



## Expanding Our Classrooms

- Traditional school building and classroom settings **isolate students from the natural environment and promote sedentary behaviors.**
- Providing a variety of settings for learning, **including outdoor spaces such as gardens and natural environments**, along with traditional structure, promotes student and teacher energy levels and satisfaction.
- Research suggests that **physical movement promotes healthy brain development in children.**
- Unfortunately, **less than 5%** of students attend schools that allow for free movement.
- Research also shows that incorporating time outdoors and in natural spaces **leads to improved student concentration and test scores**, as well as lower absenteeism.
- School buildings convey the values of the community and can be used as models to teach students about the natural environment and sustainability practices.

### A Look at Traditional Classrooms

*The average school building was made in the 1970s and has not been structurally updated (beyond basic maintenance) since.*

*The Brutalist architecture style of most school buildings features a lot of exposed concrete and small windows. Together these features limit natural airflow and sunlight.*

*Traditional learning spaces within schools are characterized by static seating arrangements and artificial elements. All of this together creates an environment that is neither conducive to students' development growth or satisfaction.*

## What You Can Do:

- Talk to your Parent Teacher Association about the importance of time outdoors and free movement for children's' development. It is a common misconception that time outdoors is distracting for kids.
- Approach the school administration office after gaining support from other parents and teachers about ways to improve their outdoor space access/time policies.
- Organize a group of volunteers to facilitate increased outdoor time by tackling your schools particular problems (such as lack of outdoor chaperones or finding a local accessible green space).
- Encourage the school to support teachers in pursuing green teaching certificates. This will improve their ability to integrate environmental education into their lesson plans.



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