

4th Parents' Newsletter – March 2025

Subject: *“The Importance of Outdoor Spaces for Children’s Social Interaction and Resilience”*

Dear parents and caregivers,

March brings springtime. The days grow longer, the weather becomes milder, and nature around us begins to awaken. Along with it, *our children’s need for freedom, exploration, communication, and play also awakens.*

This month, and in the months to come, I invite you to offer your children opportunities *to express themselves, connect with others, and feel empowered* — through the most natural way they know: by playing outdoors!

Even small outdoor spaces become places of learning, social interaction and personal growth. It doesn’t need to be complicated. A few minutes a day in a pedestrian area, a park or a playground is enough to help children strengthen life skills such as:

- Communicating more naturally with peers.
- Learning to cooperate, wait their turn, and negotiate.
- Creating new friendships and relationships through shared play.
- Releasing energy, reducing stress, and managing emotions.
- Building confidence and resilience through small everyday challenges.

What might seem like “just play” is, in fact, a deep *psychosocial and educational experience* — and it’s completely natural and free.

Below, I offer simple, practical suggestions - but don’t limit yourselves only to these:

- Instead of drawing at home, your child can illustrate a story from the class lending library on a picnic blanket or a park bench.
- Instead of reading indoors, enjoy a story together under a tree (perhaps with a friend, too).
- Instead of singing in the room, sing together while walking down a pedestrian path.
- Instead of role-playing in the living room, let their imagination run free in the sun — maybe with 2–3 friends.

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Take advantage of and enjoy meaningful opportunities for learning and social-emotional growth by playing outdoors:

- Group games.
- Running games, hide and seek, playing with shadows and chalk, balloons or balls.
- Nature hunts: “Find something that smells nice”, “Find 3 yellow things”, “Listen to the birds”.
- “Guide and blindfold” — one child closes their eyes, the other gently guides them (a trust-building game, especially for the older children).
- Reflective talk: “What makes you smile when you’re outside?”

In Kypseli and Galatsi, where most of our pupils live, there are many opportunities for these experiences:

Playgrounds, Squares, Pedestrian Areas

Parks, Small Wooded Areas and Green Spots

Explore familiar or new places nearby or a little further out — as long as they are *safe and offer space for expression, connection and joy*. You can also search for nearby public spaces through the websites of the municipalities:

1. cityofathens.gr/thema/paidi
2. galatsi.gov.gr/building

In the coming months, I suggest you try to go to an outdoor space with your child at least once or twice a week.

- Invite a friend to join - observe how they interact.
- Bring along a book, paper, crayons/colours, a ball, or simply... your imagination

Connection, regulation, friendship, confidence, and joy... are born on a bench, under a tree, with another child beside them!

Nature doesn’t just offer activities. It provides real opportunities. It invites us to relate, express, grow and connect. And your child – with a friend beside them and you calmly nearby – can flourish right where they are.

Finally, for a child to play freely and with joy, they must first feel safe – not only physically, but also emotionally. When adults are present with care, and the environment is clean, secure, and clearly defined, children dare to

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explore, communicate, and challenge themselves without risk. In outdoor spaces, they gradually learn to manage sensory input, respect the environment and others, adapt, and coexist harmoniously. Outdoor play is about joy and a life lesson grounded in values such as care, patience, and respect.

With respect and ongoing presence,

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