FOCUS ON NATURE: RESULTS OF A PROGRAM EVALUATION
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SUMMARY

Purpose:

- The purpose of this project is to evaluate the impacts of a one-day nature photography workshop for students conducted by Focus on Nature (FoN). It explored:
  - Students' experiences of participating in the FoN program, including:
    - What students learned from the program
    - How participation affected students' connection to nature
  - In addition, this evaluation aimed to better understand the experience of FoN volunteers

Methods:

- Surveys consisting of 12 multiple-choice questions were distributed to 154 student participants during the afternoon segment of the workshop at their school. Data collection took place in 16 classrooms across nine participating schools in the Guelph-Wellington area.
- An online volunteer feedback survey was distributed to the Focus on Nature volunteer email list, with 24 volunteers responding. The 18-question survey consisted of a mix of multiple choice and qualitative open-text questions.

Main Findings:

Students:

- FoN appears to have positively impacted students' connection to nature. The majority of students reported that their participation in the program (70%) and the experience of using a camera outdoors changed how they see nature.

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(71%). They also reported that it made them notice more details in their natural environment.

- 62% of students identified at least 3 elements of design in their photos
- 64% of students wanted to spend more time outside following the workshop.
- 52% participants reported that they think about their effect on the environment, which was identified as a potential area for improvement.

Volunteers

- The majority of FoN volunteers are retired older adults who first learned about the FoN program through word of mouth or their own online research. The most popular reasons for volunteering were a desire to make a difference in the lives of others and personal interest related to the topic.
- Volunteers cited a variety of factors that encourage them to continue volunteering, including:
  - connecting with young people,
  - seeing the impact of the program,
  - positive experiences with other volunteers and staff,
  - feeling connected to the values and missions of the organization, and,
  - personal interest in the subject area.
- Volunteers identified expressions of gratitude and positive feedback from staff, teachers and students as their preferred method of receiving appreciation.
- Volunteers identified proximity of workshops and additional volunteer support as factors that would most enhance the volunteer experience.
Conclusions:

- FoN appears to be fulfilling its objectives of fostering creative expression and a deeper sense of connection to nature among students but may want to improve promoting environmental consciousness.

- FoN appears to have strong volunteer retention and is made up by many long-standing volunteers. Proximity of workshops, more volunteer support and a reduce time commitment are some factors that may help further improve volunteer retention. Volunteers also identified positive feedback and expressions of gratitude as factors that motivate them to continue volunteering and showed interest in volunteer appreciation events.
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INTRODUCTION

This project was prepared for Focus on Nature (FoN), a registered charity based in Guelph, Ontario. The program aims to inspire young people to explore and connect with nature through photography. FoN offers workshops for elementary-school aged children in Wellington, Halton and Waterloo regions. The workshops bring trained volunteers into classrooms to engage students in hands-on nature and photography activities.

The goal of this project was to evaluate the impact of a one-day nature photography workshop on student participants. Specifically, we aimed to understand what students learned as a result of the program and how it affected their connection to nature. In addition, the evaluation also aimed to gather experiences from the program volunteers. As the program relies heavily on volunteers, FoN wanted to identify the factors that drew in volunteers and encouraged them to continue with the program. This evaluation will help provide formal documentation of the impacts of the program as well as provide recommendations for improving the program going forward. The current evaluation was conducted through the Research Shop based on the evaluation framework developed during Slemon’s practicum.¹

Background

Focus on Nature is a registered charity that offers full-day workshops in elementary school classes that are designed to align with the Ontario Arts Curriculum for grades 5 and 6. These workshops have been adapted for students ranging from grade 3 to grade 11.

Focus on Nature’s mission is inspired by the belief that spending time in nature is crucial to physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Due to more time spent indoors on screen-related activities, young people are spending less time outside engaging with nature. According to a recent report, the average Canadian adolescent is spending 6.5 hours a day on screens (i.e. computer, TV and video games) on weekdays and 7 hours on weekends (Active Healthy Kids Canada Report Card, 2010). Numerous

¹ This project was a continuation of previous research conducted by Kathleen Slemon, a Project Manager in the Research Shop, during her practicum placement through the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI). During this practicum, she conducted an environmental scan (Appendix A), created a program logic model (Appendix B) and an evaluation framework for Focus on Nature (Appendix C) under the supervision of Lindsey Thomson (CESI Manager).
research studies have pointed to the harms of this increasing disconnection with nature among young people, as well as to the benefits of time spent in nature for young people’s development, health and wellbeing (Louv, 2005; Ontario Nature & Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2010).

FoN seeks to promote respect and appreciation for nature through encouraging students to spend time exploring and discovering the outdoors, as well as engaging students in nature photography activities. Photography has been associated with improved student focus, engagement and depth of learning across a number of disciplines (FoN, 2010). Through combining photography and nature-awareness activities, the FoN workshops aim to foster students’ creative expression, observational skills and attentiveness to their natural surroundings, helping them to deepen their connection to nature.

While there are many programs available that aim to improve student’s relationship with nature or their artistic abilities, very few programs incorporate nature and art into one workshop. The environmental scan suggested that being outside and participating in arts-based programs have many benefits for children. One study reported improvement in behavioural and emotional issues over 12-weeks attending an arts program (Rousseau et al., 2005). Another found that children were able to make connections to the content around them and their community after a one-day outdoor conservation program (Powers, 2004). While the literature supports arts programming and nature workshops for children, very few programs that incorporate both elements have been formally evaluated. The environmental scan demonstrated FoN’s uniqueness as a program, as well as provided some insight as to how to evaluate such a program.

Workshops

Originally based in the City of Guelph and County of Wellington, FoN has expanded to serve Waterloo and Halton regions as well. To date, FoN has conducted 534 workshops in 95 schools, reaching 13,256 students in Wellington County, Waterloo and Halton Region.

One paid staff member and 2-3 additional volunteers typically run FoN workshops. Volunteers are identified as the key to success of the program, as they provide valuable expertise, skills, appreciation for nature, and provide an opportunity for students to connect with members of their community. To date, FoN has trained 76 volunteers.
Workshops include the following elements:

- An interactive lesson covering design, composition use of a digital camera
- A nature walk during which children are able to take photos of their natural surroundings
- Hands-on nature awareness and sensory activities (e.g. scavenger hunt, nature sculptures)
- A photo editing workshop
- A slideshow of students’ “top shots” that students share and discuss with the class

Research Goals

This project is a process and outcome evaluation of a nature photography program in Guelph-Wellington, at the request of, and in collaboration with, Focus on Nature. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the impacts of a one-day nature photography workshop for students. In addition, the evaluation also looked at the experience of FoN volunteers.

The following evaluation questions were used to investigate the objectives identified above:

1. How do students feel about being outside as a result of their participation in the program?
2. Does using a camera impact students’ experience of being outdoors?
3. What did students learn as a result of the program?
4. What do volunteers gain from the program?
5. Which factors enhance the volunteer experience?
METHODS

Participant Feedback

Measures
In order to gather feedback from participants, a short survey consisting of 12 multiple-choice questions was created. This survey was modified from an existing survey measuring Nature Relatedness (Nisbet, Zelenski & Murphy, 2009). In addition to Nature Relatedness, the survey included questions regarding the skills students learned in the workshop and their enjoyment of the program. This survey was distributed to participants during the workshop using a mobile device or on paper. Ethics approval was received from the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board, The Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic School Board.

Recruitment
Nine schools were identified as potential sites for the evaluation. Inclusion criteria was jointly determined by FoN and the Research Shop based on the date of workshops as well as the location. Another consideration was to target schools where the program was well established to ensure the evaluation did not overly burden teachers, students or program staff. These schools included a mix of Catholic and public schools in the Guelph-Wellington region. Once ethics approval was received, researchers sought permission from the principal of each school. Permission was granted in all schools except one, where a scheduling conflict meant that the workshop had to be rescheduled.

Procedure
Once the research team confirmed a schedule of data collection days, student recruitment began. Data was collected at a total of 16 workshops in these 9 schools, though some data collection dates had to be rescheduled or cancelled due to weather or lack of permission forms. As students were under 18, parental consent and student assent was sought. Teachers sent consent forms home as part of the Focus on Nature information package approximately one week before the workshop. Reminders were sent to teachers to collect consent forms before the workshop to ensure students were able to participate in the evaluation. All those who returned a signed parental consent form were eligible to participate. The researchers took eligible students aside in small...
groups to review the survey and provided an opportunity for students to ask questions. If students wished to participate after reviewing the survey and consent form, they were asked to provide their consent by checking a box or clicking ahead on the electronic survey. Most students completed the survey in under ten minutes.

In most cases, surveys were conducted in the afternoon of the FoN program following the morning activities. In cases where this was not possible, they were carried out within a few days of the FoN workshop during our next visit to the school. Physical copies of consent forms and completed surveys were stored securely in a locked office.

Volunteer Survey

Measures

A volunteer survey was created with input from FoN. The volunteer survey consisted of 18 questions, with a mix of multiple choice responses and open text qualitative responses. This survey sought to capture the demographics of volunteers, their experience with Focus on Nature, opportunities and barriers to volunteering, as well as their feedback on volunteer appreciation initiatives. This survey received University of Guelph Research Ethics Board approval and was distributed online.

Recruitment

Volunteers were recruited through the Focus on Nature volunteer email list. Simon Bell, Executive Director of Focus on Nature, sent a letter of information and a link to the survey in March 2018. These surveys were anonymous, and included active as well as past volunteers. Participants were encouraged to share as much or as little as they were comfortable.

Procedure:

All FoN volunteers were invited to participate via email. Volunteers filled out the survey by following a link to an online survey software program. Volunteers were asked to read the consent form before beginning the online survey and were required to click an agreement box which stated “Yes, please begin the survey,” indicating that they had read the consent form and consented to participate. All surveys were confidential, with no directly identifying information collected, and survey results were stored online.
RESULTS

Student Survey

In total, 154 students completed the survey. The age of students ranged from grade 5 to 8. Participants included students from both Catholic and public school boards in Guelph-Wellington. Students were asked about their experiences in the program and whether their attitudes towards nature. The majority of survey responses indicated that students had a positive experience in the FoN program. The responses also indicated that the program is realizing many of its objectives, including strengthening students’ connection to nature. Survey results also suggested some possible areas of improvement. The results of individual questions are summarized below.

Participants Relationship to Nature

According to the survey results, 70% of student participants (n=106) reported that the Focus on Nature program changed how they see nature. Nearly one fifth (18%) indicated they were “not sure”, and 5% indicated that it did not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported change</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>28 (18%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>106 (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, 71% of student participants (n=107) reported that using a camera outside changed how they see nature. In contrast to the previous question, this question specifically looked at whether taking pictures, rather than simply being outside, had an impact on participants. It should be noted that the results of this question are consistent
with the previous question, which suggests that having a camera outside is a key program element that affects participants’ perception of nature.

In addition, when asked if they noticed more details when they had a camera with them, 81% of participants (n=125) answered “yes”. This suggests that one of the program’s objectives, ‘using photography to encourage a different way of seeing and experiencing nature’, was achieved in the majority of participants.
The majority (90%) of student participants (n = 138) reported that they enjoyed visiting outdoor places around their school as part of the FoN programming.
Interestingly, only 65% (n=68) of student participants reported that this activity made them want to spend more time outside. Given the high result of the previous question, this result may indicate that participants already enjoy spending time outside and may already spend quite a bit of time outside. Therefore, the workshop may not be expected to generate a change in interest in spending time outside.

While the majority of students reported that they enjoyed the time spent outdoors during the FoN workshop, only 47% of student participants (n = 71) reported that they felt more comfortable outside following the program. This may indicate that participants are already very comfortable outside and therefore the program did not change their level of comfort. It may also be the case that a one-day workshop is not sufficient to change the attitudes of participants who do not enjoy being outdoors or do not feel comfortable being outside. In addition, some “nature walks” were spent on school property while others took place in local areas. Therefore, it is not surprising that some students did not see a change in their comfort level with being outdoors, as many students were interacting with areas that were already familiar to them.
Finally, the survey investigated children’s relationship to nature overall. The goal of many nature programs is to improve children’s perception of, and relationship to, nature in order to promote pro-environmental behaviours. Just over half (52%) of student participants (n = 79) reported that they think about their effect on the environment. While not an explicit outcome of the program, this indicates that many students are not conscious of their environmental impact. This finding could inform future program development, pointing to a need to promote students’ consideration of their impact on the environment.
Do you think about the effect you have on the environment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19 (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>53 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>79 (52%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students' reported thoughts about their effect on the environment.
Participants Perceptions of their Photos

The following questions explored participants’ perceptions of the photos they took. Overall, participants felt very positively about the photos they took as part of the workshop.

The majority (91%) of student participants (n = 139) reported that they felt proud of the photos they took. Only 3 students (2%) indicated that they did not feel proud of the photos they took, and only 11 (7%) indicated that they were not sure.

Similarly, 85% of participants (n = 130) indicated the photos they took surprised them. Only 10 (7%) indicated that they were not surprised by the photos they took, while 13 (8%) indicated that they were not sure.
Students were also asked to identify the elements of design present in their favourite photo. The graph below the frequency of elements of design students identified:
Over half (62%) of all student participants identified at least three of the six elements of design in their photos. Nearly half (49%) of all student participants identified at least four of the six elements of design. A little over 20% of all student participants identified all six elements of design. The most identified element of style was colour.

**Summary of Participant Survey**

**Positive Feedback**

- 90% of students reported that they enjoyed the experience of visiting outdoor places around their school.
- 64% of students reported that the program made them want to spend more time outside.
- The majority of students reported that their participation in the program (70%) and having a camera outdoors (71%) changed how they see nature.
- Most participants identified feeling proud of (91%) and surprised by (85%) the photos that they took. Also, the majority (64%) were able to identify several different elements of design in their favorite photo.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

- Just under half (47%) of students identified feeling more comfortable outside as a result of the program. Participants may have already been very comfortable outside, but this may also be an opportunity for improvement.
- Approximately half of students (52%) reported that they think about their effect on the environment. This points to an opportunity for the FoN program to cultivate greater awareness of environmental issues and inspire a sense of environmental responsibility.

**VOLUNTEER SURVEY**

In March 2018, a volunteer survey was distributed to the Focus on Nature volunteer email list, which included both past and present volunteers from the Guelph-Wellington, Waterloo and Halton areas. A total of 24 volunteers filled out the online survey. Volunteers were asked questions about their background, how they began volunteering
with FoN, what encourages them to continue volunteering, and how they would like to receive appreciation. Highlights from this survey are presented below.

**Background Information**

**Age of volunteers:**

The following section examines the age distribution of Focus on Nature volunteers.

![Age of volunteers chart]

The survey shows that younger adults (under 30) and older adults (over 50) appear to make up the majority of volunteers. This could be explained in part by the fact that FoN workshops overlap with the traditional work and school day.

- Just under half (43%) of volunteers stated that they were in the age 50-69 range.
- The second largest age group reported was 18-29 (around 24% of total responses), followed closely by the 70+ group (19%).

**Main occupation of volunteers:**

The survey also collected data on the occupational status of Focus on Nature volunteers.

Most volunteers were retired or attending school. This is not surprising as the time commitment to volunteer during workshops overlaps with a traditional work day.
Almost half (48%) of volunteers selected “retired” as their main occupation.

The second most frequent response was “attending school” (29%).

One fifth (20%) of volunteers identified working (full-time or part-time) as their main occupation.

Volunteer Experience

Duration of Commitment

The following section examines how long volunteers have been involved with Focus on Nature.
Long-standing volunteers make up a significant proportion of FoN’s volunteer membership. ‘New recruits’ also comprise a substantial share.

- Half of volunteers reported volunteering three years or more.
- Around a third of volunteers (30%) indicated that they have been volunteering with FoN for more than five years.
- New recruits (those who have been volunteering one year or under) make up more than a third (35%) of total volunteers surveyed.
- Volunteers 49 and under were far more likely to have reported volunteering one year or under.

How volunteers first encountered Focus on Nature

The following section explores how volunteers first heard about Focus on Nature. In addition to the options listed, participants had the opportunity to answer “Other” and specify where they heard about the program. Note that participants could indicate more than one response.

- Most volunteers heard about FoN through word of mouth, either from another volunteer or staff member or through their own research (online)
- Word of mouth typically came from newsletters or representatives at volunteer fairs or career organizations. For example, two volunteers indicated hearing about FoN through the Guelph Arts Council Newsletter, while another two heard about it through the University of Guelph volunteer fair.

Why volunteers began volunteering with Focus on Nature:

Volunteers were also asked about how they began volunteering with Focus on Nature. Survey participants were provided with a list of motivations to choose from. Note that participants could select more than one option. This list also included an ‘Other’ option, which allowed them to elaborate on factors not mentioned. Reasons for volunteering include:
• The desire to make a difference in the lives of others (57%) and personal interest related to the topic (arts, photography, environment) (61%) were the most popular motivations.

• Almost a third of volunteers (29%) selected meeting new people and getting to know the community as a motivation for volunteering.

• A quarter of volunteers (25%) identified developing personal knowledge and/or experience as one of their motivations.

• Some ‘other’ responses referenced the flexible schedule and the opportunity to work with children.

Volunteer Commitment

The following section presents data on volunteers’ present and future time commitment to the program.

Most volunteers surveyed indicated that they intend to continue volunteering with FoN for the upcoming school year. The majority of respondents (16 volunteers, 80%) stated that they would be volunteering with FoN this upcoming school year, while four (20%) volunteers stated that they would not.

• The majority of volunteers (71%) surveyed plan to volunteer for more than five workshops this year.

• Just under half of those (47%) surveyed volunteered for more than five workshops last year.

• Four volunteers (17%) indicated that they plan to volunteer for more workshops than they did last year.

Level of responsibility:

Volunteers were also asked about how they found the responsibility associated with their position. Overall, most volunteers appear comfortable with their current level of responsibility.
16 volunteers (78%) indicated that they have the right amount of responsibility, while 4 (22%) indicated that they have slightly too much responsibility.

Opportunities and Barriers to Volunteering

The following section focuses on volunteer retention. Volunteers were asked whether they intend to continue volunteering with Focus on Nature for the near future and were given the opportunity to explain their answer.

- 76% of volunteers stated that they plan to keep volunteering with FoN.
- 14% indicated they were “maybe” considering volunteering in the future.
- Only two volunteers indicated that they had chosen not to continue volunteering with FoN.
  - Reasons for not continuing the program included: finding the program repetitive, that they did not enjoy the program, that they found the program tiring due to the amount of standing required, and that the program did not align with their values.

Factors that supported volunteering

The survey also asked volunteers a series of questions about the factors that allow and/or encourage them to continue volunteering with Focus on Nature. Volunteers were provided space to answer in their own words.

In response to these questions, many volunteers expressed enthusiasm for the FoN program and remarked upon what a rewarding experience they had had volunteering with FoN. A summary of the responses is listed below:

- Most volunteers mentioned the enjoyment they derive from connecting with young people and seeing the impact of the program as a motivator to
volunteer. For example, one volunteer stated “it is such an enjoyable way to give”.

- Around half of all volunteers cited positive experiences interacting with other volunteers and staff motivated them.
- The social aspect and the sense of “being part of a vibrant community,” to quote one volunteer, were both identified as significant draws to the program.
- Another frequently mentioned factor was feeling connected to the values and missions of the organization.
- A number of volunteers spoke about their own personal interest and appreciation for photography, nature and being outdoors.
- Flexibility and convenience of volunteering were also mentioned as reasons to continue volunteering, as the time commitment, scheduling, the travelling distance and ease of transportation made it an accessible way to get involved in the community.
- Some less frequent responses related to feeling experienced and comfortable working with children. Expressions of appreciation from students, teachers and parents, and the opportunity to gain work-related experience in outdoor education were also mentioned.
- Finally, a few volunteers stated simply that having fun motivated them to volunteer.

“It is such an enjoyable way to give.” – FoN Volunteer

Factors that would enhance volunteer experience:
Volunteers were asked to identify factors that would improve their experience as volunteers, which is described in more detail below:
16 volunteers (76%) indicated that **proximity of workshops** would enhance their volunteer experience.

11 volunteers (57%) indicated that **extra volunteer support during workshops** would enhance their volunteer experience.

9 volunteers (50%) volunteers indicated that **a reduced time commitment** would enhance their volunteer experience.

9 volunteers (50%) volunteers indicated that **gift cards, awards or other tokens** would enhance their volunteer experience.

9 volunteers (50%) volunteers indicated that **more breaks during the day** would enhance their volunteer experience.

9 volunteers (50%) volunteers indicated that **a volunteer party** would enhance their volunteer experience.

9 volunteers (50%) volunteers indicated that **extra staff support** during workshops would enhance their volunteer experience.

7 volunteers (39%) volunteers indicated that **increased equipment training** would enhance their volunteer experience.

The majority of volunteers reported that **inclusion of lunch and/or snacks** (78%) and physical accessibility supports (79%) **made no difference** to their volunteer experience.

**Other factors that would enhance volunteers’ experience:**

When given the chance to elaborate, volunteers also offered a number of specific suggestions, including:
• More variety of activities to keep the program interesting for participants, including more rainy-day activities.

• More training on running activities and managing student behavior.

• A shorter day to help keep students’ focus and reduce time commitment for volunteers.

• Reducing the number of afternoon rotations to allow more in-depth activities and more time for editing.

• More volunteers to share the workload and provide support when students are uncooperative.

• Developing an introduction to photography that recognizes that young people today have often already developed an appreciation for photography through their mobile phones.

• More time in the morning to prepare for the day and at lunch.

• More emphasis on teaching children to respect and appreciate nature—for example, teaching children to respect creatures they encounter on the nature walk.

Volunteer Appreciation:

The following section examines volunteers’ interest in attending Focus on Nature appreciation events. Volunteers were also asked about the ways in which they like to receive appreciation. The results are summarized below:

• The majority (72%) of volunteers expressed that they do, or would, attend volunteer appreciation events.

• 63% of volunteers indicated that they would attend two volunteer appreciation events each year.

• 31% indicated that they would attend one volunteer appreciation event.
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How volunteers like to receive appreciation:

Factors that made volunteers feel most appreciated are summarized below:

- Around 75% of volunteers indicated that expressions of gratitude from FoN staff made them feel appreciated.

- A large share of volunteers (around 40%) reported that witnessing the FoN program’s positive impact on students made them feel appreciated.

- About 25% of volunteers reported that positive feedback and expressions of gratitude from school staff, and above all, from students, made them feel appreciated.

- About 20% of volunteers indicated that appreciation events made them feel appreciated.

Volunteers also offered some specific suggestions not captured above, including: potlucks, a thank you card featuring student photos, a free Bookshelf dinner, and letters and certificates of recognition.

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Above all, volunteer responses centered on expressions of gratitude and positive feedback from staff, teachers and students. Seeing first-hand the positive impact the FoN program has on students was also frequently mentioned. Perhaps appreciation efforts that combine these elements would be appreciated by volunteers. “At the end of most program days students and school staff show a genuine appreciation. I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction being involved in FON.” – FoN Volunteer

“I like the enthusiastic positive feedback from the people we serve, especially the kids.” – FoN Volunteer

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CONCLUSIONS

Participant Survey:

In summary, this report has evaluated the extent to which the Focus on Nature program is meeting its objectives by analysing the results of a student feedback survey.

Based on the results of this survey, the Focus on Nature program appears to have succeeded at enhancing students’ connection to nature. Nearly two-thirds of student participants in FoN identified that they wanted to spend more time outside as a result of the workshop. Furthermore, the majority indicated that their view of nature had changed both as a result of their participation in the program and their experience with using a camera outside. Most students reported that having a camera with them made them notice more details in the natural environment. This suggests that nature photography, in particular, is an effective activity to promote a deeper connection to nature among young people, by cultivating greater attention to the natural surroundings.

The student survey also indicated that students are having fun in the program, enjoy expressing their creativity, and are gaining knowledge and skills related to photography. The majority of students reported that they enjoyed visiting outdoor places around their school as part of the FoN programming. The survey also revealed highly positive reactions to the photography and editing activity. Nearly all students identified feeling proud and surprised by the photos they took during the FoN workshop. In terms of skills gained from the program, most students surveyed were able to identify several elements of design in their favourite photo by the end of the day. This suggests that students have gained an understanding of the basics of photo design.

The evaluation also provides some opportunities for improving the program in the future. The survey revealed that just over half of students think about their effect on the environment. This may point to an opportunity for FoN to foster greater environmental awareness and responsibility in students. It was also found that less than half of students felt more comfortable being outside after the workshop. FoN may wish to emphasize this more in their future programming. That said, it might also be the case that students are already comfortable spending time outdoors, particularly in the familiar settings explored during the workshop.
Volunteer Survey:

The volunteer survey provided useful information about how volunteers like to be appreciated. The typical FoN volunteer is in the 50-69 age range. A substantial number of young adults (18-29) and seniors (70+) were also recorded, while teens and middle-aged people appear to be weakly represented among volunteers. The survey further demonstrates that FoN relies heavily on long-standing volunteers, although new recruits also comprise a considerable share of volunteer membership. Our findings show that the majority of volunteers heard about FoN through word of mouth or through their own research. Personal interest related to the topic (arts, photography, environment) and the desire to make a difference in the lives of others were the most popular motivations for volunteering.

FoN appears to have high volunteer retention rates. The majority of volunteers surveyed indicated that they plan to keep volunteering with FoN for the near future. When asked about the factors that encourage and/or allow them to continue volunteering, the top responses were the enjoyment derived from connecting with young people and seeing the impact that the FoN program has on them, positive experiences interacting with other volunteers and staff, and feeling connected to the values and missions of the organization.

The majority of volunteers do, or would, attend volunteer appreciation events. Most feel they would attend two events in a year. Given the large proportion of volunteers who referenced enjoying being part of the FoN community as part of their motivation for volunteering, FoN volunteers appear particularly likely to appreciate the social opportunity such events provide. Asked about what makes them feel most appreciated, volunteers identified expressions of gratitude and positive feedback from staff, teachers and students more often than any other factor.

Limitations of the Report

The current program evaluation provided valuable information regarding the effectiveness and areas for improvement of the Focus on Nature workshop. The key limitation in this report is the self-reported survey measures, which were taken during the Focus on Nature workshop. Ideally, measures could be completed pre and post or at a later date to measure the impact of the whole workshop. In addition, some questions were worded too generally to identify whether the program had an impact. For instance, the question regarding impact on the environment refers to whether students
consider their impact generally, not as a result of the program. This was done because environmental impact is not a key element of the program. Additionally, the volunteer survey was meant to collect broad information regarding volunteers’ experiences. Follow-up focus groups are currently being planned in order to gather a richer understanding of volunteers’ experiences. As the volunteer response rate was fairly low for the volunteer survey, it is not surprising that most intended to continue volunteering with Focus on Nature, as they may have been more motivated to participate or felt more connected to the program. That said, the current program evaluation provides evidence for programs that incorporate both arts and nature elements in their programming.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL

Developed by Kathleen Slemon and Lindsey Thomson in collaboration with Focus on Nature

**Focus on Nature**

- **Our Mission:** We inspire young people to explore and connect with nature through photography.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and volunteer time and skills, resources (money, equipment, curriculum and training), partners (school board, teachers, government, non-profits, corporate sponsors)</td>
<td>Deliver interactive workshops and camp programs that include: experiential learning, nature-based sensory activities, walking field trips to local areas, photography assignments, photo editing and feedback sessions, class slide shows, and community art displays</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Term Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children show increased awareness of self as artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children show increased: - knowledge of visual composition - visual awareness - Creativity - self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children show increased: - appreciation of nature - awareness of public places in local environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children show engagement of the outdoors and program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers and staff demonstrate intergenerational - modelling of volunteerism and environmental stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s goals for arts - curriculum - supported</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium Term Outcomes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family show increased identification of child as creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children show increased: - mastery of photography skills - appreciation of art - visual literacy - engagement with photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children show increased: - sense of wonder regarding nature - desire to be outside - engagement with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased: - family engagement with nature - children’s appreciation of local areas and volunteering</td>
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<tr>
<th>Long term Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community shows increased recognition of child as artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children show increased: - physical and emotional wellbeing - engagement with arts - community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased children’s environmental stewardship, respect for nature; increased community awareness of value of child nature relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children show sustained engagement with nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goals of schools supported</td>
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</tbody>
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APPENDIX B: STUDENT EVALUATION MEASURES

Survey Questions

Please circle your answer: (select one response)

1. Did the program change how you see nature?  
   Yes/no/not sure
2. Did using a camera outside change how you see nature?  
   Yes/no/not sure
3. Did you notice more details when you had a camera with you?  
   Yes/no/not sure
4. Did you enjoy visiting outdoor places around your school today?  
   Yes/no/not sure
5. Do you think about the effect you have on the environment?  
   Yes/no/not sure
6. Did this activity make you want to spend more time outside?  
   Yes/no/not sure
7. Do you feel more comfortable outside than you used to?  
   Yes/no/not sure
8. Were you surprised by your photos?  
   Yes/no/not sure
9. Did you feel proud of the photos you took?  
   Yes/no/not sure

Pick your favourite photo that you took today

What elements of design do you see? (circle all that apply)

Form   Shape   Colour   Line   Space   Texture

What do you like best about this picture? (select one only)

☐ The Colours
☐ The Lighting
☐ The elements of design
☐ What’s in the photo (ex: flower, animal)
☐ The special effects I added
☐ It’s my best photo
☐ Not sure

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APPENDIX C: VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Background Information
What is your age? (select one response)

- Under 18
- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-69
- 70 +

What best describes your main occupation? (select one response)

- Working full time
- Working part time
- Attending school
- Retired
- Not currently employed

Focus on Nature Experience
How long have you been a volunteer with Focus on Nature?
(allow for a # only response)

How did you become a volunteer with Focus on Nature (i.e. how did you hear about the opportunity)? (select all that apply)
FOCUS ON NATURE PROGRAM EVALUATION

• Word of mouth from staff
• Word of mouth from another volunteer
• Focus on Nature website
• My child(ren) participated in the program
• Other: ________

Why did you decide to volunteer with Focus on Nature? (select all that apply)
• Personal interest related to the topic (arts, photography, environment)
• Make a difference in the lives of others
• Develop personal knowledge and/or experience
• Meet new people and get to know the community
• Other: __________ (add one text line)

Opportunities and Barriers

Do you plan to keep volunteering with Focus on Nature for the foreseeable future? (select one response)
• Yes
• No
• Maybe

**add in skip logic to the above question

*if no: Why will you not be continuing to volunteer?
(Open text response)

*if maybe/yes: What encourages and/or allows you to continue volunteering with Focus on Nature?
(Open text response)

Please rate each of the following factors as to whether or not it would enhance your volunteer experience: (select one response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Would greatly enhance</th>
<th>Would slightly enhance</th>
<th>No difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility: Proximity of workshops to where you live</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility: Physical accessibility supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility: Breaks for volunteers during the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation: Volunteer Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation: Gift cards, awards, or other tokens of appreciation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciation: Inclusion of lunch and/or snacks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support: Reduced time commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support: Extra volunteer support during workshops (e.g. more volunteers)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support: Extra staff support during workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Support: Increased equipment training (i.e. laptops and cameras)</td>
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</table>

Are there any other factors that could enhance your experience that are not captured above?

(Open text response)

How much responsibility do you feel you have in your role as a Focus on Nature volunteer? (select one response)
FOCUS ON NATURE PROGRAM EVALUATION

• I have way too much responsibility
• I have slightly too much responsibility
• I have the right amount of responsibility
• I have too little responsibility

*if any response that is not the ‘right amount’: Can you explain further and tell us how your volunteer experience could be enhanced?

(open text response)

Upcoming Year
Are you currently volunteering with FON this upcoming school year? (select one response)

• Yes
• No (no will skip to the next section)

Approximately how many workshops do you plan to volunteer at this year?
(allow for a # only response)

How many workshops did you volunteer for last year? (select one response)

• I did not volunteer last year
• Number: ___

Volunteer Appreciation
Do you, or would you, attend FON volunteer appreciation events? (select one response)

• Yes
• No

How many appreciation events do you feel you would attend each year?
(allow for a # only response)
What has made you feel most appreciated as a volunteer? *(select all that apply)*

- Appreciation events
- Staff thanking me
- Other: _______

What ways to you prefer to receive appreciation? *(select all that apply)*

- Appreciation events
- Staff thanking me
- Other: _______

Is there anything else you would like to tell us that has not been captured? *(open text response)*