

The world is our classroom



LS teacher Lee Phifer points out a find during a lesson at the Outdoor Education Center at Canons Park

The Honeypot Lane Children's Garden Project or Lower School Environmental Program at Canons Park, call it what you will, but this academic year has seen the beginning of a two-year program to introduce LS students to a more hands-on approach to nature studies.

Every day, a LS class heads out to Canons Park, where a section of the playing fields has been converted into an outdoor classroom, complete with a garden and a greenhouse. After a quick run, they start on the day's project, which can be working in the garden, scouting the fields' hedgerows for unique flora and fauna or looking for clues left by the animals who call the field home.

The program was born out of a conversation between Head of School Bill Mules and teacher Lee Phifer, who now leads the project. It's one of many programs to be paid for by the New Initiatives Fund. (Look for an article on New

Initiatives in the fall issue of *Accents*.) The idea is for students to build a personal relationship with nature and develop an understanding of environmental processes.

Presented with challenges that exercise their minds and bodies, the children learn about themselves and develop valuable life skills. Growing things, and all that that entails, including the use and care of tools, brings about an appreciation of achieving a long-term goal and making a contribution to the environment, and ultimately to each other. Often lessons cover other academic areas, such as math or art.

LS Principal Julie Ryan says of the scheme: "The children love their days at the Honeypot Lane garden. We've noticed a significant change in their willingness to be out in the weather. Some children have been heard to say, 'I want to be a gardener when I grow up!' We hope the project will continue to encourage children to appreciate and protect their natural world."



Look what I've found!

A traditional ASL art project got a new twist this year thanks to the gardens at Canons Park.

Students learning about ancient civilizations have traditionally painted pots in art class, smashed them, and then pieced together each other's work, learning archaeological skills firsthand.

This year, once Grade 4 students finished their pots the teachers did the smashing in secret, burying the pieces in the Canons Park garden. When students next went to dig in the garden, they were reminded by their teachers that artifacts turn up in all sorts of places. Sure enough, a few minutes into digging a perplexed student struck a chip of hardened clay, then pulled a painted shard out of the ground. Then another piece was unearthed. And another. Students caught on to the game and began digging eagerly, looking for pieces of their work. It was a fun lesson in the thrill of an archaeological dig.

