Outdoor Play at MVPS
Progress Report – Week 1

This first week of the MVPS community development project was focused on activities to better understand what is happening in outdoor play areas at MVPS.

Week 1

Project timeline

If there were no rules…

This week marked the first of a ten-week community development project for the student and adult community at MVPS. Project facilitators, Asher and Cherie, are Occupational Therapy Students from the University of South Australia. They are here to facilitate the school community’s journey to achieving the aim:

To provide opportunities for outdoor play that promote child development, health and wellbeing.

Lead learners, Holly-Anne, Faith, Jordan, Bree-Ana, Lachie, and Trae, framed a question to tap into the broadest possibilities for outdoor play and brainstormed their ideas. They enthusiastically recruited over 30 junior and upper primary students at lunchtime to participate in a photobooth, answering the question, “If the there were no rules, how would you play? Where?” The following day, more students were invited to build, draw and describe their ideas. Parents are invited to discuss these and their own ideas at an introductory morning tea next Wednesday, with the intention to form a small parent focus group to support students in implementing outdoor play ideas.

It was great for Trish Way from Governing Council to nominate as the adjunct for the student/parent outdoor play focus group, during a presentation of the project at the council meeting this week.

Most popular area reported by students: the oval.
Popular ideas: dress-ups, tree houses, rough play, sport, water and animals
Project facilitators’ overview

Week 1 strategies

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<th>Meetings</th>
<th>School site supervisor (Michele Duthy) and project facilitators discussed school updates, proposal strategies and implementation opportunities. School governing council briefed by project facilitators on purpose of project, identified a contact within the council for sustainability and school community ownership of the project. Lead learners and project facilitators discussed best question to ask students about their wishes for outdoor play.</th>
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<td>Identifying key players in the school community</td>
<td>Mark, the grounds keeper, was instrumental in identifying areas for potential development of play trials around the school and exploring a range of existing resources for use. He has kindly agreed to lend his expert advice in planning, logistics and supporting project trials. One teacher, Di Wells, was enthusiastic to hear of the project and forthcoming with information and resources about her outdoor play and gardening project involvement experiences. She has kindly agreed to advocate among teachers for the project and would like to receive any ongoing information. Trish Way volunteered to ensure outdoor play remains on the council agenda and as a communication point for the outdoor play forum (comprising students and parents).</td>
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<td>Clarifying and confirming outdoor play needs with students</td>
<td>Lead learners brainstormed ideas based on what they would like to see that is not currently available, reflecting the need for increased diversity and opportunity in the current school outdoor environment. Dress-up Photobooth was appealing to range of younger and older students who volunteered their ideas around play possibilities. The responses of over 30 students mirrored the sentiments of lead learners that the outdoor environment could be enhanced to include more play possibilities. Students were again invited to participate in a lunchtime activity to Build, Draw or Describe their outdoor play ideas. Twenty students chose to participate, predominantly from the junior school and included a number of children identified as having special needs.</td>
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<td>Events</td>
<td>Confirmed planning of morning tea for parents on Wednesday, 17th June, sponsored by Lettuce Inn and Baker's Delight. Invitations handed to parents and via in newsletter. School holidays outdoor play event has been confirmed to go ahead for Wednesday, 8th July, in collaboration with the Smith Family and sponsored by Breakfastbellies.</td>
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What’s happening next week?
- Parents gather over morning tea to: 1) discuss and interpret students’ insights 2) identify what assets are available to support a range of opportunities for outdoor play that supports students’ development, health and wellbeing 3) plan the next meeting for students and parents to collaborate on an outdoor play action plan.
- Project facilitators to continue pursuing broader community networks, such as Nature Play Australia and support establishment of the outdoor play forum.