a private activity. In order to encourage participants to engage authentically with the study I decided it was not a requirement for them to submit their nature journals, although they did have the option to submit them if they choose. As a result, only two nature journals were submitted to be analyzed as a part of this study. These nature journals provided valuable information, and it could be assumed that the unsubmitted nature journals contained private information that means they did engage authentically with the activity. Participant experiences were then discussed during the semi-structured focus group interview, where they discussed their experiences more broadly while still referencing the nature journal and their thoughts and emotions about the activity.

Due to the nature of the participant sample size and selection method, participants in this study had an affinity for spending more time outdoors than a random sample selection. Snowball

sampling involves participants telling their friends about the study, meaning "participants will generally be from the same geographical area…[and] [t]hey may also have similar socioeconomic statuses or ethnic backgrounds" (Emerson, 2015, p. 166). As a result, each participant in this study attended the same Ontario University and most lived in similar geographic areas. Despite this, one participant did live in a different geographic area as he moved away from the University after graduating. Additionally, the timeline of this study meant that participants were spending time outdoors in late winter in Ontario. The weather was often cold and not as inviting had the study occurred in another season, so participants who agreed to participate were those who enjoyed spending time outdoors already. As a result, the results of the study are representative of only a portion of pre-service and novice teachers and not all of the population. More research is needed to determine if the impacts of spending time outdoors that were found in this study apply to the broader pre-service and novice teacher population.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

While not new in practice, outdoor education has begun to gain more exposure for many reasons in Canadian primary schools. There are ample studies surrounding the impacts of outdoor education on students, the perspectives teachers have on outdoor education, as well as the impact of participation in outdoor education courses in teachers' college. However, there is minimal research regarding the impact of intentional time spent outdoors on teachers' perspectives of their practice and the development of their teaching philosophy. The purpose of this study was to discover if there is a relationship between spending time outdoors and teaching practice. This research study involved spending intentional time outdoors and documenting this time through the creation of a nature journal. Qualitative analysis was used to analyze participant responses during a focus group interview and to pre- and post-surveys, as well as narrative research methods that highlighted individual experiences within the study. This research method allowed for participants voices to remain at the forefront of the research for the duration of the study and in my analysis.

Teaching philosophies are the foundation of how educators teach and their approach to education. There are many factors that influence the development, and refinement, of one's teaching philosophy, including one's own experiences both within and outside of education. Exposure to intentional time outdoors, both as an individual and an educator, can provide the opportunity for teachers to actively reflect on their teaching philosophy. This exposure also allows educators to experience something they may have otherwise never done, whether this is learning outdoors, creating a nature journal, redeveloping a love for a forgotten habit or activity, or developing a stronger connection to nature.

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Appendix A

Pre-Survey Questions

1. What grade(s) do you teach if you are a certified teacher? (k-8, plus a box for supply)
2. Would you consider yourself to be a person who enjoys spending time outdoors?
3. How many hours per week do you typically spend outdoors?
4. What activities do you do while spending time outdoors? Select all that apply. (list including: walking, hiking, running, gardening, skiing, snowboarding, canoeing, kayaking, working (job), swimming, bird watching, fishing, other - please specify)
5. Do you feel your time outdoors impacts your teaching practice? (yes/no/unsure/if yes, how)

Post-Survey Questions

1. Incorporating time outdoors into my schedule was easy. (1-10, where 1 is strongly disagree and 10 is strongly agree)
2. I enjoyed creating a nature journal (yes/no, why or why not)
3. Do you feel your time outdoors impacted your teaching practice? (yes/no/unsure/if yes, how)

Interview Questions

1. What activities did you choose to do during your time outside? Why did you choose to engage with the outdoors in this way?
2. How did you choose to document your time outside in your nature journals? (ie. journal, drawing, poetry, photographs)
3. What was your experience like creating a nature journal?
4. How do you think spending time outside has impacted you over the past four weeks?

Appendix B

Information/Cover Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information about an interesting and potentially beneficial research project I wish to invite you to participate in. Taking part in this study is voluntary. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part in this study, please read this letter carefully to understand what is involved. After you have read the letter, please ask any questions you may have.

PURPOSE

The project is titled: *Cultivating Pedagogy: Exploring the Influence of Intentional Time Spent Outdoors on Pre-Service and Novice Educators' Teaching Practice and Philosophy Development*. This qualitative study focuses on exploring the impacts of outdoor learning experiences on teachers and how this impacts their teaching practices.

I am a Masters of Education student in the Environmental and Sustainability Education program, who has completed her Bachelor of Education in the concurrent education program through Lakehead University. I am also currently an occasional teacher with the Simcoe County District School Board and enjoy spending time outdoors and implementing outdoor learning, where possible, in my own teaching.

WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED?

Information that will be collected for this research includes participant responses to two surveys, as well as responses to questions and conversations in semi-structured focus group interviews. Participants will also have the opportunity to submit their nature journal for data collection; however, this is not a requirement.

WHAT IS REQUESTED OF ME AS A PARTICIPANT?

Data will be collected over an 8-week period between February and April 2024. Throughout this time, the commitment for this study involves spending 30 minutes outside, at a location of your choice, once a week for four weeks. During this time outdoors you will also be completing a nature journal entry, for a total of four entries over the course of the study. Additionally, participants will be answering two short surveys, one prior to spending time outdoors and one after their experience completing a nature journal. Following this time outdoors and the completion of the surveys, participants will also participate in a semi-structured focus group with me and up to 5 other participants. This focus group should last 1-2 hours and will take place in person, at a location that is convenient for all participants. If necessary, a Zoom meeting will be conducted to accommodate participants. The focus group will be recorded with an audio device to ensure accurate transcription. If on Zoom, the focus group will be recorded to my external hard drive.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?

As a potential participant your rights include: the right to not participate; to refuse to answer any question(s) during this study; to withdraw from this study at any time during the data collecting phase without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements, and to continuing and meaningful opportunities for deciding whether or not to continue to participate; to opt out without penalty and to have any collected data withdrawn from the database and not included in the study (until completion of the data collection phase of the study, if you choose to opt out, any data pertaining to your participation will be destroyed); to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality; to safeguards for security of data; to the disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher; and to a copy of the summary report. All of these rights are without penalty and exist even after signing this letter of consent.

WHAT IF I WANT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time until the completion of the data collection phase of the study. If you choose to withdraw from this study you may do so via email to myself or my supervisor, Dr. Joan Chambers.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS?

There is no foreseeable risk or harm associated with participation in my research. I will provide information on resources for mental health and well-being for you to access should you experience uncomfortable emotions during your time outdoors. You may benefit from this study in terms of understanding your own teaching practice and appreciating time spent learning outdoors through insights gained from this research.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED?

Due to the nature of the study and participation in a focus group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed among the participants themselves. Data collected from the pre- and post-surveys will not be anonymous; however, they will be confidential. To maintain confidentiality in the data analysis and reporting process, participants and all persons or places named within the focus group will not be identified. Pseudonyms will be used in all transcripts and findings, including any potential publications. A "key" linking pseudonyms to names to facilitate withdrawal will be kept by me, the researcher.

WHAT WILL MY DATA BE USED FOR?

Following the analysis of the data, the results of this research will only be used for my thesis, presentations, written articles, and/or teaching lectures for other educators.

WHERE WILL MY DATA BE STORED?

All electronic data gathered through this research project will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive. This hard drive will be stored along with written data in a locked filing cabinet securely stored for 7 years, after which time, it will be destroyed. Only my supervisor and myself will have access to the raw data.

HOW CAN I RECEIVE A COPY OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

Analysis and findings will be available to you upon request through e-mail.

RESEARCHER CONTACT INFORMATION:

If at any time, you have any concerns regarding the project, please feel free to contact me by email, tmfergus@lakeheadu.ca, or by telephone, (226) 218-0329 (cell); or contact my supervisor, Dr. Joan Chambers at joan.chambers@lakeheadu.ca or (807) 343-8010 ext. 8935.

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL:

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8010 ext. 8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Sincerely,

Tara Ferguson
Masters of Education Student
Faculty of Education
Lakehead University

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

Study title: *Cultivating Pedagogy: Exploring the Influence of Intentional Time Spent Outdoors on Pre-Service and Novice Educators' Teaching Practice and Philosophy Development*

I, _____, (potential participant) have read and understood the accompanying information/cover letter, including the potential risks and benefits of the study. I hereby consent to the participation in the research.

I understand that:

- I am a volunteer and can withdraw from the study at any time, and may choose not to answer any question
- The data will be securely stored for a minimum period of 7 years following the completion of the research project before being destroyed
- A summary report will be made available to me by the researcher upon request; and
- I will not be identifiable in any publications or public presentations resulting from this research unless I explicitly agree to have my identity revealed

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only in the following:

- Thesis, presentations, written articles, and/or teaching lectures for other educators

Furthermore, I provide explicit consent to the use of an audio/video device to record the conversational focus group to ensure an accurate transcription.

- Yes
- No

By consenting to participate, I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8010 ext. 8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

(Print Name) (Signature) (Date)

Please sign and return this form to the researcher in person or via email tmfergus@lakeheadu.ca (a scanned copy or photo image of the signed consent form). For further information concerning the completion of this form, please contact:

Tara Ferguson
Masters of Education Student
Lakehead University
Cell: (226) 218-0329
Email: tmfergus@lakeheadu.ca

Appendix D

Introductory Email

Thank you for your participation in my research study, *Cultivating Pedagogy: Exploring the Influence of Intentional Time Spent Outdoors on Pre-Service and Novice Educators' Teaching Practice and Philosophy Development*.

Linked at the bottom of this email will be the pre-survey. Please complete this survey at your earliest convenience and prior to beginning your nature journal. After you have completed the pre-survey you are welcome to begin your nature journal. As per the information letter, the instructions are as follows:

> Data will be collected over an 8-week period between February and April 2024. Throughout this time, the commitment for this study involves spending 30 minutes outside, at a location of your choice, once a week for four weeks. During this time outdoors you will also be completing a nature journal entry, for a total of four entries over the course of the study.

You are welcome to document your nature journal in any way that you feel is meaningful or appropriate for you. This may mean you decide to write about your experience, take pictures, write poetry, draw, or any other form of documentation you can think of. If you need inspiration please feel free to reach out and I can send you some resources I found helpful when completing my own nature journal.

You are welcome to submit your nature journal to me for data collection and

analysis if you choose. Should you decide to submit your nature journal your identity may be recognized by other participants in the study. Therefore, you are not required to submit your nature journal if you are uncomfortable doing so.

During my own time completing a nature journal, I experienced intense emotions surface. Should you feel overwhelmed during your nature journal please feel free to refer to the attached document for resources if you need.

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out. If you decide to withdraw from the study you are welcome to do so with no penalty and any of your collected data will be removed from the study.

Thank you again for your participation! I look forward to working with you.

Kind regards,

Tara

Link to survey

Link to mental health resources

Appendix E

Code Table

Category	**Codes**
Reflection	Clarity Reflect Reflecting on nature Mindfulness Connections (seeing and feeling; outside vs. inside)
Shift in Perspective	Uncovering Pay attention Bigger picture Observe and compare Discovering
Escapism	Escape Free Lighter Visualization Hustle and bustle Grounded Clarity Business of life Civilized world Hectic Adult constraints
Positive Emotional Associations	Less stressed Patience Calm Creative Happier Engaged Curious Boost morale
Teaching Philosophy	Lifelong learners Curiosity and wonder Trust Love of learning Caring attitude Real-life connections Community

Change in Mindset	Just enjoy nature What it means to be outside Disassemble (creative writing)
Location	Restrictions (public school system/school board) Board rules Location (urban vs. rural) Canada (snowy and cold) Limited space Freedom (forest school) Risks
Weather	Nice weather Winter Sunny days Dark early Terrible awful weather Semi-good weather (great walk) Lack of sun Vitamin D Gloomy Worst time to be outside
Lack of Understanding	Looked down on Judged Undervalued (outdoor education) Misinformation Stress Few opportunities for OE
Fear	Scared Intimidated Constantly counting Pressure (admin, parents) Consequences Worst-case scenarios Liability
Lack of Knowledge	No knowledge Field trips DPA (daily physical education) Misinformation One class (teachers' college) Disconnect Separation Lack of education