

Outdoor Learning References

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The Benefits of the Outdoors

- **Less Free Time:** During the last 30 years, the amount of children's free time has declined, in favor of more structured activities. For example, between 1981-1997, unstructured outdoor activities fell by 50%.
Study: Hofferth, Sandra and John Sandberg (1999), "Changes in American Children's Time, 1981-1997," University of Michigan Institute for Social Research. <http://www.puttingfamilyfirst.org/research.php>
- **Outside Time vs. Inside Time:** Research shows that children are spending half as much time outside as they did 20 years ago – and much more time doing "inside" activities.
Study: Juster, F. Thomas et al. (2004). ["Changing Times of American Youth: 1981-2003"](#), Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. *Child Development Supplement*
- **Too Much Screen Time:** The average American child spends 44 hours per week (more than 6 hours a day!) staring at some kind of electronic screen.
Study: Rideout, Victoria et al. (2005). [Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds](#). The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.
- **Childhood Obesity:** The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, to 17 percent of children in this age group. The rate of clinically obese

adolescents (aged 12-19) more than tripled, to 17.6 percent. The Centre for Disease Control concludes that a major missing ingredient is an hour per day of moderate physical activity. Study: CDC's National Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Division of Adolescent and School Health. [Childhood Obesity](#).

20 Oct. 2008.

- **Increased Use of Ritalin in Children:** In 2000, one out of every eight American children was taking Ritalin for treatment of behavioural disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Researchers hypothesized that an increase in television viewing, as well as greater academic pressure at an earlier age, was contributing to increased usage. Study: Sax, Leonard, "Ritalin - Better Living Through Chemistry?" *The World and I*. Nov. 1, 2000. http://www.dadi.org/rtln_sax.htm
- **Increased Use of Anti-Depressants in Children:** The use of anti-depressants in children grew between 1998 and 2002 from 1.6% to 2.4%, an adjusted annual increase of 9.2%. The growth in antidepressant use was greater among girls (a 68% increase) than among boys (a 34% increase.) Study: Delate T, Gelenberg AJ, Simmons VA, Motheral BR. (2004) "Trends in the use of antidepressant medications in a nationwide sample of commercially insured pediatric patients, 1998-2002." *Psychiatric Services*. 55(4):387-391. <http://www.ps.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/4/387>
- **Surge in Childhood Obesity:** In the past 30 years, childhood obesity has more than tripled. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 6.5% in 1980 to 19.6% in 2008. During the same time period, the prevalence of obesity among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years increased from 5.0% to 18.1%. Study: CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Division of Adolescent and School Health. *Childhood Obesity*. 20 Oct. 2008. <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity>
- **Lack of Vitamin D and Health Issues:** Many children in the U.S., especially minorities, need more Vitamin D. Spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, protecting children from bone problems and other health issues. Study: American Academy of Pediatrics. "Many Children have suboptimal Vitamin D Levels," *Pediatrics*. October 26, 2009. <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/oct2609studies.htm>
- **Near-Sightedness:** In several studies reported in the journal *Optometry and Vision Science*, researchers found that kids who spent more time outside during the day tended to have better distance vision than those who favored indoor activities. Study: [What's Hot in Myopia Research-The 12th International Myopia Conference](#), Australia, July 2008
- **Natural Settings and Cognitive Behavior:** Children who are exposed to natural or outdoor settings receive benefits to their cognitive health, such as reduction of ADHD symptoms. Study: Wells, N.M. (2000). At Home with Nature: Effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning. *Environment and Behavior* (32), 6, pp 775-795. <http://eab.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/32/6/775>
- **School Performance:** Offering environmental education programs in school improves standardized test scores.

Study: Bartosh, Oksana. Environmental Education: Improving Student Achievement. Thesis. Evergreen State College, 2003. Web.<http://www.seer.org/pages/research/Bartosh> 2003.pdf.

- **Critical Thinking:** Through environmental education offered in schools, students increase their critical thinking skills of performance on tests.
Study: Ernst, Julie (Athman) and Martha Monroe. "The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking." 10.4 Environmental Education Research, Nov. 2004.
- **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder:** Researchers at University of Illinois report findings that indicate exposure to natural settings in the course of common after-school and weekend activities may be "widely effective" in reducing attention deficit symptoms in children.
Study: Kuo, PhD, Frances E., and Andrea Faber Taylor, PhD. "[A Potential Natural Treatment for Attention- Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Evidence From a National Study.](#)" American Journal of Public Health 94.9. Sept. 2004.
- **Importance of Play:** Play protects children's emotional development; whereas a loss of free time in combination with a hurried lifestyle can be a source of stress, anxiety, and may even contribute to depression for many children.
Study: Ginsburg, MD, MEd, Kenneth R., Committee on Communications, and Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. "[The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds.](#)" 119.1 (2007). American Academy of Pediatrics, Jan. 2007.
- **Nature Makes You Nicer:** Increased time in nature makes one nicer, enhances social interactions and more.
Weinstein, N., Przybylski, A. K., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). "Can nature make us more caring? Effects of immersion in nature on intrinsic aspirations and generosity." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35, 1315-1329.
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Five days at outdoor education camp without screens improves preteen skills with nonverbal emotion cues

Websites:

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- <http://www.lotc.org.uk/why/early-years/>
- <http://www.ltl.org.uk/>
- <http://www.lotc.org.uk/category/research/>
- NATURAL CONNECTIONS <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/englands-largest-outdoor-learning-project-reveals-children-more-motivated-to-learn-when-outside>
- <http://www.se-ed.co.uk/sustainable-schools/>
- <http://www.geography.org.uk/eyprimary/geographysubjectleaders/fieldwork/>
http://www.foresteducation.org/forest_schools.php
- <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/approaches/outdoorlearning/index.asp>