

For Immediate Release

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Sharp Decline in Children's Unstructured Play Time Shown in New Study

Waning could negatively impact growth and development

Delano, Minn. (Sept. 6, 2017) — Over half of parents in a recent poll think that children today have fewer opportunities for play than children 20 years ago. Educators and child development experts agree that play is vital to children's cognitive, social/emotional and physical development and growth. Yet, many parents polled reported their children get one hour or less of unstructured playtime each day: 55 percent of parents with children ages 10 to 12; 42 percent of parents with children ages 3 to 9; and 34 percent of parents with children up to age 3. Almost two-thirds of those polled think the ideal amount of daily play time is between one and two hours.

Parents advocate for play time too, according to a new survey commissioned by Landscape Structures Inc., a Delano, Minn.-based commercial playground equipment manufacturer. Even in today's 24/7 world, more than three-quarters of parents polled agreed that children with adequate free play time grow up to be better contributors to society.

The company surveyed parents of children 12 years and under to understand their attitudes on the value of unstructured play. Topics ranged from important life skills gained on the playground to opportunities for free play.

While they may be stressed and over-scheduled themselves, today's parents recognize the value of free, unstructured time for their children's overall health and well-being. "Modern life takes a toll on children too," said Lynn Pinoniemi, director of marketing at Landscape Structures.

"More kids are being diagnosed with anxiety, depression and obesity—and many live with disabilities," she said. "But giving kids the freedom to play—to gain confidence through mastery and self-discovery—can really nurture small psyches and instill lifelong skills."

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When asked about important life skills, parents surveyed considered play and creativity of similar importance to academics and critical thinking. Most mothers (92 percent) rated play and creativity as moderately or very important, compared to 84 percent of fathers.

Persistence was considered a top skill for children of all ages to learn. Creativity was more likely to be chosen for younger children, while leadership was likeliest for older children. Parents reported that sharing, imagination and creativity were the skills most often exhibited by their own children on the playground.

A recent meta-study conducted by the University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development and commissioned by Landscape Structures, titled "Shaped by Play: The Formative Role of Play and Playgrounds," confirms our culture's growing infringement on children's play opportunities.

According to the study, a long list of daily distractions competes for children's free time: hectic family lifestyles, organized activities, T.V. and electronic devices, and academically packed school schedules that cut into recess. In Minneapolis, limited recess time even sparked a public petition to the school board this spring.

The survey and meta-study are part of Landscape Structures' Shaped by Play campaign, which includes an inspirational video: For a Better Tomorrow, We Play Today. A copy of the full research whitepaper is available for download at shapedbyplay.com.

The survey was commissioned by Landscape Structures and conducted by ORC International. It took place in June 2017 and consisted of 1,000 U.S. parents who have children ages 12 years and under.

About Landscape Structures Inc.

Since 1971, Landscape Structures Inc. has been the leading manufacturer of commercial playground equipment in the world. The employee-owned company designs community and school playgrounds that encourage kids of all ages and abilities to learn persistence, leadership, competition, bravery, support and empathy through play. Landscape Structures pushes the limits—of design, inclusion, play—to help kids realize there is no limit to what they can do today and in the future. For a better tomorrow, we play today.