

# More risks on school playgrounds linked to happier children

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(HealthDay)—Children from schools with greater risk and challenge in

the playground environment report being happier at school and playing with more children, according to a study published online April 24 in *Pediatrics*.

Victoria L. Farmer, Ph.D., from the University of Otago in New Zealand, and colleagues conducted a two-year cluster-randomized controlled trial in which eight control schools were asked to not change their play environment, while eight intervention schools increased opportunities for risk and challenge (e.g., rough-and-tumble play), reduced rules, and added loose parts (e.g., tires). At baseline, one year, and two years, 840 children, 635 parents, and 90 teachers completed bullying questionnaires.

The researchers found that intervention children reported higher odds of being happy at school (at two years, odds ratio [OR], 1.64) and playing with more children (at one year, OR, 1.66) than control children. While intervention children reported they were pushed/shoved more (OR, 1.33), they were less likely to tell a [teacher](#) (OR, 0.69) at two-year follow-up. There were no significant group differences in parents reporting whether children had "ever" been bullied at [school](#) (one year,  $P = 0.23$ ; two years,  $P = 0.07$ ). Teachers at intervention schools noticed more bullying at one year ( $P = 0.009$ ), but there was no corresponding increase in children reporting bullying to teachers (both time points,  $P \geq 0.26$ ).

"Few negative outcomes were reported by [children](#) or parents, except for greater pushing/shoving in [intervention](#) schools. Whether this indicates increased resilience as indicated by lower reporting of bullying to teachers may be an unanticipated benefit," write the authors.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)  
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