The connection between childhood nature deficit and air quality protection in the U.S.

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National Wildlife Federation
America’s New Indoor Childhood

- American kids no longer play together outdoors
- Instead they spend 6.3 hours per day staring at electronic screens
- Not including homework!
A Profound Change

- Estimates are that children spend 10X the amount of time watching screens indoors than playing outdoors.

- Loss of social and interpersonal skills.
Weekly Outdoor Time?

- **Unstructured outdoor play?**
  - 30 to 50 minutes per week

- **Add in organized sports?**
  - 4 hours per week

- **Compare indoor “screen” time**
  - 44 hours per week
Health Professionals:

- CDC says kids missing about 60 minutes per day of light to moderate activity
- AAP says kids need an hour per day of unstructured play
- Affects attention spans and creativity
The Missing Foundation of Fitness

- Early onset of diabetes
- Cardio-pulmonary problems
- Poorer overall state of health
- Shorter life-spans – 3 to 5 years
Indoor Childhood:

The enemy of preventative health care on a vast societal scale
Disproportionate Impacts

- Access to organized activities
- Parent’s sense of safety
- Reliance on public programs
- Air pollution and other exposures
National Wildlife Federation

- Be Out There! – public education campaign
- Green Hour – parent support program
- Research – Eg. Learning “readiness”
- Nature-find – opportunity locator
- Policy agenda – federal and state
- Agency, NGO and corporate partnerships
EPA’s Commitment to Children’s Health

- Toxic exposures
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Home, school and play
Indoor Air Quality

- Modified definition of the “ambient environment”
- Homes
- Schools
- Daycare
Outdoor Air Quality

- New challenge to air safety messaging
- Alerts
- Positive aspects of fresh air
Solutions: Kids Outdoors

- **Goal:** daily green hour

- **Barriers**

- **Safe: Opportunities**
  - Backyards
  - Camps
  - Daycare
  - School
  - Playspaces
Policy Agenda -- Examples

- State NCLI plans to coordinate
  - Parks and recreation
  - Public health
  - Environmental quality
  - Education
  (NWF policy guide)

- School wellness plans
EPA Air Quality and Children’s Health Protection Education

- Expanded indoor air education tools
- Outdoor air quality index
ties
- Nexus of clean air and natural play spaces
- Informational support of state NCLI plans
EPA Air Quality and Children’s Health Protection Policy

- Proposed federal legislation for children and outdoors state plans
- Reinforcement of safe AQ for schools & daycare
- School anti-idling
- Other --
Thanks

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