

In Washington, outdoor preschools hold all classes out in the open

By Seattle Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.21.19

Word Count **395**

Level **580L**



Image 1. After a hike through the woods, students stop for lunch while lead teacher Hannah Kinney (left) reads a book to them. Olin Clark-Gamble, 3, (standing) responds to his teacher during the book reading. They are participating in a three-hour outdoor preschool program, Tiny Trees Preschool, at Camp Long in West Seattle, Washington, September 26, 2019. Photo by: Ellen M. Banner/Seattle Times/TNS

SEATTLE, Washington — Jane Theumer is 4 years old. She was learning outside in the rain.

"I feel like my cheeks are cold," she said.

Jane goes to Tiny Trees Preschool in Washington. The class hiked through Camp Long in West Seattle.

Jane forgot about the cold once on the trail. There were so many things to see. She checked out an orange slug and some white mushrooms.

Tiny Trees is one of the state's outdoor early education programs. The classes are all outdoors.

Jane loves Tiny Trees.

Guidelines For Outdoor Learning

Hannah Kinney is Jane's preschool teacher. She used to teach at indoor schools in Michigan. Now she teaches outdoor classes at Tiny Trees.

Outdoor preschools are catching on nationwide.

Washington tested the idea in 2017. It had to develop guidelines for all licensed outdoor preschools. These are rules that the schools have to follow.

There were no licensed outdoor preschools in the United States. That meant they could not offer full-day programs. A full-day program is important for many working families. That is because parents go to work while their children are in school.

That changed recently. A state agency in Washington has been working on new guidelines for outdoor learning. It has slightly different standards than indoor schools.

One is that there must be one teacher for every six kids. So most classes have two or three adults. Other guidelines explain what to do when it rains.

Tracking Kids' Grades And Activities

Washington started to license a few programs this fall. It is the first in the country to do so. Two programs made it through the state's process in September.

Some families are still worried about the idea though.

Amber Fyfe-Johnson's top concern was the weather. She studies health and education at a university in Washington. She is studying early learning based in nature. She wants to show that outdoor time is key for children's growth.

She will partner with Tiny Trees over the next five years. They will track children's activities and grades. They will also study students' weight, health and sleep.



Quiz

1 Which sentence from the article states a MAIN idea of the entire article?

- (A) Now she teaches outdoor classes at Tiny Trees.
- (B) Outdoor preschools are catching on nationwide.
- (C) A state agency in Washington has been working on new guidelines for outdoor learning.
- (D) She wants to show that outdoor time is key for children's growth.

2 Read the following paragraph from the section "Tracking Kids' Grades And Activities."

She will partner with Tiny Trees over the next five years. They will track children's activities and grades. They will also study students' weight, health and sleep.

What is the MAIN idea of this paragraph?

- (A) Amber Fyfe-Johnson thinks that outdoor time is good for children.
- (B) Amber Fyfe-Johnson studies health and education at a university.
- (C) Amber Fyfe-Johnson worries about the weather in outdoor preschools.
- (D) Amber Fyfe-Johnson will be studying outdoor preschools.

3 What does Image 3 show about Tiny Trees?

- (A) what problems the school is starting to have
- (B) what trails the children are hiking on in the forest
- (C) what types of math lessons students are doing
- (D) what one of their outside classes looks like

4 How does Image 1 help the reader to understand outdoor schools?

- (A) by showing that outdoor schools have smaller class sizes
- (B) by showing that outdoor schools are becoming popular
- (C) by showing that outdoor schools do not have licensing
- (D) by showing that outdoor schools are not full-day programs