



The influence of the natural environment on learning in primary school students

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I am a primary education teacher, also a nature lover, and maybe that's why I can present you this article, because I mixed my three passions: education, nature and research. From now on, don't hesitate, you can ask for your teacher to do a lesson on the playground. If you continue reading you can have scientific evidences why learning outdoors it's a better plan than stay inside a classroom.

As a student, you might know how hard it could be staying the whole time sitting down on a chair in a lockdown space, sometimes without properly views. If you are as lucky as I was during my high school, you can watch throughout the windows and see a mountain and green space that surrounded you, it was something that makes me feel calm and in some way it helps me with my tasks. You want to know why?

Contact with nature changes us in many ways: after a walk in the forest, our body, brain and feelings are different. Did you ever try it? Can you close your eyes and think about that feeling? And now, can you put words to that feelings and tell us how it was? Something in you had changed?

Those changes have an explanation: green places provide us with numerous benefits. This scientific review explores the relationship between nature and primary education, and the results can make a difference in the way we teach and how we can rethink the education locations. For that, literature on research from the last years on the topic is reviewed to show the scientific evidence of nature effects students. First, a comparison between rural and urban areas as a place of living and studying and the decreasing numbers of people living in the countryside is presented, compared to the increasing amount of the population moving into the urban areas. Do you think there is more or less people living in a rural area? Just check the statistics from the recent years and you can see the critical situation that some small villages have around our country, where the average of the age is older people, mostly retired.

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A second section shows how nature can stimulate the brain in a way that provides benefits for academic tasks and also helping students having better behaviour and health. It seems impossible, although, the effects that nature provide can make a big difference, for example, learning how to read in the playground instead of the class makes the process easier and more effective.

Furthermore, the article reports which kind of places provide a better learning, development related to green spaces. For example, schools that are affected by pollution (applying to those areas located in high levels of traffic and mostly urban environments) is where we can observe how the development of those children's brains occur slower in polluted environments causing them lessening their cognitive abilities such as attention and working memory.

Decreasing levels of cortisol, higher levels of concentration, motivation or more participation of the students, are some of the outcomes that nature can bring as a learning space. Just to let you know, cortisol is the hormone related to the stress, have it in a moderate quantity can help us in the process of learning, but in a high quantity it could be really bad, making us feel some anxiety and sick.

Though, not only benefits exist for education, but also health takes part when it comes to nature: fewer levels of depression or anxiety are also found in people living surrounded by nature.

Just think for a minute how was your primary school, did contain many trees or green spaces? Probably, after reading this article, you might think that another way of learning it's possible, more connected with nature and with outdoor lessons.

Focusing on building and reconstructing schools providing more green spaces and large windows to observe wildlife can be helpful in a city area. Use the forest or the playground as a place of learning can be another easy and effective way of taking all the benefits that nature can provide to our students in rural areas.

As you know information is priceless, especially if you know how to use it properly. Now, that you know all those evidences, do you think that we need to change the way we do our lessons? Would you like to learn closer to the nature? In case you put that in practise, write me, let me know if something changes in you, maybe you feel more relaxed, more concentrate, or you can understand or memorise something better than before.