



National League of Cities

Cities Connecting Children to Nature

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Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Planning Grant Background

- In March of 2016, the City of Austin was one six cities nationwide to receive a \$25,000 Planning Grant from the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network
- PARD dedicated an additional \$25,000 in funding to assist in the planning effort
- The combined funding resulted in a 6 month planning process to develop a plan for City leadership to get more kids connected to nature more equitably

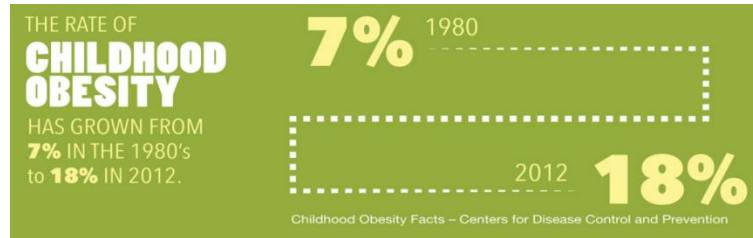


Why focus on Connecting Children to Nature?



The Average Child Today:

THEY SPEND OVER
90% OF THEIR TIME INDOORS.
Changes in American Children's Time, 1997-2003 – International Journal of Time Use Research



KIDS TODAY SPEND OVER
50 HOURS A WEEK
ON SOME DEVICE.

A green line-art icon of a smartphone.

Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds – Kaiser Family Foundation



PRE-SCHOOL KIDS

ARE THE FASTEST GROWING
MARKET FOR ANTI-DEPRESSANTS.

Rising prevalence of antidepressants among US youths. (Zito et al 2002)



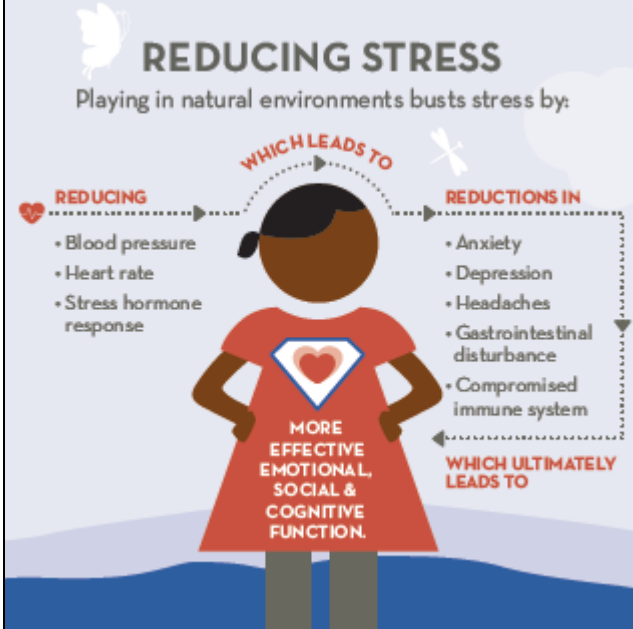


Studies show that kids who have regular interaction with nature are: **HEALTHIER, HAPPIER & SMARTER**



GARDEN-BASED LEARNING IMPROVES grades, knowledge, attitudes & behaviors at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. *Williams & Dixon, 2013*

GPAS
In one study, **92% OF CLASSROOMS** that integrated the environment had higher standardized test scores, GPAS, and enthusiasm for learning. *Lieberman & Hoody, 1998*



REDUCING STRESS
Playing in natural environments busts stress by:

REDUCING

- Blood pressure
- Heart rate
- Stress hormone response


WHICH LEADS TO

REDUCTIONS IN

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal disturbance
- Compromised immune system

WHICH ULTIMATELY LEADS TO

MORE EFFECTIVE EMOTIONAL, SOCIAL & COGNITIVE FUNCTION.



98% OF TEENS surveyed said gardening helped their ability to focus when completing their homework. *Charola, et al., 2014*

WHEN GIVEN A CHOICE, PRESCHOOL & ELEMENTARY KIDS **CONGREGATE MORE IN NATURAL AREAS** THAN ON TRADITIONAL PLAY EQUIPMENT OR BLACKTOP. *Charola, et al., 2014*





Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Planning Team

Participants: **10** city departments, **40** organizations and over **75** individuals participated in the planning process

Core Planning Team:

- 38 members from 10 city departments, AISD, non-profit sector, and healthcare providers
- 2 meetings per month, 9 meetings total

Working Groups:

- 6 Working Groups: **Data Collection, Health, Community Engagement, Non-Profits, Education, Policy**
- 1 meeting per month per group, 24 meetings total





Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Planning Process Highlights

- **Collective Impact Model:** the approach is premised on the belief that no single policy, government department, organization or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex social problems we face as a society
- **Gap Analysis:** GIS mapping model that provided a “Nature Equity Score” for every zip code in Austin
- **Program Survey: 90** organizations completed an in-depth survey on nature based programming offered in Austin
- **Community Engagement:** over **800** children and adults completed a community survey about personal barriers and access to nature
- **Policy Scan:** Created a **Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights** Resolution that will be presented to City Council and implemented a tracking system across department Master Plans.





Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Implementation Key Strategies

- **Green School Parks:** partner with AISD campuses that have an existing joint-use agreement with PARD to create enriched green schoolyards that will provide daily nature access for students and a new rich nature park for the surrounding community
- **Public Awareness & Marketing Campaign:** city-wide public awareness campaign about the developmental benefits of time spent in nature
- **Park & Program Activation:** creation of a comprehensive nature based program directory, relationship building with Learn All the Time (Austin's out of school time network), and program alignment and promotion of under utilized park space
- **Interdepartmental Communication & Master Plan Tracking:** participation in the CodeNEXT process and identification of department Master Plans and major initiative goals that align with the children in nature mission



Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Implementation Budget

- Upon submitting the Implementation Plan to our grantors, PARD will receive **\$50,000** of pass through funding with the potential for an additional **\$40,000**
- **\$50,000 Budget:**
 - \$25,000 - Implementation Plan Manager (*part-time temp*)
 - \$8,000 - Green School Park materials
 - \$6,000 - Outside Assistance / Consultants
(*revamping shared ownership agreements, green schoolyards summit, collective impact planning*)
 - \$5,000 - Study with UT School of Public Health
 - \$3,000 - Community Engagement Initiatives
 - \$3,000 - Marketing Design & Scoping
- **\$40,000 Budget:** Reinforcement of items listed above and additional resources for Green School Park incubator project
- **PARD Contribution:** \$25,000 in matching funds for Implementation Plan Manager

Cities Connecting Children to Nature: Next Steps



- Implementation Plan submitted on September 16th; you can find the full plan and supporting appendices at www.austintexas.gov/cccn
- Additional Funding will be received by November 30, 2016
- The CCCN Team will begin hiring for the Implementation Plan Manager on October 1st
- Pilot Incubation Project School will be selected in October 2016
- Core Leadership Team will be reformed in October 2016