



The Benefits of Outdoor Play & Education

While the idea that outdoor education can be beneficial to children's learning and development has been shared by practitioners in formal education systems for generations, in recent decades research has documented multiple benefits from cognitive, physical, psychological and social perspectives.

At the cognitive level, outdoor education has the potential to improve how children retain learning and to increase students' ability to transfer their learning to everyday situations. Even brief contact with nature can have positive effects on cognitive performance. On the physical level, outdoor education reduces sedentary behaviour.

From a psychological perspective, learning in contact with nature is known to reduce anxiety and increase people's overall sense of well-being. Immersion in nature can even increase feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem. In terms of social outcomes, outdoor education develops social relationships between students and provides additional opportunities for collaboration among them.

Outdoor practices in school settings also provide equal opportunities for all youth to experience nature and outdoor environments in the community.

Outdoor Play Canada, 2023

Additional considerations:

1. BEING OUTSIDE PROMOTES POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH: According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, simply spending time outdoors improves mental wellbeing. Green spaces are an enriching setting for children and youth to develop foundations of positive mental health, including competency, autonomy, relatedness, and generosity. The problem-solving opportunities and obstacles inherent to unstructured outdoor play can boost the self-esteem and confidence of children and youth and develop their resiliency

2. BEING OUTSIDE PROMOTES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: The outdoor environment is an ideal venue for engaging in physical activity. According to the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, kids are more physically active when they are outside. Regular participation in outdoor play contributes to increased physical activity and fitness, including improved strength, endurance, balance, and flexibility.

ParticipACTION, 2015 & BMC Public Health, 2013