

PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF GREEN SCHOOLYARDS IN TEXAS



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When a child spends any time in a greenspace, their body gets a shot at becoming healthier. Green schoolyards can be a school's biggest asset, and a student's best resource for health.

ACCESS TO OUTDOOR PLAY

- Nature-based schoolyards can entice children to get the physician-recommended amounts of **physical activity** per day by providing venues for exercise and play.
- The [US Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#) states that children should achieve at least **60 minutes** of physical activity per day.
- Researchers published in the [International Journal of Obesity](#) found that children who spent more time outdoors were **more active** than children who spent less time outdoors.

HEALTHY HABIT BUILDING

- Spending time outdoors at an **early age** helps children develop physical activity habits early on, according to research out of [North Carolina State](#).
- The [World Health Organization](#) states that physical activity is a significant **deterrent of obesity**.
- According to the [Texas Department of State Health Services](#), over 35% of Texas' population is obese.
- [Researchers from the Netherlands](#) found that green schoolyards supported **girls' physical activity** baseline more than indoor environments. The girls' physical activity habits were sustained over the longitudinal study.

BENEFITS OF (SOME) HEAT

- [Researchers from Japan and Australia](#) found that routine heat exposure is associated with **lower rates** of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and respiratory illness.
- [Exposure to sunshine](#) fights **vitamin D** deficiencies and regulates circadian rhythm.

SAFETY AND CARE

- Natural environments on school campuses are shown to make students feel **safer, come to school more often, and act less violent**.
- According to [Texas Education Agency](#) data, over 10% of students enrolled in Texas schools interacted with in-school disciplinary authority in 2023.
- [In general](#), green spaces within urban areas are associated with **lower rates of violence** and higher rates of people feeling safe.
- Researchers published in the [Journal of School Health](#) found that students feel safer in schools that contain “signs of caring,” such as greenspaces and gardens.
- [Rates](#) of **absenteeism fell** when students felt safer in their school environments.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Visit [Texas Children in Nature Network’s resource page](#) to find out more information, funding sources, and get ideas for starting a new green schoolyard!

MUSCULOSKELETAL, LUNG, AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Open, outdoor environments are great at facilitating unstructured play, an essential part of **musculoskeletal development**.
- Pediatric occupational therapist [Angela Hanscom](#) has noticed that, when children lack outdoor and unstructured play, they experience a significant decrease in **balance, strength and coordination**, and **sensory processing** abilities.
- Research out of [Texas Christian University](#) underscores the importance of outdoor, unstructured free play for children’s heart, bone, and muscle health development.

NEUROLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Green schoolyards can provide children with access to diverse terrains that enable neurological development related to [nuanced bodily perception](#).
- According to psychologist [Jean Ayres](#), children perceive their bodies in more complex and mature ways when they engage with unique terrain since it enables **varying and diverse** physical movements.

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