DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL SKILLS THROUGH NATURE-BASED LEARNING
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Molly Thompson*, @mollllythompson, Program on the Environment, University of Washington
Site Supervisor: Carrie Guess, Wildflowers Preschool
Faculty Advisor: Alexa Schreier, Program on the Environment, University of Washington

Due to the rising popularity and newness of nature-based preschools, it is essential to analyze and the effects of nature-based education. Research has shown outdoor education has many benefits such as improved happiness and decreased stress in children and adults. However, research is lacking on specific benefits such as improved interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are essential for academic and life success due to their necessity for human-to-human communication. My study aims to answer the question: Do preschool aged children show more positive interpersonal behaviors when in an urban outdoor setting vs. an indoor setting? I conducted a 9 week observational study at Wildflowers Preschool. I determined the frequency of both positive and negative interpersonal behaviors in outdoor urban greenspaces vs. the indoor classroom setting through a coded list of interpersonal behaviors in each setting. The behaviors chosen were drawn from a list of categories of positive interpersonal behaviors: active listening, caring, motivation, responsibility, and teamwork. Negative interpersonal behaviors included not displaying active listening or engaging in arguments with peers. The results showed that there was a similar level of positive interpersonal behaviors in both settings but the frequency of negative interpersonal behaviors was lower in the outdoor setting. More specific results include an increased display of empathy and self-expression in the outdoor setting as well as less interpersonal conflicts. This shows evidence that nature-based learning has the potential to have a positive impact on the development of interpersonal skills in preschoolers.