

Outdoor Environmental Education and The Nature School of Nynäshamn

The Nature school of Nynäshamn started up in 1988 and is a resource available for children, pupils, teachers and preschool teachers in the municipality of Nynäshamn. The nature school is not a place, it is a method of learning. The Nature School of Nynäshamn is an active member of the Association of Nature Schools in Sweden.

The Nature School of Nynäshamn produces textbooks and teaching aids in cooperation with other Nature schools and the contents of the books are reviewed and approved by the Association of Nature Schools in Sweden. The purpose of these books is to spread the methods of outdoor learning and they are used for different courses in outdoor environmental education. The Nature School of Nynäshamn and other Nature Schools in Sweden that offer courses in outdoor environmental education use the outdoor arena only. Only in exceptional cases indoor lectures can be of interest.

Textbooks written up to now (February 2010):



Att lära in ute året runt (Outdoor learning all the year round): written by The Nature School of Nynäshamn. Released 2008.



Leka och lära matematik ute (Playing and learning Maths Outdoors) (preschool ages 4-6), written by The Nature School in Nynäshamn in cooperation with Nature Schools in Falun, Uppsala and Torshälla. Released 2007



Att lära in matematik ute (Learning Maths Outdoors) (school ages 6-16) written by The Nature School in Nynäshamn in cooperation with Nature Schools in Falun and Uppsala. Released 2005



Att lära in engelska ute (Learning English Outdoors), written by Lotta Carlegård, Falun. Released 2007.



Att lära teknik ute (Learning Technology Outdoors), written by Carina Brage, Linköping. Released 2009.



Att lära svenska ute (Learning Swedish Outdoors), written by The Nature School in Nynäshamn in cooperation with Nature Schools in Uddevalla, Hyttö, Skärholmen, Lund and the Outdoor Educator Ammi Wohlin. Releasing date, August 2010.

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Why outdoor learning? Why outdoor education?

Increasing the physical activity

Outdoor education includes movement while it is performed, thus stimulating knowledge as activities and creative learning processes such as "the body moves the mind into action".

Preschool playgrounds with large running areas, hilly grounds and large biological diversity with a lot of trees and bushes stimulate increased physical activity (see Boldemann, C., Dal, H., Blennow, M., Wester, U., Mårtensson, F., Raustorp, A. and K. Yuen, *SCAMPER – preschool environment and children's health*. 2005, Report 2005:3 from the Centre of Public Health, the Department of Public Health Work, Stockholms läns landsting. (www.folkhalsoguiden.se/Rapport.aspx?id=744))

Decreasing the stress levels

The outdoor education increases the ability to cooperate and reduces the levels of stress in learning environments with rich nature diversity. Nina Nelson who is Chief Physician and Professor of pediatrics in Linköping discovered, during her research (2006), that the levels of the stress hormone cortisol were lower for children who spent one hour of their education outdoors. The improvement is most obvious to the boys.

Increasing the concentration ability

The SCAMPER-study shows that children in green environments had less ADHD-similar symptoms. (See the report; Mårtensson F, Boldemann C, Söderström M, Blennow M, Englund J-E, Grahn P. *Outdoor environmental assessment of attention promoting settings for preschool children*. Health & Place 2009;15 1149-1157.)

Children with access to large playgrounds consisting of nature fields are more healthy, their play is more diversified and they develop better concentration abilities compared to children who play in artificial and less diversified outdoor environments (refer to Patrik Grahn's study *Ute på dagis* 1997).

Expanding the learning environment

The outdoor education expands the children's and pupils' learning environment as well to involving society, natural environments and cultural environments. A meeting between place and learning is a way to create knowledge about our life environment. It provides a sensual experience combined with a sense of the local environment, that is; a firm support, which is both local historical, ecological, social and physical, among the extended pedagogical room.

Stimulating different learning styles

The outdoor education provides the tools for a diversified learning and stimulates different learning styles in interaction between bookish education and sensual experiences, textbased practices and non textbased practices.

Stimulating environmental awareness

The outdoor education stimulates environmental awareness and learning sustainable development by giving the students a positive feeling towards the nature through these nature experiences.

Homepages

- For more information about the Nature School of Nynäshamn and the outdoor educational books, visit our homepage; www.nynashamnsnatureskola.se

- For more information about the Association of Nature Schools in Sweden, visit the homepage; www.natureskola.se

Literature

Lars Owe Dahlgren and Anders Szczepanski, *Outdoor Education - Literary Education and Sensory Experience* (Japanese version ready spring 2010) Linköping University, 2010. For more information Look at: <http://www.liu.se/ikk/ncu?l=en> National Center for Outdoor Education at Linköping University, Sweden. Anders Szczepanski, ass visiting prof Outdoor Education