

The View From

Leave No Child Inside

By
Heather
Crawford
on a
'View
from...'
theme

The time is ripe for
a Leave No Child
Inside movement.

Western society is sending an unintended message to children: Nature is the past, electronics are the future and the bogeyman lives in the woods. So says Richard Louv who wrote "Last Child in the Woods". Maybe it is something in the changing of the clocks heralding a change in the seasons but there seems to be a need for a revolution.

This week I have researched a host of articles and publications to support the argument that PE and outdoor education are an essential part of the school curriculum. What is happening to society when schools who once stood for rounded education now add their voice to the Keep Kids Inside campaign? Yes, good exam results are important; yes, a well educated population is the bedrock of the country's economy; yes, technology provides wondrous opportunities. But well rounded young people who can draw upon a range of experiences to help them solve problemsnow there's a thought.



There is nothing, NOTHING quite like

- the feel of grass on bare feet
- watching clouds morph into different shapes across the sky
- standing in rivers and running fingers through the water whilst looking for wriggly things
- smelling new mown grass turning into delicious hay
- watching grasshoppers on a summer's day
- watching swifts and housemartins skud across a summer evening
- picking blackberries from the hedgerows
- learning where to spot the trout
- discovering a bluebell wood
- crawling up close and personal to a herd of deer
- reaching the top of (even a little) a hill
- seeing a dragonfly skim over water
- watching the moon rise

- counting shooting stars whilst bivvying out (even in your back garden)
- feeling the earth on your fingers
- the smell of heather moorland in bloom
- watching bees being busy
- counting the number of different greens in a woodland in summer
- your first taste (and smell) of wild garlic
- the smell of the air after rain
- making daisy chains
- making and using a grass mouth organ
- rolling downhill – in sunshine or snow
- the sight of arching boughs and leaves trailing in mountain tarns
- the first swallow of summer
- knowing where the blackbird builds its nest – and watching it being built
- picnics in dappled shade
- watching the sun rise and set
- catching a ride on tractor and trailer
- watching the wind through a field of ripening wheat
- finding the perfect skimming stone and using it
- the sound of waves crashing on a beach in winter
- building sand castles
- the snuffle of hedgehogs
- climbing trees
- collecting windfalls for pies and chutneys, and making these
- kicking leaves on a perfect autumn day

I had a conversation with a friend who was concerned at the level of health and safety reports within their school. In asking what these were I was astounded – and delighted – to find that the majority were injuries from playing sport. Hallelujah!! At least the students were

...kicking leaves on a perfect autumn day...

...building sand castles...

...the smell of the air after rain...

...rolling downhill in sunshine or snow...

...reaching the top of a hill...



playing sport. Long may it continue, long may twisted ankles and bruised shins and scraped knees exist. Long may young people feel the wind in their hair, the rain on their skin and the feeling of tiredness that comes only from physical exercise. Long may they have pictures in their minds of countless wonders and long may they be able to conjure up the smells of outdoor life. ■

The View From ... continues with a fourth viewpoint in Horizons 37.



*So let's start a revolution.
Leave No Child Inside.*

Author's Notes

Heather is a Training and Development Manager for Fairbridge, a national charity working with inner city 13-25 year olds most at risk. She has worked as a lecturer in outdoor education at both HE and FE levels and also as a practitioner. Her articles focus on how academic models can be used every day by practitioners and also on observations of what is happening within the industry.

Photographs

From the IOL library and the Low Bank Ground Team.