

Studies and Quotes Supporting Place-Based Education

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Environmental Education Evolves:

Developing Citizens, Furthering Education Reform by Karen Rasmussen

The state of the environment affects our quality of life... For that reason, environmental education is an essential part of the curriculum in a democratic society. Because humans and the environment are in constant interaction, "It's our responsibility to help kids understand the ecosystem where they live and the impact humans have on it," says Mary Lane, principal of Hawkins Middle School in Olympia, Wash. "Our children will be responsible for making decisions that help preserve or make a healthy environment. For that, they need to know what a healthy environment is and how to make good decisions." It's important that children know they don't have to wait until they are adults to make a difference in their environment, notes Richard Wilke, distinguished professor environmental education at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point. "Kids can decide if they will recycle, if they will turn the lights off when they aren't needed. Kids also have a lot of money to spend these days, and they can learn to make a difference now in their consumer choices." The behaviors and attitudes that children develop continue into adulthood, he suggests. As children develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make informed decisions, say experts, teachers need to allow young people to form their own opinions.

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Journal of Environmental Education, (Dresner and Gill. 1994. Vol 25. No.3)

"Residential environmental education camps provide a setting that can result in beneficial changes in participants' self esteem, interpersonal relationship, and feelings of connection with the natural world, as well as stimulating greater interest in future low-impact recreation experiences in natural areas." The study goes on to say that "When students learn how ecosystems function and about environmental action strategies that contribute to their maintenance, they develop more environmentally responsible behaviors" Furthermore, the research suggests, "Enhanced self-esteem is a major influence on their desire to take further environmental action."

"What Does Camp do for Kids?: A Meta-Analysis of the Influence of the Organized Camping Experience on the Self Constructs of Youth." (Marsh, Paul E. 1999. Masters Thesis, Indiana University).

This study indicates that the outcomes of an organized camp experience are: the ability to adjust to new environments, a greater sense of personal satisfaction, and personal habits that lead to a healthy lifestyle. One could argue from the results of this study that participating in an organized camping experience increases the participants' self esteem. Recognizing that the first study indicated that self esteem was a major influence on taking environmental action, combined with the fact that organized camping experiences contributes positively to a child's self esteem and youth development, makes a strong case to continue to invest and build a strong camping component in our overall education activities.

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More Studies Supporting Place-Based Education

- All students, including at-risk, gifted, and special education students, benefit from environmental study (National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, 2000).
- Research shows that academic achievement, teacher satisfaction, discipline, and student engagement improve significantly when schools use the environment as an integrating context for learning (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998).
- Positive community environmental behavior improves (Ramsey, 1987).
- Environmental literacy is best achieved when schools include community investigation, citizenship participation, and environmental study (Volk and McBeth).
- Other findings show an association for inner-city children between experience of "nearby nature" and an increase in cognitive functioning and self-discipline, and a reduction of learning disability symptoms and aggressive behavior. (published studies by Kuo, Sullivan, Taylor, Wells)
- Teaching about the natural and built environment provides a real-world context for learning by linking the classroom to the students' community. Students are engaged in hands-on, active learning that increases their knowledge and awareness about the environment. Because environmental education encourages inquiry and investigation, students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making skills. Environmentally literate students become citizens who are able to weigh various sides of an environmental issue and make responsible decisions as individuals and as members of their community. Quality, standards-based environmental education improves everyday life by protecting human health and encouraging stewardship of natural resources. (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)
- Hands-on structured outdoor activities improve behavior and produces positive results for students with ADHD. ("A Potential Natural Treatment for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Evidence from a National Study" by Frances Kuo, PhD, and Andrea Faber Taylor, PhD., American Journal of Public Health, September 2004, vol 94, No. 9)
- The primary value of place-based education lies in the way that it serves to strengthen children's connection to others and to the regions in which they live. It enhances achievement, but more important, it helps overcome the alienation and isolation that have become the hallmarks of modernity. By reconnecting rather than separating children from the world, place-based education serves both individuals and communities, helping individuals experience the value they hold for others and allowing communities to benefit from the commitment and contributions of their members. (Excerpt from *Clearing* magazine #118, Fall 2005 article "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are" by Gregory A. Smith)