

# Texas Children in Nature Network

## ABOUT TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK

We strengthen and leverage the work of over 700 state and local partners across Texas, working in the health, community development, education, and conservation fields. Collaborating with our partners we work towards creating equitable access and connection to nature for all children in Texas. Through our partner programming and projects TCiNN engaged over **3 million Texas families** during 2022.

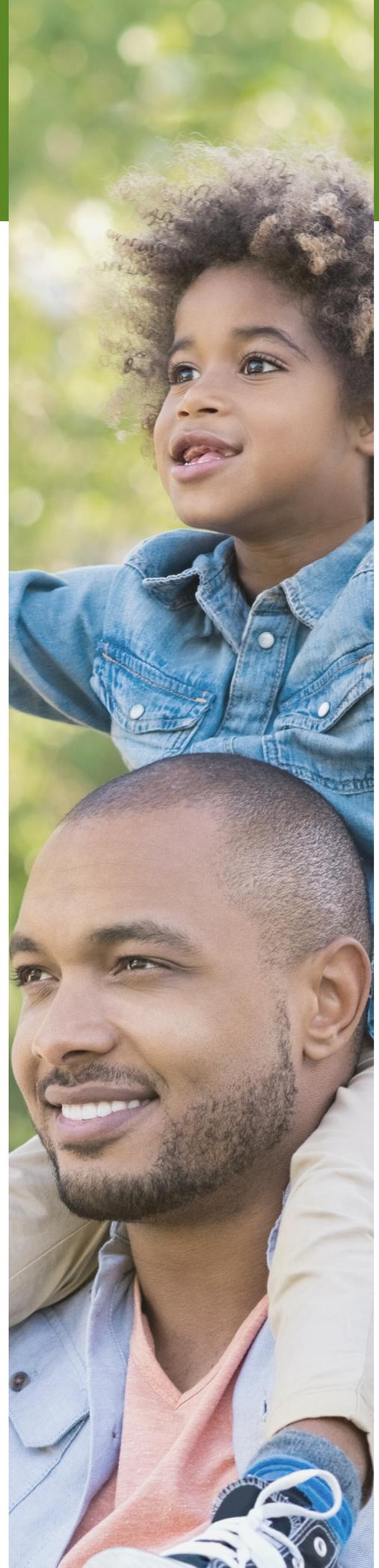
The Texas Children in Nature Network supports the children in nature movement through the sharing of resources, production of an annual summit, and providing technical support to our partners. With our partners TCiNN has created the strongest statewide nature collaborative in the nation.

## WHY TIME OUTDOORS IS KEY FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**Abundant Research shows that children and teens who regularly play and learn outdoors:**

- **Are healthier physically and mentally**
  - Addresses growing youth mental health crisis
  - Addresses increasing numbers of childhood obesity and diabetes
  - Important for healthy development of bones, muscles, and balance
  - Higher self-esteem
  - Feel more capable and confident
  - Reduced stress
- **Are more successful in school**
  - Better attention span
  - Higher test scores
  - Have good self-discipline
  - Are effective problem solvers
  - Are more cooperative with others
  - Are more creative
- **Better connected to nature, and positioned to become the conservation leaders of tomorrow**

Find Research at: [texaschildreninnature.org](https://texaschildreninnature.org)



# WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN SPEND MORE TIME IN NATURE



## OUTDOOR LEARNING AND GREEN SCHOOLYARDS

Learning outdoors during the school day is a great way for students to spend regular time in nature. Schools across the state are installing outdoor classrooms and nature areas for students. These allow teachers to take lessons they would normally do indoors outside and provide great experiences for students.

School Districts who dedicate funding for an Outdoor Learning Specialist to work with teachers across the district on ways to teach outdoors make a positive impact on increasing the time students spend time outdoors during the school day.

**A State initiative Working on This: [OLE! Texas](#) with the Department of State Health Services**

## ACCESS TO GREENSPACE

Having a greenspace close to where children and families live is important to facilitate regular time in nature.

City initiatives like the "10 Minute Walk" campaign where planners are building parks within a half mile of all residents, helps make a positive impact towards more children and families having regular access to the outdoors.

Joint Use Agreements (where a school district and city agree to make the school grounds open to public use during non-school hours) are one way policy makers can effect change in engaging more students in nature during the school day.

**A State Initiative Working on This: Local Parks Grants with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**



## ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND RECESS AND BREAK POLICY

Standards around time outdoors during the school day are a way to ensure children are able to connect with nature everyday. Policies such as mandatory recess, and/or outdoor learning time can make a huge difference in children's lives.

Texas currently has no mandatory recess or outdoor break-time in public schools. A state policy requiring at least 30 minutes of recess per day in pre-K through 5th grade, and at-least one 15-minute "brain-break" per day in middle and high schools would be way to ensure children are able to connect with nature during the school day.

**A Statewide Standard Achieving This: A current state policy mandating 60 minutes outside a day for Early Childhood Centers.**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Support the Texas Department of State Health Services initiatives for the OLE! Texas program (Outdoor Learning Environments for early education centers)
- Encourage and support schools in your district to install and use outdoor learning areas and train teachers on their importance and use.
- Encourage municipalities and schools in your district to consider joint-use agreements as a way to increase outdoor spaces within residential neighborhoods
- Support and increase funding for public outdoor spaces, such as state parks, local parks, and greenways
- Work with other policy makers to draft and pass legislation to require at least 30 minutes of recess per day in pre-K through 5th grade, and at least one 15-minute "brain-break" per day in middle and high schools.
- Contact the Texas Children in Nature Network and our Executive Director, Sarah Coles for resources and more information on how TCiNN and our partners can help you advocate for these important issues

TEXAS CHILDREN IN NATURE NETWORK  
SUMMIT

*Opening the Doors to Nature For All!*



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