

Benefits of Outdoor Learning

The Children and Nature Network provides an [extensive research database](#) on the benefits of outdoor learning.

The [Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin](#) compiled these benefits of outdoor education:

Students who participate in outdoor, nature-based learning reap cognitive, academic, physical, and emotional benefits from their experience. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics¹, the American Medical Association², the American Association of Ophthalmology³, the American Public Health Association⁴ and the Centers for Disease Control, children who engage in outdoor, nature-based learning:

- Perform significantly better on standardized tests
- Increase academic performance by up to 27%, particularly low income students
- Are better able to concentrate and have reduced discipline problems
- Have better attendance and are less likely to drop out of school
- Have improved creativity, problem-solving skills and critical thinking abilities
- Discover increased cooperation, self-discipline, confidence and self-awareness
- Have improved performance on college entrance exams
- See a reduction of stress and mental illnesses including depression, ADD and ADHD
- Develop improved immune systems & cardiovascular health and lowered obesity
- Have improved classroom performance in math, science, reading and social studies
- Have a greater respect for themselves, for others and for the environment.

The Pew Charitable Trust's 1998 report: *Closing the Achievement Gap: Using the Environment as an Integrating Context (EIC)*, showed that children who participate in nature-based education programs had better performance on standardized tests in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, reduced discipline and classroom problems, and increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning. (Hein, 2014)

The American Institutes for Research's report titled: *“Effects of Outdoor Education Programs for Children in California,”* focused on “at risk” youth, showed a 27% increase in mastery of science concepts; enhanced cooperation and conflict resolution skills, improved self-esteem, classroom behavior, problem solving and motivation to learn. (Hein, 2014)

“When engaging children in an outdoor forest restoration project, a teacher pulled my wife aside and remarked at the way a particular student was lighting up and leading her class that day. The teacher

simply said: 'She's special.' My wife replied, 'That much is obvious. She's running the show out there.' The teacher choked up a little and said, 'No, you don't understand. She's special needs. I've never seen her like this. It's just...amazing.' – Frank Hein

Footnotes

1. |LS|American Academy of Pediatrics, "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-ChildBonds,"|RS|↵
2. |LS|Burdette, H., et al. "Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children." Children and Nature Network. 2005. 22 Oct. 2012 < http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/Burdette_LookingBeyond.pdf>|RS|↵
3. |LS|Sherwin, J, et al. "The Association between Time Spent Outdoors and Myopia in Children and Adolescents." US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health. 2012. American Association of Ophthalmology. 22 Oct 2012. < <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22809757>>|RS|↵
4. |LS|Kuo, PhD, Frances E., & 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. 22 Oct. 2012. |RS|↵