

# The Outdoor School

---



The outdoor school project in the Nursery School is an educational project that some municipal schools in Rome, such as "Legno Verde", have been activating for some years with the collaboration of the thirteenth Rome's city hall "Aurelio" and with the Department of Educational Sciences, of the Roma Tre University. It took place on eighteen of June two thousand eighteen (2018).

The project is born because today our children have less and less opportunities to meet nature in everyday life and to play freely with friends in the open air, although studies and research show how important these factors are in terms of pedagogy and quality of the child's life.

The project aims to bring children into the woods, supports free play in the open air, encourages movement, the use of the senses, imagination and creativity.

Its main characteristic is to put constant contact with nature, which has always been a companion of discoveries and adventures, at the center of the child's growth.

In particular, today we will talk about the "Legno Verde" children's school and the outdoor school project that has been implemented for four years with the collaboration of the "VoloAlto" Nature Park.

The inspiring idea of this project took place in a completely casual way: after a guided tour of the Park, the teachers were so satisfied and intrigued by the remarkable variety of animal and plant species present in the park, that they immediately entered into a collaboration agreement with the operators and experts responsible for this nature reserve. They have been working for several years in the implementation of manual, tactile, sensory and olfactory activities and experiences that fully involve children and make them participants in a process of growth and education complete, direct and extremely effective for understanding natural and vital events.

All this was made possible, of course, also thanks to the full approval of the parents of the children, who provide to pay a minimum fee to allow their children to participate once every two weeks, for the entire school year, to all the laboratories organized by the experts.

During the project, which involves 4 sections (the Clouds-3, 4 and 5 years; the Sun- 3 years; the Moon- 4 years and the Stars- 5 years), the children on the established days remain in the Park for the whole school hours, engaged in free exploration activities and creative workshops with natural material.

The teacher is Nature, and with her there are teachers, school staff and qualified operators from the "VoloAlto" Park.

The aims of the project are:

- Reflect on childhood and on the relationship that links the child to nature.
- Spread the knowledge of Kindergartens in the Woods, arousing curiosity and interest in these experiences and educational methods.
- Propose another educational model to parents and integrate it with the conventional one, presenting an alternative and innovative kindergarten that has a more sustainable lifestyle at heart.
- Rekindle the passion for an active school in the teaching group.

I knew this reality, thanks to Professor S. Chistolini who is following me in a graduation thesis project. During my stay in this school I was able to observe the children learning in the open air, I asked the teachers about their teaching and methodological methods and I was also able to interview the parents of some children to have a positive or negative account on their part about this experience.

In the end I can say that the results achieved, thanks to this project, seem to be excellent from all points of view: children are happier, autonomous and free; many of them have expanded the vocabulary of words, they talk a lot more with their parents than before; many children with more or less serious disabilities are stimulated in all senses by the proximity to animals and contact with nature. They learn to understand what it means to take care of the other; they have more respect for their surroundings, they are more social and empathic. At the park, children can run, collect leaves, smell flowers, breathe clean air, they can also play with group games, they can have collective discussions, and they can have a creativity workshops with teachers. Thanks to the open-air school, the children of the Legno Verde kindergarten know the history of the primitives, they know what they ate, how they discovered fire and how they built their homes. All this because they experienced it right here in the park, they built the huts with animal skins themselves, or the houses with mud bricks; what they learn with outdoor schooling will be lasting concepts that they will always remember, because they themselves have experienced the sensations and emotions of eating, touching, manipulating, identifying with primitive man. This one of which I spoke to you is just one of the many laboratories that every year teachers and park experts implement together with the children.

Of course, today we can be satisfied with these achievements, but the road to continuous improvement is still long and will always be open to new experiences.

Outdoor School Project,

“Legno Verde” Infant School, in collaboration with the University of Roma Tre.

Annalaura Iannilli, graduate student in General Pedagogy, Degree Course in Primary Education.

Rome, 10/31/2019.