

CHILDREN, YOUTH



ENVIRONMENTS

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# CHILDREN, YOUTH ENVIRONMENTS



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The *Children, Youth and Environments* journal disseminates knowledge and stimulates discussion in support of inclusive and sustainable environments for children and youth everywhere. *CYE* has a global community and connects the worlds of research, policy and practice. The *CYE* journal is a peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary, online journal, highlighting the physical environments where children and youth live, learn, work and play. The journal values the capacity of children and young people to meaningfully participate in the processes that shape their lives, and publishes papers from distinct viewpoints, varied approaches, and diverse cultures and regions around the world. The journal offers researchers a high-quality, refereed outlet for sharing work pertaining to the physical environments that impact the lives of children and youth around the world. The journal publishes papers in the form of research articles, field reports and book/media reviews ranging from quantitative and qualitative empirical research; theoretical, methodological, and historical investigations; critical literature reviews; design analyses; post-occupancy evaluations; policy studies; and program assessments.

*Children, Youth and Environments* appeared as a print journal from 1984-1995 as *Children's Environments Quarterly* and *Children's Environments*. In 2003, it was revived as an online journal, which now reaches readers in more than 160 countries. Readers and authors include researchers and practitioners in education, childhood studies, geography, sociology, child and youth development, child welfare, child rights advocacy, development studies, architecture, landscape architecture and design, urban design, and planning. *CYE* is endorsed by UN-Habitat and guided by a distinguished Editorial Advisory Board.

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Cover image is from the article *Nurturing Empathy: Exploring Teachers' Insights from Minnesota's Nature Preschools* by Claire Underwood, Julie Ernst and Nathan Meyer

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## Acknowledgement of Reviewers in 2024

As editors of *Children, Youth and Environments*, we count on the informed judgment of our reviewers to make the highest quality research and information available online to scholars and practitioners around the world. In a double-blind review process, a minimum of two experts contribute comments about each paper published in *CYE*. Their advice is essential to determining whether an article is accepted for publication and invaluable to authors when undertaking revisions. We, therefore, take this opportunity to thank all those

who have acted as reviewers for CYE during the last year for your time, energy and commitment to the journal! The following list reflects reviewers of papers in 2024.

— The Editors

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## Call for Submissions

The Children, Youth and Environments Journal is inviting submissions for research articles, field reports, and book/media reviews that contribute to the discourse in the following areas:

- Quantitative and qualitative empirical research
- Theoretical, methodological, and historical investigations
- Critical literature reviews
- Design analyses
- Post-occupancy evaluations
- **Policy studies**
- Program assessments

For more information about submission guidelines and processes, please visit [the CYE submission page](#). For all additional questions, please contact [cynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:cynetwork@gmail.com). We're excited to read your work!

## Call for Field Reports

*Do you have an engaging new project or program you would like to share more widely?  
Would you like to write a report or story about it for CYE?*

CYE offers an opportunity to publish brief (3000 words) [Field Reports](#) about initiatives around environments for children and youth. This call is for researchers, practitioners, policy makers, community leaders and others involved in creating projects or programs with children and youth to share insights about their work.

A field report tells a real-life story about a specific program or project initiative, that links children and youth to a particular setting or environment in a reflective and informative way. It includes contextual information such as location and participants, a rich description of the initiative from the perspective of those involved and concisely situates the initiative within a theoretical framework. The overall aim is to provide our readers with enough information so that they could develop a similar program or project and benefit from your experience and insights.

**Note:** Field Reports are not peer-reviewed in the same manner as articles, but undergo an in-house review by the CYE Associate Editors who manage Field Reports. They will provide helpful feedback and support for Field Report authors through to CYE publication. More information is available here: [CYE Field Report Guidelines](#).

We look forward to hearing from potential Field Report authors in the coming year,

Dr. [Daniela DiGiacomo](#) and Dr. [Sue Elliott](#)  
CYE Associate Editors



## Inside this Issue

Inside this issue, you will find diverse scholarly work that spans across the globe. We first arrive in the midwestern region of the United States where Underwood and coauthors interviewed teachers to explore how nature preschools foster empathy development in young children. By focusing on teachers' experiences, they were able to create a conceptual model highlighting the role of the natural environment, school culture, and teachers in nurturing empathy in children. Next, Jones analyzed participant-created digital stories and interviews about garden programs at U.S. secondary schools to evaluate themes in environment, instruction, assessment, and professional learning. Findings revealed there are common themes like building relationships and student leadership and suggested that stakeholders could benefit from garden-based education resources focused on justice and cultural sustainability. Heading west to Texas, Trina and coauthors studied a nature-based preschool in Texas to test if outdoor environments with appropriate landscape elements encourage STEAM-related behaviors in children aged 3-5. They found that children engage in more STEAM activities in settings with flexible features like sand and water play areas, loose parts, and varied natural topography. Staying in Texas, Guerrero and co-authors conducted an online survey of early childhood educators to explore their views on outdoor play settings and their design features that various forms of play. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data informs practical implications for architects and early childhood centers to design environments that intentionally foster these types of play. Heading back east, Moore and coauthors examined horse camp experiences of historically underserved youth (ages 9-18) through letters written to their assigned horses and interviews with riding instructors. The analyses revealed that the program helped participants develop positive relationship skills such as respect, responsibility, discipline, and social connections, providing valuable opportunities for socio-emotional growth through interactions with horses. Spanning across the United States, Iwinski and coauthors analyzed data from 468 families in a longitudinal birth cohort study and found that early access to green space and outdoor items positively influences children's cognitive development and household environment. They emphasized the importance of promoting green spaces and reducing household chaos to support executive function and well-being, with implications for education and policy.

The issue continues with two reports from the field. First, Derr and coauthors describe a partnership between a land trust, elementary school, and university in California, focused on fostering empathic relationships for children with limited access to nature. Using an action research framework, the partnership co-creates, co-learns, and documents "magical moments" of joy and connection with the land and each other. Next, Reyes and share an initiative in Santa Ana Chiautempan, Mexico, where "play yards" were created to promote free play and recover public space for recreation. The evaluation, based on surveys and field observations, showed the initiative's positive impact on children's holistic development.

We wrap this issue with two book reviews: Thueneman's review of *The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain* by Annie Murphy Paul and Wilson's review of *The Nature of Inclusive Play* by Amy Wagenfeld and Chad Kennedy.

Happy reading!

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