Why schools need to champion outdoor play (and learning) for the sake of the planet, the health of our children and because it’s plain common sense.

Cath Prisk
Director, Outdoor People
Global Partnerships Director, Outdoor Classroom Day
‘HAPPY HEARTS AND HAPPY FACES
HAPPY PLAY IN GRASSY PLACES –
THAT WAS HOW, IN ANCIENT AGES,
CHILDREN GREW TO KINGS AND SAGES.’

Robert Louis Stevenson, A Child’s Garden of Verses, 1888
MUDDY HANDS, HAPPY FACES…. WHY PLAY AND LEARNING OUTDOORS

1) Outdoor play, playful learning and learning outdoors....
2) Outdoor Classroom Day – a global campaign
3) The state of outdoor play and outdoor learning worldwide
   – Why is play and learning important at school?
   – What stops children getting outdoors?
4) Why schools are key influencers
5) Impact of Outdoor Classroom Day so far....
“THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR, COMPPELLING AND ROBUST.

PLAY IS NOT JUST A ‘NICE TO HAVE’.

IT IS NOT A ‘A SHAME’ CHILDREN DON’T PLAY OUTDOORS AS MUCH AS THEY USED TO.

IT’S A TICKING TIME BOMB.”

#MUDDYHANDS
CHILDREN SPEND LESS TIME OUTDOORS THAN PRISONERS....

'Dirt is Good' is the core ‘purpose’ of our funder, Persil, and this statistic encouraged them to invest in taking the campaign global from 2016.
OUTDOOR PLAY, PLAYFUL LEARNING AND LEARNING OUTDOORS....
GETTING OUTDOORS AT SCHOOL...

Outdoor learning refers to any adult-directed lessons that are held outdoors.

Play is directed by the child, is not constrained or directed by the adult and is a process engaged in for its own purpose.

Playful learning is learning directed by an adult, but where the child controls their own engagement – the intention is that it should be fun, playful and experiential.

Outward Bound is training and adult supported adventurous activities outdoors usually offsite, and usually a dedicated residential stay rather than weekly.

Forest school is a pedagogy that started in Europe and can be summarised as a play-based, child-led and playful way of enabling a learning experience outdoors, usually for children between 2 and 6 years-old.

Playtime refers to all break times throughout the school day.
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY
A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN
WHY TARGET SCHOOLS?

That’s where the children are!

90% of all children worldwide are in school...

Unicef
Outdoor Classroom Day

is a global campaign...

Celebrating outdoor learning and play at school.

Inspiring schools everywhere to make outdoor learning and play part of every school day.

Reaching parents, communities and policy makers worldwide, to make real play part of every single day.
Outdoor learning is part of every school day for every child

Every child has great recess/playtime at school every day for at least 60 minutes, with the longer-term aim of 90 minutes

Schools act as advocates for more time outdoors, so that outdoor play becomes part of every child’s everyday life.

#OutdoorClassroomDay
#MuddyHands
OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY – A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Since 2012

> 130 countries

> 50,000 Schools

> 3 million Adult volunteers

> 6 million Children

> 18 million hours outdoors...
25% of all the schools across Scotland signed up to say they believe in outdoor learning and play in 2018.
30% of Australian schools joined in 2018
ALMOST 500,000 CHILDREN FROM NORTH AMERICA
OVER 500,000 CHILDREN FROM TURKEY...
AND ALMOST 1 MILLION CHILDREN FROM ACROSS INDONESIA
IMPACT OF OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY SO FAR....
WHY DOES THIS CAMPAIGN WORK?

• Getting involved in Outdoor Classroom Day is a non-threatening introduction to the power of outdoor learning and – importantly – the importance of playtime

• It introduces schools to experts (like Scotland’s own Juliet Robertson who wrote the campaign’s guide to outdoor learning), so they know how to get started

• It builds COMMUNITY

• But most of all it makes it a NORMAL part of every day, simply common sense

#MUDDYHANDS
#OUTDOORCLASSROOMDAY
GROWING EXPONENTIALLY

2016
51 Countries
3,354 Schools
481,261 Children
? adults

2018
113 Countries
28,681 Schools
3,538,338 Children
10,349 Parents

Number of Schools

2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018
SCHOOLS LOVE IT... AND SO DO CHILDREN!

“We loved this initiative and now are planning all activities keeping in mind the need to go outdoors. We understand that lessons conducted outdoors provide children with opportunities to learn in ways that may not be possible in a traditional indoor classroom.”

Dubai

“This was a great way to get me thinking about getting them outside. It was almost like having permission to make it happen because it was a global event, which administrators and others can get behind!”

USA

“Sometimes parents complain about the dirty clothes. Some teachers think it is a waste of time. The Kids love it.”

- Teacher from school in Brazil
‘At first, parents here did not appear to understand and appreciate the value in outdoor learning.

However, once they began to see changes in their children such as eating and sleeping better, eager to get to school and sharing stories of the day’s events, parents were on board.’

Teacher from Australia
Since getting involved in Outdoor Classroom Day...

44% of schools told us they increased outdoor learning

#MuddyHands

Source: Muddy Hands Report 2019
Since getting involved in Outdoor Classroom Day...

22% of schools told us they increased playtime!

#MuddyHands

Source: Muddy Hands Report 2019
44% INCREASED OUTDOOR LEARNING

44% worldwide increase in Outdoor Learning since getting involved in Outdoor Classroom Day

This can offer an easy entry point...
22% increased outdoor play world wide since getting involved in outdoor classroom day...

Early indications suggest this is increasing in 2018
THE STATE OF PLAY AND OUTDOOR LEARNING AROUND THE WORLD
(OR WHY OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY IS IMPORTANT...)
FREQUENCY OF LEARNING OUTDOORS

**Frequency of Outdoor Learning (all schools)**

- **UK - Scotland**: 6%
- **India**: 10%
- **Brasil**: 13%
- **England**: 13%
- **Indonesia**: 14%
- **Australia**: 15%
- **Canada**: 16%
- **ALL SCHOOLS**: 17%
- **Colombia**: 25%
- **USA**: 30%

- Less than once a month
- About once a month
- More than once a week
- Every Day
FREQUENCY OF PLAYTIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Over 60 Mins Playtime</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALL SCHOOLS</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Graph Description:

- **Australia**: 64% of students play for more than 60 minutes.
- **England**: 44% of students play for more than 60 minutes.
- **Canada**: 39% of students play for more than 60 minutes.
- **ALL SCHOOLS**: 39% of students play for more than 60 minutes.
- **Scotland**: 29% of students play for more than 60 minutes.
- **USA**: 18% of students play for more than 60 minutes.

Legend:
- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to an hour
- 60 to 90 minutes
- Over 90 minutes
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE YOUR PUPILS OUTSIDE MORE OFTEN?

4 out of 5 teachers worldwide want to take pupils outside more often.
WHY IS PLAY AND LEARNING IMPORTANT AT SCHOOL AND BEYOND?
'97% of teachers worldwide believe that time to play outdoors throughout the school day is critical for children to reach their full potential.'

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
Parents believe play influences children’s development

- Creative thinking and expression of ideas: 92%
- Social skills and empathy for others: 91%
- Fine motor skills and coordination: 90%
- Problem solving skills: 90%
- Sharing and taking turns: 90%
- Strength and Endurance: 88%
- Memory and concentration: 89%

Q12. On the scale below, please indicate how much influence you believe play has on developing the following areas for children (Net strong influencer: 7,8,9,10 on a 10 point scale) Total base: 12,170
Q14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Q20. Which of the following skills do you think it is important for your child to learn? Total base: 12,170

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<td>USA</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>87%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

But many parents believe their children don’t get to play as much as they should.
CONNECTING TO PLACE AND ENVIRONMENT
‘86% of teachers worldwide say that playing outdoors gives children a better understanding of the environment.’

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
‘No-one will protect what they don’t care about and no-one will care about what they have never experienced

David Attenborough
'Playing outdoors builds an appreciation for the natural environment – from head to heart to hand (learning, appreciating and taking action for conservation).'

Teacher in South Africa, Muddy Hands report

#OutdoorClassroomDay
TYPES OF INTERVENTION AND LONG TERM IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR

- Physical activity
- Concern for the environment
- Mental health
- Sense of place
- Connected to nature
- Social skills
- Scientific knowledge

Tim Gill, Sowing the Seeds, 2011
AFTER BEING OUTDOORS CHILDREN HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENVIRONMENT

“I think that all skills can be acquired from playing outdoors, but certainly environmental understanding can only truly come from being in it!”

(Teacher in Canada)

“Students learn to love and respect their surroundings as well as each other.”

(Teacher in India)
IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES
‘Play is fundamentally important for learning 21st century skills, such as problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity, which require the executive functioning skills that are critical for adult success.’


#MuddyHands
#OutdoorClassroomDay
We don’t grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it.’

Sir Ken Robinson
KEY SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH PLAYING OUTDOORS

- Social skills: 100%
- Improved fine motor and gross motor skills: 90%
- Ability to focus on a task: 60%
- Imagination and creativity: 80%
CAPABILITIES IMPROVED AFTER PLAYING OUTDOORS

- Behaviour: 60%
- Ability to concentrate: 70%
- Engagement in learning: 80%
- Happiness: 90%
CAPABILITIES IMPROVED WHEN LEARNING OUTDOORS

“Our children frequently ask to work anywhere but the classroom as this provides space and independence for them to flourish.”

(Teacher in the UK)
‘94% of teachers worldwide say that children develop imagination and creativity from playing outdoors’

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
'88% of teachers worldwide say that children are more engaged in learning when taking part in lessons outdoors.'

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
All the schools involved in the trial (increasing playtimes length and frequency) have, so far, reported:

- improved on-task behaviour,
- better attention to task,
- less fidgeting and
- improved focus among children, when compared to children of a similar age and background not involved in the programme.

D. Rhea, Liink Project, Texas.
PHYSICAL HEALTH
'Letting children go out to play is one of the best things that parents can do for their children’s health: outdoor play uses more calories than clubs and tuition.'


#OutdoorClassroomDay
‘Research shows that even subjects that might seem to have little to do with the outdoors, such as literature or dance, can benefit from being taken outdoors.’

(Waite et al. 2016)

#OutdoorClassroomDay
Outdoor play gets kids more active

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
MENTAL HEALTH
WHAT IS GOING WRONG?

Percentage of parents reporting that their children are allowed to travel home from school alone 1971 – 2010.

Source: Children’s Independent Mobility Report, Policy Studies Institute
'When taking part in lessons outdoors we see increased attendance and mood towards friends'

Teacher in Philippines, Muddy Hands report

#OutdoorClassroomDay
‘A child with selective mutism (where a child doesn’t speak to people other than close family), started to relax outside (over 6 months period) and then actually spoke to her friends at outside time.

Over time she did this at inside time too.’

(Teacher in Australia)
“When we get into the woods, please can I go and sit somewhere by myself for five minutes?”

“Of course. Why would you like to do that?”

“Because this is the only time I get some peace and quiet.”

(Child F, Y2) in McCree, Cutting, Sherwin, (2018) p151
Time spent outdoors boosts mental health.

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
TO BE HAPPY!
HAPPINESS INCREASED OUTDOORS

Happiness increased whilst learning outdoors
Happiness increased after playing outside
'88% of teachers worldwide say that children are happier after playing outdoors.'

Muddy Hands Report, 2018

#OutdoorClassroomDay
'The teachers are happier as well. When you get outside of your classroom and breathe fresh air it takes a bit of the everyday stress of being cooped up all day away.'

(Teacher in the US)
WHAT IS STOPPING CHILDREN GETTING OUTDOORS?
WHAT STOPS OUTDOOR PLAY?

- Poor behaviour in class
- Poor behaviour during the break
- Finishing classwork or homework
- Catch-up lessons (reading/literacy/maths)
WHAT STOPS OUTDOOR LEARNING?

- Parents’ perception that learning outside is not time well spent
- More difficult to moderate children’s behaviour outdoors
- Health and safety fears
- Pressures caused by curriculum work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>All Schools</th>
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<td>All Schools</td>
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</table>
WHAT STOPS YOU GETTING OUTDOORS?

‘I just don’t remember to step out of the classroom when we are working our way through the standards. I should go out more!’ (Teacher in the US)

‘The children love it, they really enjoy being outdoors and take in so much. The parents are very supportive and the feedback is good. The teachers tend to shy away from outdoor activities as they can be hard to organise and children are so excited to finally be outside it may not always go to plan. This combined with the added workload pressure in class often means it’s easier to work indoors.’ (Teacher in the UK)

‘For the most part, nothing keeps our children indoors...[although] at least once a week [we] have to provide clothing to allow them to partake in outdoor activities in rainy or cooler weather.’ (Teacher in Canada)

‘Nothing keeps us indoors!’ (Teacher in Wales)
THE WEATHER STOPS US GOING OUTDOORS

Weather stops outdoor play
Weather stops lessons outdoors
‘We are not allowed to take the children out when the temperature is -20°C or colder.’ (Teacher in Canada)

‘Note our weather restrictions are tornados, frost bite and hail so large it can cause concussion.’ (Teacher in Canada)

‘Only the heat in India. During summers it’s not practical to take them outdoors.’ (Teacher in India)

‘Cannot go out if temps are below 28F (-2C).’ (Teacher in the US)
WHAT STOPS YOU GETTING OUTDOORS?

‘Sometimes the children get harassed by vervet monkeys who steal food out their hands and chase them threatening to bite them. On these days we have to play inside and close all the doors and windows because the monkeys will come inside if they find a way in.’

(Teacher in South Africa)

‘Snakes’ (Teacher in Australia)
'If we could spend the whole day outside every day we would!'

(Teacher in Australia)

“We usually ignore wet playtime and put our waterproofs on and get outside. I give up my break time to supervise this. Midges can be pretty brutal at times, however we still go outside”

(Teacher in Scotland)
WHAT STOPS YOU GETTING OUTDOORS?

• Media – Deep pervading belief that children SHOULDN’T be outdoors
• Fear of strangers
• Traffic
• Pressure of curricula
• Lack of training
• Parental pressure
• Dangerous environment
• Air pollution
• Pressure from administrators and policy makers
SCHOOLS AS KEY INFLUENCERS
“School isn't supposed to be a polite form of incarceration, but a portal to the wider world.”

– Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder

Illustration © Rob Shepperson http://robshepperson.blogspot.com
Conclusion....
“Treating today’s kids as physically and emotionally fragile is bad for their future, and our country’s. With an unpredictable and rapidly changing economy ahead, kids need to be flexible, creative problem-solvers. They can’t solve their problems if adults are always right there, solving them first!”

Lenore Skenazy & Peter Grey
Let Grow
INCONSISTENCY OF TIME OUTDOORS ACROSS SCOTTISH SCHOOLS

**Frequency of Outdoor Learning**

- **Less than once a month**: 10%
- **About once a month**: 5%
- **More than once a week**: 40%
- **Every Day**: 45%

**Length of Playtime**

- **Less than 30 minutes**: 10%
- **30 minutes to an hour**: 60%
- **60 to 90 minutes**: 20%
- **Over 90 minutes**: 10%

*Note: sample size is small, n=28, but distribution curve similar across all schools*
“If we want happy children, they need to play outdoors. We have to make playing outdoors every day routine again. By supporting Outdoor Classroom Day and by supporting the goal that playtime at school should be at least 60 minutes long, the Scottish Government can send the message that it believes that outdoor play is important, not just at school but every day.”

*Ruth Maguire, Minister for the Scottish Parliament*  
#MuddyHands #OutdoorClassroomDay
“Many of us now believe that the future will belong to the nature smart – those young people with hybrid minds, who become leaders by developing both ways of knowing the world, the virtual and the natural.

Each school that participates in Outdoor Classroom Day will help young people take a step into that future.

And then another.”

Richard Louv, Muddy Hands Report 2018
Thank you

Contact

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https://outdoorclassroomday.com/

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