

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF TEXAS GREEN SCHOOLYARDS



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Spending time outside can have major, positive impacts on children's mental health, academic achievement, and capacity for social/emotional learning.

SOCIAL + EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION + COOPERATION

- [Researchers in Texas](#) determined that children possess **stronger social and emotional learning skills** (self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills) when they have a **connection to nature**.
- [Experts in outdoor education](#) in England found that students who typically **struggled to interact** with peers and participate in group activities in traditional, indoor settings, were able to **communicate and cooperate** better with peers in outdoor environments.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT BOOSTS

- A report from the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) showed that 1 in 9 children in the US between the ages of 3 and 17 were diagnosed with ADHD in 2022.
- Research from the [University of Illinois](#) found that children with ADHD symptoms had **better attention** performances after a 20 minute **walk in a park** compared to a 20 minute walk in an urban area.
- The researchers claimed that “**doses of nature**” might be one of the best ways to manage ADHD symptoms.
- Other research out of the [University of Illinois](#) found that students who simply **saw green landscapes** through their classroom windows **recovered from stress** more quickly and had improved attention spans than students who could not see green landscapes.

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE

- Child psychologist [Roger Hart](#) found that natural landscapes' diverse terrain helped children **develop independence** by enhancing their spatial awareness and by encouraging connection to others and the environment.
- Hart also found that children were able to independently **process new information** about their lives and experiences when they played in outdoor landscapes.

TREATING STRESS AND ANXIETY

- Since the COVID-19 pandemic, children have grown **increasingly isolated** and screen-dependent.
- According to policy advocacy group [Every Texan](#), **20% of all Texas youth** have a mental, emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem.
- [Researchers from Germany](#) found that even just **standing near trees** can result in measurable, positive improvements in mental health outcomes. People who routinely spent time within 350 feet of trees were **less likely to be prescribed antidepressants**.
- A research trial at the [University of Nevada](#) found that students who walked through arid, desert-like settings achieved the same levels of comfort and calm as students who walked through greener spaces.

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!

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