



Outdoor Learning, Austin TX

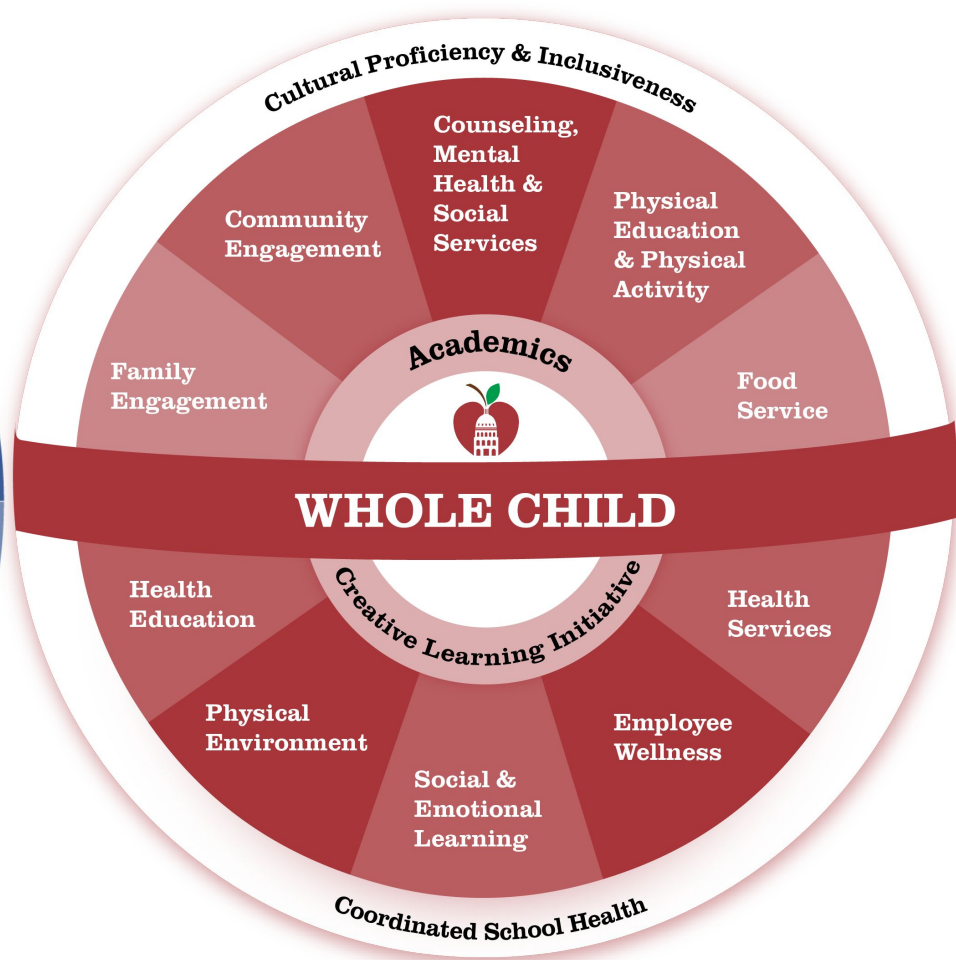
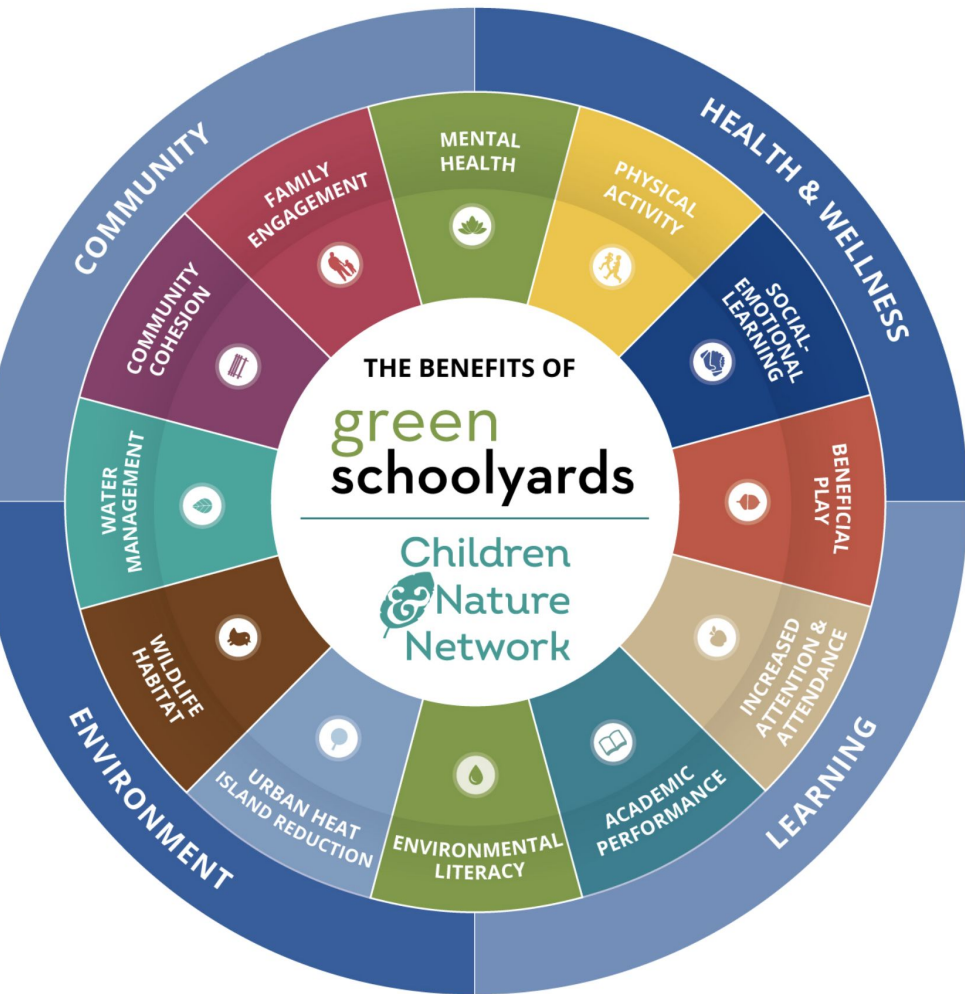


Anne Muller
Austin ISD Outdoor
Learning Specialist
anne.muller@austinisd.org



We believe that children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and smarter!





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 GROWTH³
- HEALTHIER BIRTH WEIGHTS^{12,3}

NATURE CONTACT IS especially beneficial for mothers of lower education and socio-economic levels^{2,3,4}

HEALTHY EYES AND VITAMIN D LEVELS

Time spent in bright sunlight can:

- REDUCE NEARSIGHTEDNESS^{5,6,7}
- INCREASE VITAMIN D LEVELS⁸

INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Access to parks and greenspace can foster:

- INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY^{11,12}
- REDUCED RISK OF OBESITY¹³

OUTDOOR PLAY increases the likelihood that girls will remain active into adolescence⁹

Children are better able to cope with stress when they live near trees and other greenery.^{15,16}

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Learning in nature can support:

- IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP SKILLS^{17,20}
- REDUCED STRESS¹⁷, ANGER^{18,19} AND AGGRESSION^{18,19}

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS CAN INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

THE ISSUE
Less than 3 in 10 high school students get 60 minutes of physical activity every day.¹

REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENHANCES WELL-BEING & ATTENTIVENESS IN THE CLASSROOM.

Green schoolyards can promote physical activity by offering a variety of active play options that engage children of varying fitness levels, ages and genders.

MORE OPTIONS, MORE ACTIVITY

85% OF EDUCATORS AND PARENTS said green schoolyards support a wider range of play activities than other types of schoolyards.²

PROMOTE running, jumping, climbing, lifting

trees, logs, shrubs, rocks

Variety in landscaping increases variety in active play.²

MEETING DIVERSE & CHANGING NEEDS

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS COMPLEMENT CONVENTIONAL PLAYGROUNDS WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR **LIGHT & MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** that are more appealing to some children.^{3,4}

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO **GIRLS' PHYSICAL FITNESS** ★★★★★

Physical activity decreases as children grow, especially for girls. Green schoolyards sustain activity as children age and preferences change.^{5,6,7}

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS CAN PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS



THE ISSUE
1 in 5 children has, or has had, a serious mental health disorder at some point in their lives.¹

MENTAL HEALTH PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL, & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

Green schoolyards can enhance mental health and well-being and promote social-emotional skill development.

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS HELP KIDS FEEL:

- CALMER & LESS STRESSED**^{2,3}
Views of green landscapes from classroom windows helped high school students recover more quickly from stressful events.⁴
- POSITIVE & RESTORED**⁵
Forest schools enhanced positive and decreased negative emotions.⁵
- RESILIENT**²
Natural areas enhanced feelings of competence and increased supportive social relationships that help build resilience.²

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS PROMOTE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP SKILLS ★★★★★

Children demonstrated more cooperative play, civil behavior and positive social relationships in green schoolyards.^{5,7}



DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-MANAGEMENT

Green schoolyards can reduce aggression and discipline problems.^{4,7}
Gardening at school helped students feel proud, responsible & confident.²

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES



THE ISSUE
Only 1/3 of U.S. 8th graders perform at or above standards for science and math.¹

SCHOOLS ACROSS THE NATION ARE SEEKING WAYS TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Green schoolyards promote academic achievement through hands-on, experiential learning and by enhancing the cognitive and emotional processes important for learning.

ENHANCING LEARNING

Green schoolyards provide **experiential learning across many subjects.**^{2,3}

IMPROVED OUTCOMES in science, math & language arts.²
35 of 40 school garden studies (88%) found

- BETTER GRADES** (A+)
- HIGHER TEST SCORES**
- ENHANCED KNOWLEDGE** (ACROSS SEVERAL SUBJECTS)

GREEN SCHOOLYARDS CAN

- ★ Help students focus attention and regulate behavior.^{5,6}
- ★ Enhance attitudes and engagement with school.^{7,8}
- ★ Support creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.⁹

ROOM WITH A VIEW

Seeing nature and greenery from school buildings can foster positive academic outcomes.^{10,11}

HIGH SCHOOLERS WITH VIEWS OF TREES HAD:¹²



HIGHER standardized test scores

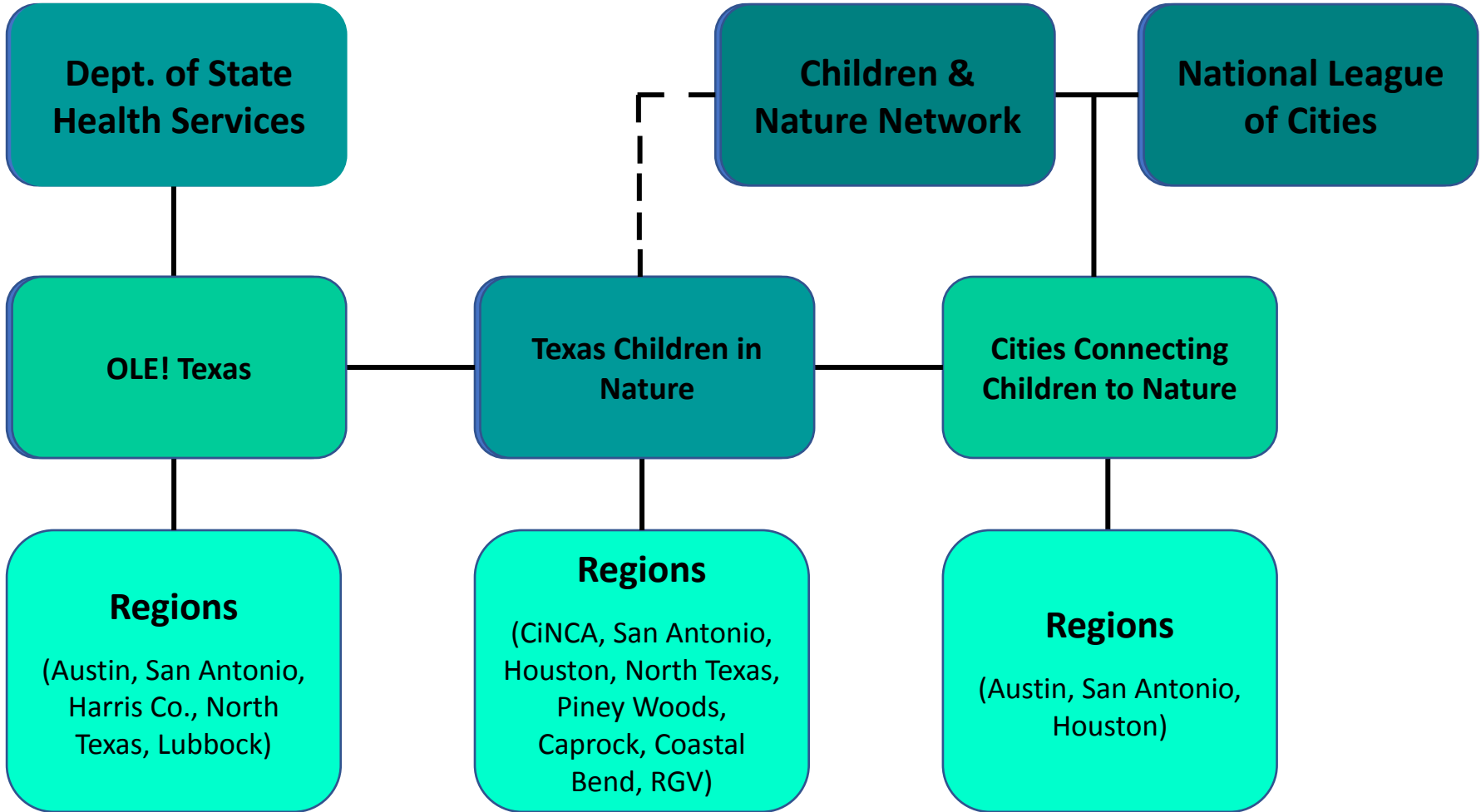


HIGHER graduation rates

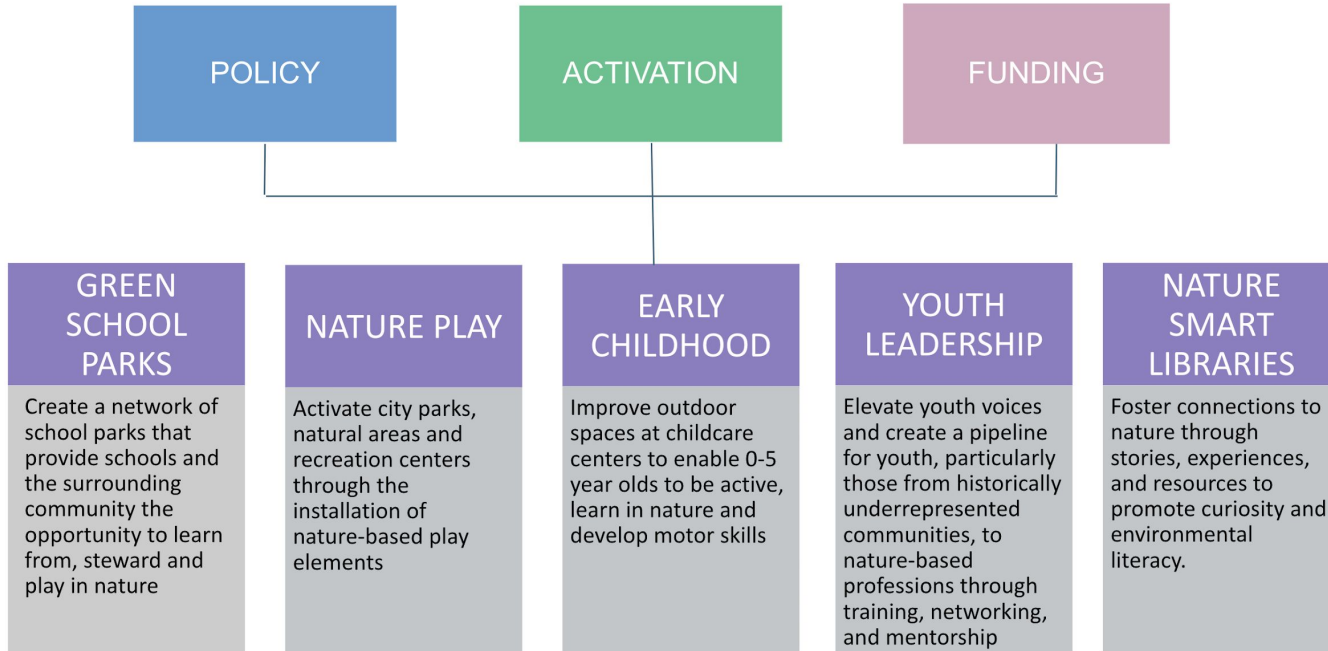


HIGHER % of students planning to attend a 4-yr college





Cities Connecting Children to Nature



CCCN Austin

Youth Leadership

Nature Play

Green School Parks

Nature Smart Libraries

OLE! Austin

City of Austin

Parks

Schools

AISD

Partners

PARD Planning

PARD Asset Mgmt

PARD Nat. Res.

PARD Operations

PARD Comm + Eng.

WPD

Principal
Teacher
Student
Parent

Academics

O+M

Program

CiNCA
NWF
EcoRise
PEAS
CaveSim
FIN

Community

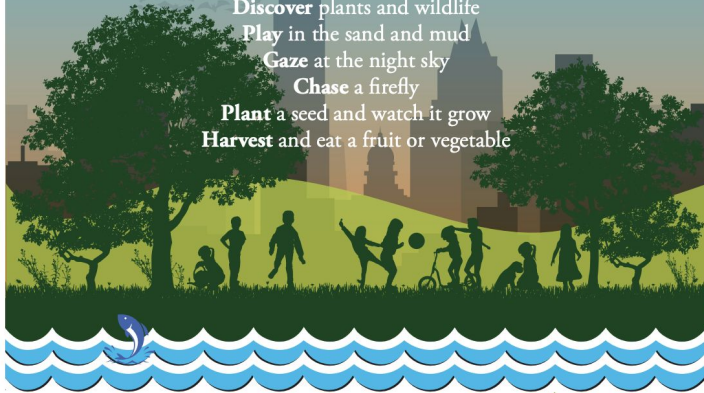
GAVA
Neigh. Assn.
Neighbors
Adopt-a-Park

APF
LBJWC
Westcave
Yarrow
UTHealth

AUSTIN CHILDREN'S
**OUTDOOR
BILL of RIGHTS**

In which every child has the right to:

- Climb a tree
- Catch a fish
- Picnic in a park
- Hike a trail
- Ride a bike
- Splash in a creek or river
- Discover plants and wildlife
- Play in the sand and mud
- Gaze at the night sky
- Chase a firefly
- Plant a seed and watch it grow
- Harvest and eat a fruit or vegetable



Understanding that research shows children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school, we enthusiastically support this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/ccn



AUSTIN CHILDREN'S
**OUTDOOR
BILL of RIGHTS**

WHEREAS: Studies show that children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school.

WHEREAS: Children who have safe access to parks, zoos, nature centers, lakes and rivers, and other public outdoor spaces are more resilient, have higher self-esteem, are more confident, are better problem solvers and are more creative.

WHEREAS: All children should feel welcome at all of Austin's parks, pools, trails, waterways and open spaces.

WHEREAS: Communities in disadvantaged areas with access to nature benefit from greater health equity with lower rates of mortality and disease.

WHEREAS: Children who develop a positive relationship with nature are more likely to become tomorrow's stewards of our natural heritage.

WHEREAS: Through its parks, trails, waterways, open spaces, and other natural spaces, Austin provides a wide variety of quality outdoor opportunities.

THEREFORE: We support this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights in which every child has the right to:

- Climb a tree • Catch a fish • Picnic in a park • Hike a trail • Ride a bike
- Splash in the creek or river • Discover plants and wildlife
- Play in the sand and mud • Gaze at the night sky • Chase a firefly
- Plant a seed and watch it grow • Harvest and eat a fruit or vegetable



Children in Nature
Collaborative of Austin



Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/ccn

Sustainability @ Austin ISD

Teaching & Learning

Infrastructure & Operations

Community Engagement

Energy



Water



Waste



Procurement



Transportation



Air Quality



Food



Nature



AISD Sustainability Plan: Nature

The intent of the Nature Action Area is to provide the Austin ISD community with nature-based learning benefits, opportunities, and experiences; enhance resilient ecosystem services on Austin ISD property; improve social, emotional, health, and academic outcomes for students; and nurture an appreciation for the environment in the next generation of environmental stewards.

Goals

- Embed nature into district policies and procedures
- Infrastructure: Support access to nature
- Activation: Increase student time in nature
- Sustainable land management and carbon sequestration



EDUCATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

FOR MODERN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
Approved by AISD Board of Trustees, Nov. 27, 2017



Outdoor Learning

- Outdoor classroom
- Nature loop trail
- Green stormwater infrastructure & cisterns
- Wildlife habitat
- Trees
- Vegetable & pollinator gardens
- Nature play areas
- Community artwork



Curriculum Connections

Explore (20 min.)



Write to Learn



Outdoor Connection

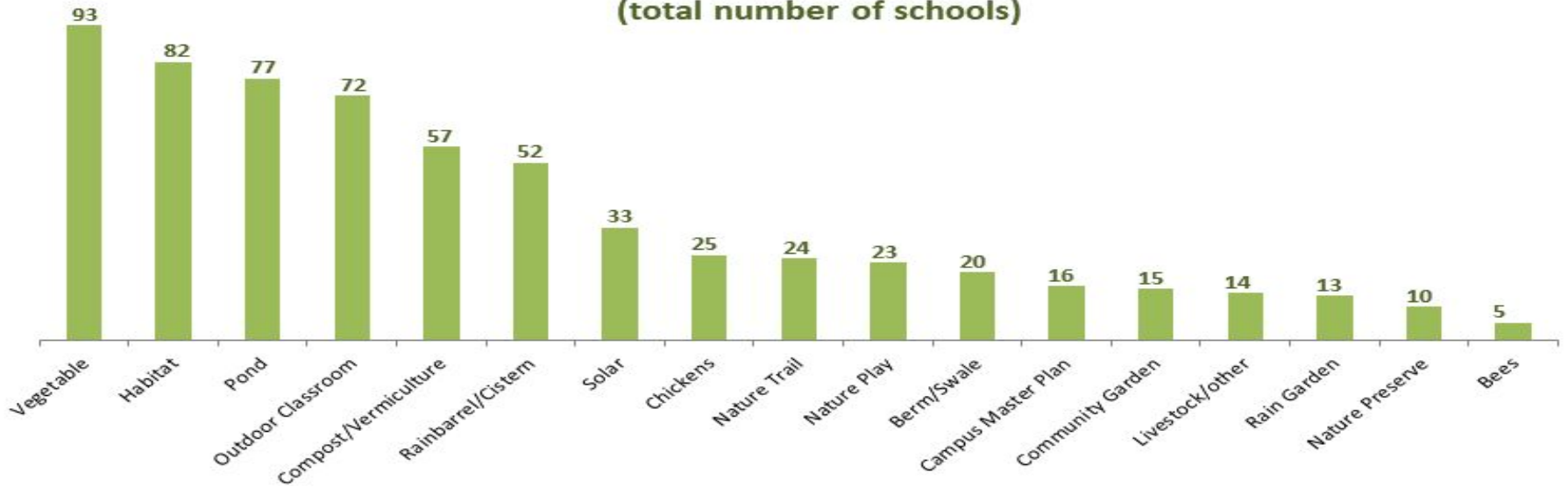
Brainstorm: What does the natural world around you mean? [¿Qué significa el mundo natural alrededor?](#) Take students outside for 10 min. and ask them to name the things they see around them in the world. They should see trees, plants, buildings, cars, etc. Once back inside, what do they see?

Provide each group of 4 students with a box of science materials* (rock, leaf, food, etc). Have students draw a picture on an index card of an example of the natural world (tree, soil, insect, etc.) and label it. Have them pair-share their drawing with the other students at their table. Say: *These are things we are going to be studying about this year.* Have students write any questions they have about the natural world or the things they observed in their world. Post on your Class Inquiry Board for future investigation.



2019-2020

AISD SCHOOLYARD HABITAT FEATURES
(total number of schools)



Outdoor Learning and COVID-19

Austin:

- [Austin Public Health](#)



Austin ISD:

- Professional Learning
- [District Reopening Plan](#)
- Identifying School Need
- [Outdoor Learning Environments Checklist](#)



COVID-19 Response

- District tree removals
 - Mulch and stumps
- Austin Parks Foundation outdoor classroom support
- Austin ISD limestone blocks- 29 campuses



Some teachers at McCallum High School move classrooms outside in effort to reduce stress



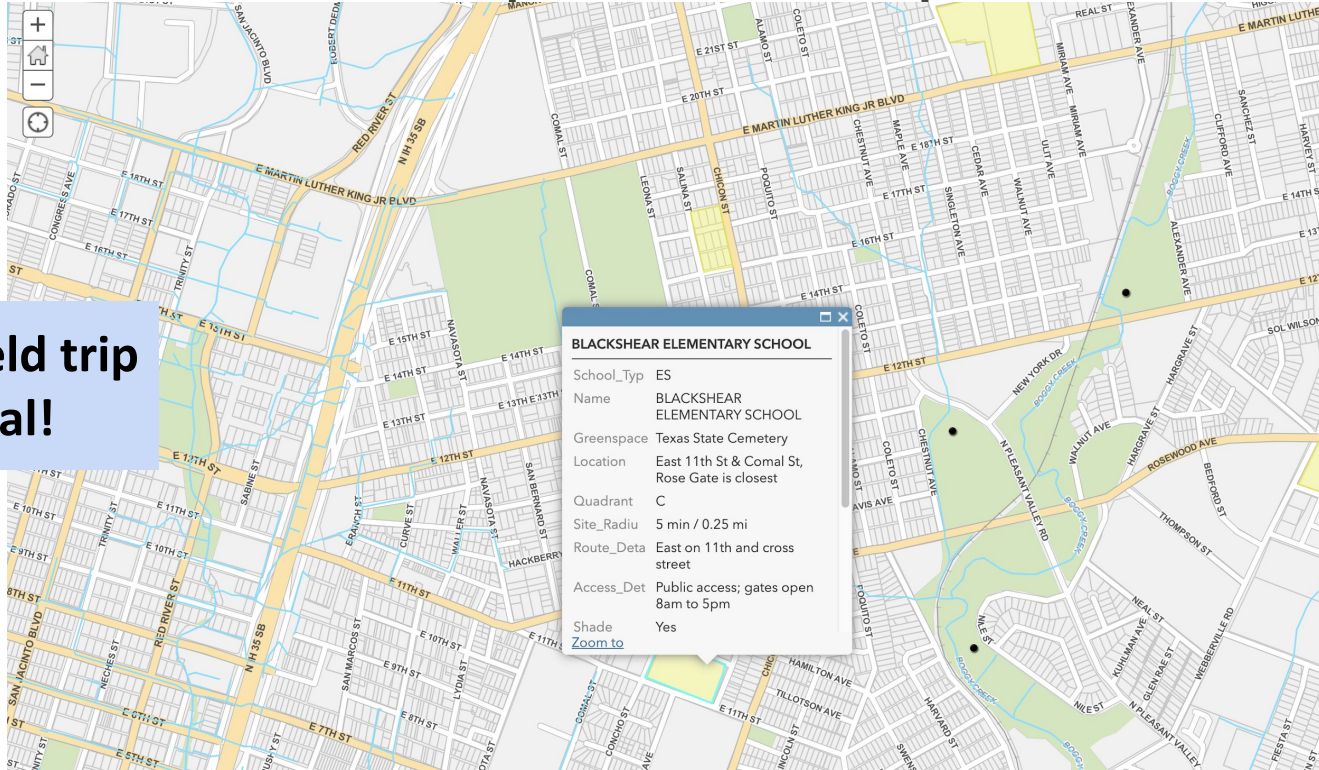
Outdoor Learning Features Mapping



- Habitat Garden
- Vegetable Garden
- Livestock
- Ponds
- Rain Garden
- Rainwater Collection
- Outdoor Classroom
- Solar



Off Campus Green Spaces



Walking field trip approval!

BLACKSHEAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

School_Type	ES
Name	BLACKSHEAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Greenspace	Texas State Cemetery
Location	East 11th St & Comal St, Rose Gate is closest
Quadrant	C
Site_Radius	5 min / 0.25 mi
Route_Data	East on 11th and cross street
Access_Det	Public access; gates open 8am to 5pm
Shade	Yes
Zoom to	



Green Campus Principal Cohort

Green Campus Administrator Cohort

2021-2022 PILOT COHORT



EcoRise is excited to work with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and Austin ISD to launch the first Green Campus Administrator Cohort. Funded by a catalytic grant from Cities Connecting Children to Nature, the cohort will consist of administrators from all communities within Austin ISD. Principals from Title 1 schools are encouraged to apply. Administrators will participate in extensive learning opportunities to understand the research and benefit of incorporating nature, outdoor learning, and green school yards into academic learning. Administrators will collaborate to build a campus mission and plan to incorporate this learning and network with like-minded principals from across the district.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

The goal of this cohort is to support campus administrators in effectively leading a green campus. We are seeking principals interested in increasing their capacity to incorporate green campus features and outdoor learning into the teaching practice and culture of the campus to increase students' engagement and the social and emotional benefits of experiential learning.

COHORT SCOPE:

- Cohort Selection & Meet and Greet: Spring 2021
- Knowledge Building Convenings: June 2021
- Campus Planning Convenings: July 2021
- Monthly Check-ins: Fall and Spring 2021-2022
- Coordinated Campus Visits: 2021-2022
- Campus Showcase Opportunities: Spring 2022

GOALS AND OUTCOMES:

- Administrators will increase understanding and access to research, local resources, and tools to support green campus teaching and learning
- Administrators will create a campus mission and plan to share with staff to support green campus initiatives.
- Administrators will give and receive feedback on progress towards their green campus initiatives goals.
- Administrators will receive targeted professional development for their staff to implement campus goals.
- Administrators will share the work of the campus with parents and the community.

HOW CAN A CAMPUS APPLY?

The Green Campus Administrator Cohort selection process will begin in March of 2021. Campus teams must consist of the campus principal and one other member of the administrative staff such as Assistant Principal, Academic Dean, or Counselor (not to include instructional coaches or teachers). To submit your application please use the link below:

Apply today at <http://bit.ly/AdminCohortSurvey>



"[The most important thing I learned is] the number of easy ways an individual can make a difference for the environment just by changing small parts of their life."

AKINS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



AISD Outdoor Learning Case Study



Thank you so much!

Anne Muller

Austin ISD Outdoor
Learning Specialist

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