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‘Getting Children Outdoors again’
- Outdoor Play for children in a rural North West of Ireland setting:
A civic engagement Project

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1. Background

Children’s’ Outdoor play nowadays is the preferred approach to playing indoors which has become a constant focus of influences and powers of technology. Children spend hours on social media sites, isolated playing video games and lost in technologically powered screens (Larson et al, 2011). As a results of this disengagement with outdoors activities, children fall victims to many problems including obesity, social exclusion, and in some cases behavioural issues Fresh air and exercise are probably the two most common benefits associated with outdoor play by parents. However, many other advantages and beneficial of outdoor play including child’s social, cognitive and emotional development (Sluss, 2014).

2. The Project

Outdoor play has always been a keen interest and recently come to light that there is a lack of it occurring in Inishowen region, Co. Donegal. Anecdotal evidence would suggest this is due to parents not fully understanding its importance and benefits to the child. This project proposes the development of an Outdoor Play Manual (OPM) designed and targeted at parents within Inishowen region on the importance of outdoor play and overall child development. This OPM will be delivered and explained to the parents through a number of workshops via established crèches, nurseries and childcare facilities in the region. It is envisaged through parent’s awareness and education via information sessions, they will take cognisance of this as a child health and wellbeing matter and encourage children to get outdoors.

3. Possible Outcomes

It is envisaged that implementation of this project, parents will be more aware of the huge advantages for children which are currently missed opportunities. It is anticipated that today’s generation of children can become a compromise of profile of past generation children that was filled with enthusiasm, fun and interest in exploring the outdoor activities. Upon reflection, the author recalls such days spent outside, not wanting to go back inside because I knew it would be time for bed. Outdoor play is one of the most defining characteristics of many happy childhood memories. It is timely to put an end to the newfound ‘techno child’ and get them outside playing, socialising, being creative, using their imagination and most of all having fun!

References

- Larson, L. R., Green, G. T. & Cordell, H. K. (2011) Children’s time outdoors: results and implications of the national kids survey. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*. 29(2), p:1-20.
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