

# Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

Last week, I wrote about Kids on Campus, a summer-enrichment program that provides first- through fourth-graders an opportunity to improve their math, music, science, technology or visual arts skills through hands-on learning activities.



I love the concept of hands-on learning.

I love more when kids learn without realizing it.

An article in the April 26 issue of *The Atlantic* addresses the important learning that children gain when they are engaged in playing outside.

"Give young kids the opportunities to engage in hours of free, unstructured play in the natural world, and they develop just as organically as any other creature," writes Conor Williams. "They learn creativity as they explore and engage with complex ecological systems — and imagining new worlds of their own."

But this need for embracing nature isn't limited to young children.

Adults need to take a page from those who advocate for embracing nature as a classroom.

"Today's kids are growing up at a moment when American childhood — like much of American life — is increasingly indoors and technologically enhanced. Families spend more time indoors and on screens," Williams writes.

Tied to the sedentary lifestyle of today's young people is that while childhood obesity has declined, it is still an American epidemic. More than 12 million U.S. children are obese — that is one of every six children (<https://stateofobesity.org/childhood-obesity-trends/>).

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Aurora, 5, potted a plant for a Mother's Day gift last week. Aurora is in the preschool program at Pickaway-Ross Career & Technology Center. Preschoolers were invited next door to Crouse Chapel for this activity.

What can we do?

We can unplug. We can disconnect. We can model the behavior we want our young people to emulate.

I write this knowing that I, too, need to take a break from technology and enjoy nature. (Especially in Ohio, when it's much too cold for my liking about six months of the year.)

So as summer vacation draws ever so near (yee!), make a vow to disconnect from technology and reconnect with nature, family and fun.

Fall will be here before we know it. So have a great summer!

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