

Kite and Leaf...

The good news
email from TCS!

The Outdoor Education Advantage

TCS has long incorporated outdoor education into its curriculum. Here's why: Music class takes on a different feel when you're singing along with a guitar in a circle in the woods. Science is even more fun when you learn about the water cycle while standing ankle-deep in a creek. Math becomes hands-on when you dig in the dirt to estimate the number of worms in a cubic foot of topsoil. Weekly time for independent reading can be truly magical when everyone is sitting under their favorite tree.



Exploring and adventures.

"Nature breeds curiosity; it helps to grow explorers rather than robots. It reminds us that we are part of something bigger. It grounds us, calms us."

Ben Palmer-Fry

The Evidence for Outdoor Education

It turns out that educational research backs us up: kids learn more, retain more, and stay more interested and focused on learning if the learning venue is outdoors. Here proven benefits of outdoor education:

- significantly raises student science test scores
- enhances attitude about school



Innovation and physical challenges

- improves in-school behavior
- improves attendance
- enhances student achievement
- decreases symptoms of ADHD
- decreases stress in both students and teachers
- more engagement and hands-on learning

Researchers contribute the increase in performance to the increased relevance and hands-on experience of learning outdoors.

Studies show that students who learn outdoors develop a sense of self, independence, confidence, creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, empathy towards others, motor skills, self-discipline, and initiative.

Outdoor experiences also help students increase their understanding of their natural and human communities which leads to a sense of place. Through connection to place, students develop stronger environmental attitudes and civic behaviors.



Collecting, sorting, inventing games.

“Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries.” *Jimmy Carter*

The Children's School on the Leading Edge

We continue our commitment to nature play and nature education, as well as using our outdoor spaces and outdoor field trips in innovative ways. Each classroom spends a day in the woods every other week. Older students participate in forest stewardship activities to learn more about forest preservation and the environment through hands-on action.

Our outdoor education is also enriched with learning about and respecting the natural history of the land and the indigenous tribes whose native land we reside on

in the metropolitan Chicago area. We affirm the Forest Preserve's [land acknowledgment](#) and seek out ways to cooperate in ongoing activities that foster respect for native tribes and care for their land and its resources.



Free play and making memories.

In addition to trips to local forest preserves, our field trips bring students out to a wider range of nature experiences at farms, conservatories, the lakeshore, arboretums, and museum exhibits. Students may work with outdoor survival experts, environmentalists, naturalists, farmers, professional gardeners, veterinarians, or their own classroom teachers in outdoor projects and academic work.

In addition, we work to bring nature and the outdoors into the classroom. Our classrooms often host fish hatcheries, caterpillar and butterfly metamorphosis areas, classroom pets, seedlings and gardening projects, vermiculture, and compost bins. We integrate nature learning into many aspects of each day at TCS.

“Our challenge isn’t so much to teach children about the natural world, but to find ways to sustain instinctive connections they already carry.” *Terry Krautwurst*

We've heard from so many parents over the years that their children are the most excited when coming home after a woods day. Ask them about what they saw, experienced, and felt on these days, and you may see firsthand how their faces light up as they recount the wonder and awe of seeing a deer, or stomping in a mud puddle, or huddling around a fire in the snow. You'll see what we see — that the wet mittens, muddy boots, and extra efforts are all worthwhile!



Learning about plants, insects, and animals

For More Information on Nature Education

Keeping the Outside In (the Curriculum!) TCS faculty shared our outdoor education experience with other progressive schools at the 2022 PEN conference in Seattle. Here's the video summary they played during their presentation.



Nature Play and Nature Education / TCS Program Information and Resource List [Click Here!](#)

"No Child Left Inside" - [click for more](#) information on bi-partisan federal legislation to broaden access to outdoor education for more children in our public education system.



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