Go Play Outside…But Why?
Nature Disconnect & Our Kids

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For more information on how to become a member, the Environmental Education Certification, EE Grants and more, visit our booth in the Exhibitor Hall!

www.maeoe.com
Let’s Take a Quiz!
On average how many minutes a day do children spend playing outside?

A. 0-30 minutes
B. 30-45 minutes
C. 60+ minutes
Answer:

Kids are, on average, spending less than 30 minutes a day playing outdoors. They are, on average, spending more than 7 hours in front of screen.

Sampson, How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature
On average, as a child, how much time did you spend playing outside each day?

A. 0-30 minutes  
B. 30-60 minutes  
C. 60+ minutes
Answers will vary

● 90% of active outdoor adult participants were introduced between ages 5-18.

● In one generation, the percentage of people who reported that the outdoors was the most influential environment of their childhood dropped from 96% to 46%.” (Sebba).

● According to the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 87% of children who played outside when young still held a love of nature as adults.

● 52% of parents surveyed said their children do not play as much as they did (play being free, unstructured without devices). 73% of parents said they played more outside than their children. (Morris).
According to a national study what percentage of preschoolers play outside with their parents?

A. 90%
B. 60%
C. 50%
Answer:
Less than 50%

- Compared to those confined indoors, children who regularly play in nature show heightened motor control, engage in more imaginative and creative play which fosters language, reasoning and problem solving, have a sense of wonder, have a sense of self and place, and develop an environmental ethic” (Sampson, pg. 37).

- Children need the outdoors to help stimulate senses and move their bodies. Nature provides just the right amount of stimuli for a child to be calm and alert. Nature inspires the mind to design, create, experiment, take risks, build confidence, and learn to adapt. “Nature is inherently therapeutic”
What is Nature Disconnect?
Why Should We Care?

“It’s a messy, dirty business--picking up leaves and flowers, turning over rocks, holding wriggling worms, and splashing in ponds. Rather than saying “no” every time a child wants to pick up a stick, throw a rock, climb a tree, or jump into the mud, take a deep breath and cheer them on instead.” Dr. Scott Sampson, author, paleontologist, PBS Kids
Nature Deficit Disorder

- Term coined by Richard Louv, national bestselling author and cofounder of the *Children & Nature Network*
- A phenomena that has occurred over the last 25-30 years where free play in nature, around the world, has declined and screen time has increased.
- “The antidote to Nature Deficit Disorder may be simple: get people to spend time in nature, and when they return, be there to ask good questions and catch their stories” (Sampson)
Social Impacts

“I like to play indoors better, ‘cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are.” 4th grader, San Diego CA Last Child in the Woods

- US Department of Education: between 1991 and 2001 the number of five-year-olds “related services” (includes occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy) under the Integrated Disability Education and Awareness Program increased 31 percent. Four-year-olds increased 76 percent. Three-year-olds increased 94 percent.

- “The lack of free, active play outdoors has lead to an increase in brittle bones and breaks, falling, aggressive behavior, lower immune systems, myopia, emotional issues, ADHD and anxiety (Hanscom)
Social Impacts Continued...

- 18% of children ages 6 and up are considered obese.
Ecological Impacts

“Children who do not learn to understand and appreciate nature will not know how to preserve it.”
- Shuffield

- Stewardship
- Fear & Phobias
- Learning about the environment inside, rather than experiencing it outside
For More Statistics/Data Check Out….

- DNR Reconnecting Children and Nature Top Ten Reasons to be Concerned
- Children & Nature Network
  - [https://www.childrenandnature.org/](https://www.childrenandnature.org/)
- Dr. Scott Sampson
  - [http://www.scottsampson.net/](http://www.scottsampson.net/)
We know the message, but what holds us back from integrating daily nature experiences for our kids?

- Knowledge (I do not know “enough”)
- Safety
- Curriculum Requirements
- School Requirements
- Confidence (in ourselves and in our students)
- Fear/phobias
- What else?

“Mentors are teachers, question askers, and tricksters” - Sampson
So how do we integrate daily nature experiences?

● Connecting classroom to school environment: Bird Watching!
● Connect Technology to Nature: Merlin Bird ID App
● Curriculum Connections: *Growing Up Wild, Project Learning Tree, DNR’s Go Wild for Wildlife*!
● Convincing Administrators: Come observe me OUTSIDE!
● Become educated: Environmental Education Certification, Academy of Natural Resources
● Seek out help: MAEOE, DNR, MSU extensions, Local Experts, & More!
Plan for Action: Through Education!

Science in Nature Summer Camp

- Partnership with Williamston Community Enrichment
- 4 Days (June/July)
- Morning session PreK-2nd
- Afternoon session 3rd-5th
- Themed days
- STEM and Arts integration
- Connecting with local experts
- 2nd year of nature science success!

“Failing to include the environment as part of schooling sends an unspoken, yet crystal clear message that the environment doesn’t matter. “ Dr. Sampson
Nature Camp Objectives

Campers will...

- develop an appreciation for the natural world around them
- use their 5 senses while exploring nature.
- be able to identify basic characteristics of native Michigan birds in our school yard.
- learn and describe the parts of a seed.
- learn and describe the basic parts of a tree.
- be able to identify and describe the characteristics of an insect.

“Get outside, get into nature, and make discoveries.” -Dr. Sampson
Daily Classroom Integration

- Nature Walks and journaling
- Birding
- Curriculum: Growing Up Wild, Project Learning Tree, Go Wild for Wildlife, and more!
- Gardening
- Insect Study
- Sensory Table
- 5 Senses in Nature Unit
- STEM in Nature
- Nature stewardship
- Sit Spots with Hula Hoops

“Ms. Durling! I hear the crows!” Emmett, age 5
Why Connecting to Nature Matters for our Kids...

What my kids say they love about nature….

○ Jumping in puddles
○ Watching for animals
○ Looking for animal homes (especially the woodpeckers)
○ Watching the trees change colors
○ Counting and graphing the birds
○ Writing and drawing about nature

“Can we do science camp everyday?” Max, age 5
Connecting Kids to Nature Matters!

- Watching the ants carry things to the ant hills
- Protecting the bees
- Going to the garden and getting vegetables and eating them!
- Feeding the birds
- Listening to the outside
- **Looking for tracks**!
- Taking care of nature
Check these out: Nature Preschools

- **Little Hawks Discovery Preschool:** [www.littlehawks.org](http://www.littlehawks.org)
  - “Was created to provide developmentally appropriate preschool experiences that emphasizes active play and learning, outdoor activity and exploration of the natural world.”

- **NC RESA Building Bridges Neway Nature Preschool:** [www.ncresa.org](http://www.ncresa.org)
  - Motto: “Get UP, Get OUT, EXPLORE!”

- **Nature Preschool Chippewa Nature Center:** [www.chippewanaturecenter.org/nature-preschool](http://www.chippewanaturecenter.org/nature-preschool)
  - “Nature Preschool offers discovery-based learning through play, sensory, gross and fine motor activities and creative expression, using the natural world as a catalyst for children’s growth and development.

“Nature-based preschools are powerful programs that fuse early childhood and environmental education to develop a child's lifelong connection with the natural world” (naturalstart.org).
A few things to try….

● Poison Ivy Safety Lesson
● Beetle Identification and Insect Traits
● Broad Leaf and Needle Leaf Tree Identification
● Sit Spots with Hula Hoops
● Birdwatching
● Mi Nature (Facebook and mi.gov/dnreducation)
One more....Thunderstorm!

How could this work for your kids?
Come join us at the beautiful Kettunen Center, near Cadillac, for more environmental education activities!
About Me

- Young Fives Teacher, Discovery Elementary, Williamston Community Schools
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- MA K-12 Literacy, University of Michigan-Flint
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