



ALL SAINTS'

EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL

After several years of playground improvements, we are excited to announce that All Saints' Episcopal Day School has received official certification from Nature Explore for our Outdoor Classroom. Nature Explore is leading a movement to bring the benefits of learning with nature to all children. We are delighted to meet their research-based requirements for outdoor classroom design and align perfectly with their mission to inspire joy and wonder in children, educators, and communities with a heart centered approach to early education.

The latest educational research shows the benefits of outdoor learning. When children play outside, they learn about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), develop social skills, create healthy habits of being physically active, and experience hands-on learning in the real world. Time outside leads to better learning outcomes in all domains. Being outdoors lets kids burn extra energy, increases blood flow to the brain and decreases stress. When they come inside, children are more attentive, focused, and on task. As an Episcopal school, we see an additional spiritual benefit, knowing that we are all a part of God's Creation and loved by God. Not only do we learn to love and take care of the Earth by spending time in nature, but it also leads us to understand something greater than ourselves and helps us feel a deeper connection to God.

At All Saints', outdoor play is known as essential to the healthy development of body, mind, and spirit. The design of our playground was intentionally improved to become the Outdoor Classroom. There are more than twelve distinct play areas where indoor learning materials are brought outside and used alongside natural materials, to encourage whole-child learning. These areas include:

- **Action Area** for large motor activities and wheeled toys – develops big muscles needed for physical development
- **Climbing & Crawling Area** including a bridge, monkey bars, a slide, and climbing wall support – improves gross motor skills and strengthens the vestibular system
- **Messy Materials, Sand, and Water Areas** – engages the senses, develops curiosity, and provides hands-on experimentation
- **Building Area** and Lego Wall – encourages critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, and early science exploration through construction and engineering
- **Nature Art Area** – develops creativity, visual-spatial processing, and fine motor skills
- **Music and Movement Area** – encourages self-expression, language, and literacy through dramatic play including storytelling, singing, and exploring instruments and sounds
- **Garden Areas and Greenhouse** (coming in August 2024) – improves early science and math skills, including observing and organizing information, develops patience, and encourages curiosity

Thanks to Nature Explore and the hard work of our school family, All Saints' students are learning, both indoors and outdoors, to have “Minds that think, hearts that love, and hands that help.” They are happier and healthier, feel a sense of belonging and connection to others, and develop a love of nature, because of the wonderful opportunities and experiences provided by the

Outdoor Classroom. On a typical day, you can observe children deeply engaged and working cooperatively to dig in the sand and make volcanoes and rivers, building rocket ships and castles, singing and dancing on the stage, observing snails and butterflies, and excitedly raking, sweeping, and watering the garden.

Want to learn more about Nature Explore? Check out their website here: <https://natureexplore.org> and find our listing as a certified Nature Explore classroom here: <https://certified.natureexplore.org/all-saints-episcopal-day-school/>