



# HB 2717 Outdoor Preschool Licensure

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To increase childcare capacity  
and equity across Oregon



# What is Outdoor Preschool?

- Outdoor preschool is a preschool that meets either entirely or primarily outside.
- Also called “forest kindergartens,” this model has been around for decades and offers children the unique health benefits of time in nature along with the skills your kid needs to succeed in school.
- Many of the [physical, cognitive, and social development benefits](#) are unique from those in a traditional indoor environment.



# Evidence Based Research

## NATURE CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Spending time in nature enhances educational outcomes by improving children's academic performance, focus, behavior and love of learning.

### BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Learning in natural environments can:



**BOOST PERFORMANCE**  
in reading, writing, math, science and social studies  
1, 2, 3, 4, 5



**ENHANCE**  
creativity, critical thinking and problem solving<sup>6</sup>

Seeing nature from school buildings can foster academic success<sup>3, 7, 8</sup>

### ENHANCED ATTENTION

Spending time in nature can help children focus their attention:



**FOCUS AND ATTENTION**  
10, 11, 12, 13



**ADHD SYMPTOMS**  
14, 15

The greener the setting, the better the focus<sup>16, 17</sup>

### INCREASED ENGAGEMENT & ENTHUSIASM

Exploration and discovery through outdoor experiences can promote motivation to learn:



**INCREASED ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING**  
1, 16



**GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING**<sup>17</sup>

### IMPROVED BEHAVIOR

Nature-based learning is associated with reduced aggression and fewer discipline problems:<sup>18, 19</sup>



**MORE IMPULSE CONTROL**<sup>20</sup>



**LESS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**<sup>20</sup>

## NATURE CAN IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Spending time in nature provides children with a wide range of health benefits.

### HEALTHY BABIES

Nature exposure for mothers can promote:



**BETTER FETAL GROWTH**<sup>21</sup>



**HEALTHIER BIRTH WEIGHTS**<sup>22, 23</sup>

### HEALTHY EYES AND VITAMIN D LEVELS

Time spent in bright sunlight can:



**REDUCE NEARSIGHTEDNESS**  
5, 4, 7



**INCREASE VITAMIN D LEVELS**<sup>4</sup>

**NATURE CONTACT IS**  
especially beneficial for mothers of lower education and socio-economic levels:<sup>5, 2, 4</sup>

### INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Access to parks and greenspace can foster:

**INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**<sup>24, 25</sup>

**REDUCED RISK OF OBESITY**<sup>25</sup>

**OUTDOOR PLAY**  
increases the likelihood that girls will remain active into adolescence<sup>6</sup>

Children are better able to cope with stress when they live near trees and other greenery.<sup>26, 27</sup>

### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Learning in nature can support:



**IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**<sup>27, 28</sup>



**REDUCED STRESS<sup>27</sup> ANGER<sup>16, 29</sup> AND AGGRESSION<sup>16, 29</sup>**

"Early experiences with nature guided by knowledgeable, caring adults benefit children in all domains of health and wellbeing – cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. Nature-based early childhood education programs should be recognized as an essential option for families."

Anne Mannering  
UO Online Master's in Psychology Program Director



# Outdoor Preschools need a path to licensure

- Cannot meet current licensing standards
- Only operate for half days
- Unable to accept state or federal child care resources
- Cannot apply for programs like Preschool Promise

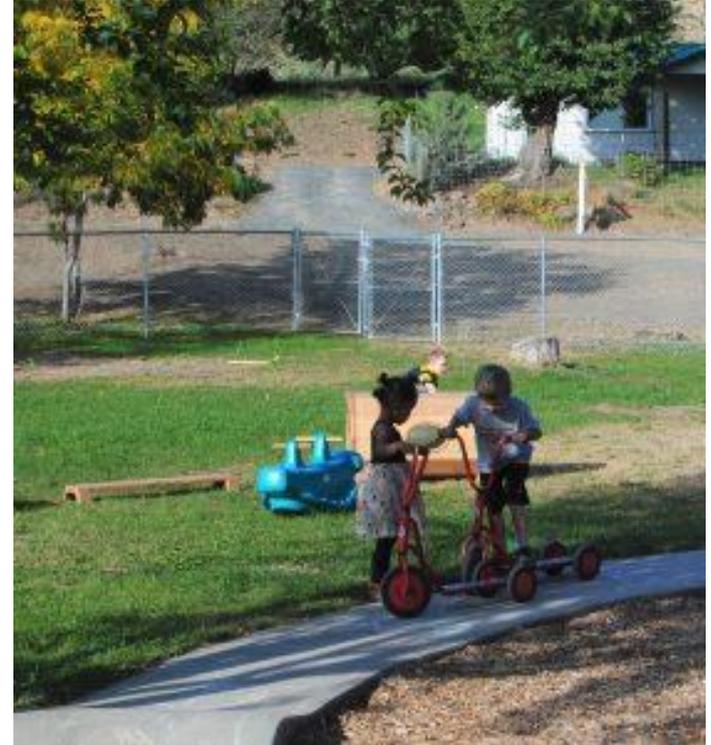


# HB 2717 allows Office of Child Care to make outdoor preschool an eligible certified child care license type

Licensure increases:

- [Capacity](#)
- [Affordability](#)
- [Equity](#)

Meets Oregon priorities to increase childcare capacity and equity in both rural and urban areas



"I have witnessed firsthand the therapeutic benefits of providing outdoor early education, particularly for children with high levels of trauma and/or social-emotional needs. Many early educators can attest to the fact that children who display disruptive behavior are often transformed when they switch to an outdoor environment."

Ilana Jacobowski  
Director, First Place Kids



"Families who need full-day childcare are currently eliminated from the pool of folks who can take advantage of this excellent form of early childhood education. Licensure for these programs would make this high-quality childcare option available to the people who arguably need it most."

Jenny Noyce, Ph.D., mother of two outdoor preschool graduates



# Outdoor Preschool and Covid

“As health experts agree that virus transmission is less likely outdoors than indoors, and parents and education leaders are looking for creative solutions to safely return to school, interest in nature-based education could soar.”

[Christy Merrick](#)

Director, Natural Start Alliance



# Early Literacy Outdoors



# Resources - What does outdoor preschool look like?



[Affordable, Outdoor Preschool in Seattle & King County Parks](#), Tiny Trees

# Resources

- [Outdoor Preschools in Oregon](#)
- [Washington Outdoor and Nature-Based Child Care Standards](#)
- [Outdoor Preschool Policy Action Framework](#) and [Outdoor Preschool Equity Toolkit](#)



# Benefits: Physical Health

- Promotes physical activity, reduces sedentary behaviors, and improves overall cardiorespiratory fitness
- Supports gross and fine motor development, muscle and bone health, and spatial awareness and coordination
- Strengthens immune systems by exposing children to microorganisms in a critical period of their development
- Improves eye health
- Predicts lifelong engagement in physical activity
- Reduces risk of transmission of communicable diseases



# Benefits: Mental Health

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression in children
- Improves self-confidence, self-worth, autonomy, self-resilience, strength, coordination, focus, problem-solving, and teamwork skills
- For children with ADHD, walks in nature can improve focus comparatively to ADHD medication



# Benefits: Learning & Development

- Supports all developmental learning domains
- Supports creativity and problem-solving skills
- Enhances cognitive skills and higher executive functioning
- Improves academic performance



# Are Outdoor Preschools increasing nationally?

naturalstart  
alliance

## Estimated number of nature-based preschools, 1965-2020

