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ISGA’s 2015 International School Grounds Month committee members included:
  DC School Garden Program, USA
  Green Schoolyards America, USA
  Play Learning Life, England

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  Children in Nature Collaborative, USA
  Education Outside, USA
  Environment Design Institute, Japan
  Green Schoolyards America, USA
  Learnscapes Planning and Design, Australia
  Play Learning Life, England

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The non-profit INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL GROUNDS ALLIANCE (ISGA) is a global network of organizations working to enrich children’s learning and play through improving the way school grounds are designed and used. The wellbeing of children and the ecological diversity of their learning landscapes are intrinsically linked. The ISGA aims to support all schools in making the most of the opportunities excellent school grounds afford.

We invite like minded organizations and professionals to become ISGA members and collaborate to nurture and grow this international movement. To join ISGA, please visit our website:

www.internationalschoolgrounds.org
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WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL GROUNDS MONTH?
In May each year, the International School Grounds Alliance calls on schools around the globe to take their pupils outside to celebrate their grounds. It’s as simple as that. We believe school grounds are very important to children and shape their experience of the world around them. If you agree with us, we hope you will take some time in May—an hour, a day, even a week or several different times during the month—to go outside into your grounds with your students to engage in learning, play or other activities.

HOW CAN YOUR SCHOOL PARTICIPATE?
There is no right or wrong way to take part. You could take academic lessons into your grounds, promote outdoor recreation, or invite parents to the school to watch a play outdoors—whatever works best for your school.

This booklet includes ideas and activities we have gathered for you from around the world. We hope they will inspire you and help you get started dreaming up outdoor activities for your own school. Please make sure to check our website for new activities each year, and download our most recent version of the Activity Guide.

NEXT STEPS
We hope you will celebrate this special month using the ideas in this booklet or other activities you create yourself. After you have participated in International School Grounds Month, please share your adventures with us by taking the time to register with us! We are very interested in hearing from you. Your participation and reporting of your activities will help us spread the word to other schools, governments and organizations who might be able to help promote and support school grounds around the world in the future.

Please register your school and your International School Grounds Month activities by following the directions in the blue box to the right.

REGISTER YOUR SCHOOL
Please tell us about your celebration of International School Grounds Month by emailing us the following information:
• Contact name and email address
• Name of your school
• Age range and number of students who participated
• Your location: City/State/Province/Country
• School or project website (if you have one)
• A brief description of how you celebrated International School Grounds Month (100-400 words)
• Photograph(s) showing your activity or activities in progress. Please confirm that you have permission to use these images and indicate whether we can use them online on our website and in print to describe this event.

Please send this information to:
• sharon@internationalschoolgrounds.org
• mary@internationalschoolgrounds.org

In the months following the event, we will share many of the activity reports we receive by posting them on the ISGA website’s blog. We can’t wait to hear about your work and hope you enjoy the celebration!
CREATE AND FLY
CARP STREAMERS
ON YOUR GROUNDS

AGES
4-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Environment Design Institute
Tokyo, Japan
www.ms-edi.co.jp/youho/htdocs/

May is the season of flying carp streamers (wind socks) and includes Children’s Day in Japan. Let’s encourage schools to fly carp streamers on their grounds, and to make them with children. When the carp streamers are finished, encourage the children to draw pictures of their school grounds with flying carp streamers.

MATERIALS
• Pieces of cloth to create the fish-shaped wind socks
• Acrylic paint to decorate the fish (You can make the carps’ scales using children’s handprints!)
• Needle and thread to sew the fish-shaped wind socks
• Some rope and wire to hang up the completed fish

MORE INFORMATION
homepage3.nifty.com/omura/shugei/koi-nobori/koi-nobori-1.htm
www.dee-okinawa.com/topics/2011/04/koinobori.html
MOSAIC PICTURES WITH NATURAL MATERIALS

AGES

4-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Green Schoolyards America
Berkeley, California, USA
www.greenschoolyardsamerica.org

Many children enjoy engaging in creative art projects in their free time. In this activity, children create temporary, artful, “mosaic” compositions by assembling natural materials they find on their school grounds or using other materials provided by school staff. Children may create this type of art at recess or during an art class with their teacher.

MATERIALS

• Many different types of natural materials may be used for this activity including: sticks, stones, gravel, flowers, leaves, pinecones and seeds. Some of these materials may be found onsite and others may be acquired from local homes or parks (with permission) or purchased inexpensively at local garden stores.

DIRECTIONS

• Allow children to gather natural materials from the school grounds, if possible. If the school has a garden or other plantings that are pruned regularly, save the most interesting trimmings for use in this activity. If the school has abundant vegetation, it’s nice to allow children to pick some fresh flowers and leaves just before they begin their work, for added color and variety.

• Encourage children to create their own pictures by arranging the materials they have on hand on the ground in abstract or representative forms, as they like.

• When recess or class time is over, the compositions may be cleaned up and the materials returned to their prior locations.

• For schools without access to natural materials onsite, it’s often helpful to put special natural materials (such as bags of purchased, colored stones), into a basket or cart that may be brought outside at recess on a regular basis.

VARIATIONS

• For younger children studying numbers: Ask each child to create a picture using a fixed number of elements. For example, create a composition using 100 leaves.

• Some schools set aside a permanent “art area” in their schoolyard to facilitate outdoor art activities. Having a dedicated, outdoor art space also allows children to work on larger scale compositions and to leave them in place for a short time. These dedicated art areas can also include permanent storage bins for a wide variety of natural materials. Some teachers like to encourage students to try creating work inspired by artist Andy Goldsworthy and other nature artists.
WEAVING WITH PLANT MATERIALS

AGES
4-12 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Ayesha Ercelawn, La Scuola
San Francisco, California, USA
www.lascuolasf.org

A beautiful variety of plant materials can be used for weaving outdoors. This activity can range from simple to complex depending on the children’s age and prior experience with weaving. You can create a simple cardboard loom for individual projects, construct a large wooden loom for group projects, or weave a beautiful fence using sticks pushed into the dirt. For plant weaving materials, the primary criteria is flexibility.

MATERIALS
• Wooden or cardboard loom
• Yarn, scissors and small plant clippers
• Strong twigs and a variety of flexible plant materials

DIRECTIONS FOR A SIMPLE CARDBOARD LOOM
• Use any strong piece of cardboard. For individual weavings that can be finished in one sitting, use pieces approximately 8”x11” (20 x 28 cm) each.
• Cut short 1” (2 cm) slits in the cardboard, about ½”-1” (1-2 cm) apart. Do this on both ends of the cardboard, making sure the slits line up with each other vertically.
• Use your yarn to warp the loom on one side. On the back, you will make a loop from one slit to the next to come back to the front. Leave a long piece of yarn at the start and at the end (start and finish at the top of the loom).
• Let children experiment with a variety of materials. Make sure each row/weft they weave is pushed up close to the previous one.
• There are several ways to finish the weaving. The easiest is to just leave the weaving on the cardboard loom. But if you want to take it off, gently slide yarn loops off the top and bottom and weave the yarn and leaf ends into the back side. Or you can add a twig on the top and bottom, by weaving them in, to create a hanging.
ARTIST’S VIEW OF THE SCHOOL GROUND

AGES
6 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY
Evergreen
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
www.evergreen.ca

This activity enables students to examine natural materials that are most often overlooked on our sidewalks, pathways and natural landscapes, and view them as artists. The activity works well for creating abstract pieces, where the colour, lines and form become the focus of the artwork.

MATERIALS
- Clear acetate sheets – one per student
- Permanent markers – one per student
- Acrylic paints in a variety of colours
- Paint brushes
- Old Tupperware or kitchen containers to use for water and mixing paints
- Paper towels for clean-up

DIRECTIONS
- Lay an acetate sheet on a patch of the ground. Have students observe interesting shapes, lines and colours.
- Students will then trace the outline of the details visible under their acetate. (e.g. cracks on the pavement, lines on leaves, twigs, etc.)
- Once the students have finished tracing, ask students to add colour to their artwork by applying paint with fine brushes. If you don’t wish to use paint, oil pastel also works.
- Once the paint is dry, flip the acetate over, so that the paint and marker are on the back (and there is nothing that can be smudged on the front).

ENRICHMENT AND EXTENSION ACTIVITIES
- You can make a black construction paper frame, or mount the artwork on a piece of white paper.
- You may wish to display the artworks individually or to attach the sheets together to form an abstract or “stained glass” quilt that represents the collective class perspective of the school grounds.
- To explore colour in more detail, you may wish to assign students to use a monochromatic colour scheme, work with contrasting colours, or explore how to use colour intensity to emphasize something in their artwork.
- Another approach is to have students look at their tracing and use their imagination to turn their lines into representations of something concrete (be it an object or an animal). What do they see? The children’s book Beautiful Oops provides a great introduction to this approach.
- To practice writing skills, have students write poetry to describe the school grounds. If you mount the acetate artworks on large pieces of paper with a wide border, students can express their view of the school grounds using words around the frame.

References: This activity was adapted from lesson plans by Julie Frost and Dorie Preston and inspired by Hilary Inwood, Instructor, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto.
IN A BOX

AGES
6-11 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Play Learning Life
Winchester, Hampshire, England
www.playlearninglife.org.uk

“In a Box” is a way of getting creative within your school grounds using cardboard boxes. Children choose a box to place somewhere in their school grounds and create a scene inside using things they find around them. These can be stand-alone art works or they can be structures as scenes that tell a story.

MATERIALS
• A selection of boxes of different shapes and sizes (one box per group of kids)
• Natural materials found on school grounds
• Art supplies like scissors and markers

DIRECTIONS
• Each artist or group is to make a picture within their box using materials found in the school grounds. This helps to frame the picture and challenges them to find items that fit within a small space.
• You can let pupils create any picture they like, set a theme or make each box a scene within a sequence. For example, this could be specified scenes within a known story or could be the starting point for creative writing. To illustrate a story, each box becomes a scene and the pupils write a narrative that progresses from one box to the next as they walk around the grounds.
• Students can also take photographs of the images in the boxes and save the stories written about them, to display in the classroom or on the school’s website.
MAKE YOUR OWN VINE CHARCOAL (GÖRA RITKOL)

AGES
6-18 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Naturskolan i Lund
Lund, Sweden
www.lund.se

Viné charcoal is a lovely, expressive art material that is very useful for sketching and drawing—and can be created from supplies you find on your own school ground. Below are two different methods for creating your own vine charcoal.

METHOD #1: FOR MANY PIECES AT ONCE

MATERIALS
• Sticks from hazel or lime trees - Sticks should be straight and as thick as your finger. It’s often easy find sticks during springtime when the trees near schools are pruned back. If you want, you can keep them for use later on. You can probably use sticks of other wood as well. Try what you find near your school!
  • Tin can (e.g. bean or tomato tin)
  • Tinfoil to cover the tin
  • Dry sand (use sand from the sand pit in your school ground)
  • Saw, knife or a pair of pruning shears to cut the sticks into the lengths you want
  • Firewood and a good place to make the fire

DIRECTIONS
Cut the sticks to the same length as the height of the tin. Pour the sand into the tin, nearly all the way up to the brim. Drive the sticks firmly into the sand. Make sure that the sticks are evenly spaced. Cover the tin with a few layers of tinfoil, so the covering gets nice and thick. Put the tin into the fire and let it stay there for 30-45 minutes. Allow the tin to cool down a little before emptying. And now you have your vine charcoal!

METHOD #2: FASTER METHOD

MATERIALS
• Sticks from hazel or lime trees, straight and as thick as your finger.
• Tinfoil
• Awl
• Firewood and a good place to make the fire

DIRECTIONS
Wrap a stick, approximately 5 cm (2”) long, entirely in the tinfoil. Make sure the tinfoil covers the stick completely. Use the awl to make a hole through the tin foil and into the stick. This will become the chimney for the stick. Put the stick into the fire and wait for 10-15 minutes. The time the stick needs to be in the fire depends on the stick’s thickness, if the stick is fresh or dry, and the fire’s temperature. Watch out for smoke from the ”chimney”. In most cases some smoke (steam) can be observed. When it stops, pull the stick out of the fire and carefully open the tinfoil to check if the vine charcoal is ready. If not, just wrap it up again and put it back into the fire. Don’t let the stick stay too long in the glow as it will become very brittle and may fall into small useless pieces. A perfect piece of vine charcoal will be uniformly black, but holds together well enough to be a sturdy drawing tool.
ART ON THE FENCE

Most schools have a UCLF—“unattractive chain link fence”. Turn the fence into an outdoor art gallery by using the fence as a background. The artwork takes your eyes away from the fence and creates an effective backdrop for student creativity. The beauty of this art gallery is that the displays can be easily changed, allowing for themed exhibits or grade level specific shows.

MATERIALS

• 1/2” or 3/4” (1-2 cm) thick plywood, enough for a whole class to create their drawings
• Wood primer suitable for painting the outside of a house, to paint on all sides of each piece of wood
• Paints that can be covered with a waterproof sealer, along with a variety of brushes
• Drop cloths and rags to catch and clean up paint drips
• Clear, weatherproof, outdoor sealer to apply over the children’s paintings
• Wire and wire cutters for attaching plywood to the fence
• Drill, for putting holes in plywood, to attach the paintings to the fence

SUGGESTED THEMES

• Flower garden—Have each child draw a flower.
• Wildlife habitat—Ask each child to depict an animal, insect or plant that occurs in your local area.
• Local or state history—Have each child depict a person, place or event that has historical significance.
• Literature focus—Ask each child depict a person, place or event that is related to a piece of literature.

DIRECTIONS

• Teacher cuts plywood into the sizes to be placed on the fence. Have a piece for each child.
• Teacher primes the wood on all sides.
• Ask the class to decide on a theme for the artwork.
• Have paints, brushes, drop cloths and rags available as the painting process begins.
• Teacher applies the waterproof sealer to the artwork.
• Teacher drills holes and uses wire to attach the artwork to the fence.

TIPS

• Limit the children’s color palette to a small number of colors to help the group of paintings have greater, collective visual impact.
• Be sure to include all artwork. This should not be a “best work” show.
• Change the display several times during the year and involve a variety of grade levels.

CONTRIBUTED BY

Herb Broda
Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio, USA
movingtheclassroomoutdoors.com

AGES

7-12 years old

Ford Elementary School near Atlanta, Georgia, USA placed student artwork on their fence to create a unique outdoor gallery.
THE FINE ART OF FLOWER POUNDING

AGES
7-17 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Life Lab
Santa Cruz, California, USA
www.lifelab.org

In this activity you will harvest flowers together and then pound their colors on to paper, leaving a beautiful flower print behind. What kid doesn’t love hitting things with a hammer?

MATERIALS
• Cutting board
• Dishtowel
• Fresh flowers and leaves
• Hammers
• Wide painter’s tape
• Watercolor paper cut into bookmarks or note cards

DIRECTIONS
• Place a cutting board on top of a dishtowel. Place a piece of watercolor paper on top of the cutting board.
• Harvest a handful of fresh flowers and leaves. Note that some flowers work better for flower pounding than others, so harvest a variety to test out.
• Cut the stems and as much of the green back off of the flowers as possible. If the flower has a large center, remove it and use only the petals.
• Place the flowers and leaves face down on the watercolor paper. For large flowers, only place the petals on the paper.
• To remove some of the tack from the painter’s tape, stick it to your pant leg a time or two.
• Now cover the flowers and leaves completely with a single layer of painter’s tape.
• Pound on the tape with a hammer, making sure to hit each section multiple times. You can place a phone book below the paper to dampen the noise.
• Carefully peel off some of the tape and peek at the paper to see if any area needs more pounding.
• When you’re satisfied with the print, peel off all of the tape. The colors should have left a print on your paper.
• Remove any flower or leaf pieces that are still stuck to the paper.
• Now allow your paper to dry and use it for a note card, bookmark, or anything else you can think of. Laminating the bookmarks makes for a nice finishing touch.
CREATE A BEAN TEEPEE PLAYHOUSE

AGES
2-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Bay Tree Design, inc.
Berkeley, California, USA
www.baytreedesign.com

Bean teepee playhouses are inexpensive, creative play elements that enhance school grounds for young children by providing a setting for their imaginative games that is cozy and inviting, and easy for adults to supervise. These simple structures can be built in a very short amount of time, are inexpensive and are straightforward to assemble. They can be planted directly in the ground or use large, sturdy pots for support.

MATERIALS

• 5-10 sturdy bamboo poles at least 8’ in length (3 m) and 1”-2” in diameter (3-5 cm). If planting in containers on a paved school ground, also purchase one large, sturdy pot or planter for each bamboo pole and fill them completely with rich potting soil.
• Edible bean plants that are vigorous climbers such as: scarlet runner beans (with lovely red flowers and large, tasty bean pods), pole beans (generally with white flowers and smaller pods), or other climbing plants. Purchase enough seeds or seedlings to have 4-6 plants per bamboo pole.
• Additional plants to enliven the base of the teepee or fill the surface of the pots, such as: nasturtiums, sorrel, lettuce, or other leafy and flowering edible plants.
• Twine to tie the bamboo poles together at the top and to attach the vines to the poles as they grow.

DIRECTIONS

• Find a suitable location for the bean teepee playhouse in an area that receives some sun to help plants grow. Check to make sure this location is also away from ball games, so children who are engrossed in creative play will not be disturbed by flying balls.
• Mark a rough circle on the soil or grass—or arrange large pots to form a circle—big enough for 2-4 children to sit comfortably inside.
• Gather bamboo poles together. Wrap a piece of sturdy twine around the top of all of the bamboo poles, roughly 1’-2’ (0.3-0.6 meters) from one end, to hold them together loosely.
• With several people working together, spread the poles out to form a cone shape, with the twine-wrapped end at the top. Place the bottom ends of the poles at least 2’ (0.6 meters) into the soil or to the bottom of the large pots that will serve as their base. Pack the soil down around the poles quite firmly and check to make sure that the structure is secure.
• Plant bean seeds or seedlings around the base of the poles. Add additional flowering, edible plants to fill the tops of the pots or enliven the area at the base of the poles.
• Water regularly. As the plants grow, tie the vines to the bamboo poles to give them support until they are well established.
USING LOOSE MATERIALS FOR PLAY

AGES
2-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Grounds for Learning
Stirling, Scotland
www.ltl.org.uk/scotland/

Lots of schools take a variety of small play equipment into their grounds for pupils to play with over break or lunch times. If you provide children with hoops, balls, ropes, bean bags and other loose play parts you will see lots of sports-type games going on. But what happens to those children who don’t like sports very much? Why not add some different materials so that you can get everyone involved in creative and more social play. Using open-ended materials means that children work together to build dens, tell stories, invent their own worlds or make their own art works.

The most successful play provision is accompanied by staff training, including discussions of: the value of play; the role of the adult; issues and concerns of staff and parents; practical issues such as storage, maintenance and managing risk; practical sessions with children playing with different types of loose play equipment; and how to best include parents and other family members playing, too.

MATERIALS
The materials used for open-ended, loose parts play might include pieces of scrap or natural materials—anything that can be used in many different ways. This might include:

- Sticks and stones
- Tarpaulins and sheets
- Sand
- Drainpipes
- Ropes
- Hosepipe
- Live willow planting
- Logs
- Leaves, feathers, shells, gravel, pine cones
- Cardboard
- Bungee ties
- Hay or straw bales
- Wooden pennies (circles of timber)
PLANT, GROW AND HARVEST A “NIBBLING GARDEN”

AGES

4-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Bay Tree Design, inc.
Berkeley, California, USA
www.baytreedesign.com

Edible gardening is very popular on school grounds throughout California and around the world. Many schools have a school garden where students participate in the process of growing nutritious food, and classes work on hands-on curriculum activities of many types. In the San Francisco Bay Area, some schools are extending their horticulture programs by creating small “nibbling gardens” intended to engage children in their free time during recess. The value, beyond nutrition, is the learned skill and expertise of knowing what types of food are edible in one’s environment and when they are at their delicious peak of ripeness—in other words, teaching the concept of seasonality. Nibbling gardens work best as an extension of a school’s curriculum-tied gardening program, after students have already been given some background in plant identification and understand the basics of plant growth. Since children engage with these gardens on their own, all plants in a nibbling garden must be edible.

DIRECTIONS

• Choose a sunny spot with clean soil or someplace you can place food-grade planting containers. If using containers, be sure to select materials that are safe for growing edibles. For example, you can illustrate material reuse by reusing containers from local food industries such as wine or olive barrels. Many schools in our region also use sturdy new containers such as galvanized steel stock tanks. Do not use tires, pressure treated lumber, or other potentially hazardous materials.

• If planting in the ground, amend the soil with organic compost. If planting in containers, fill them with organic compost and potting soil.

• Start the nibbling garden by planting seeds or seedlings of robust edible plants that will produce food that students can harvest and eat on the spot during the school year.

• Adapt this list for your own local region and microclimate to teach students about the special edible plants that are grown in your part of the world.

• Water, weed and eat!

PLANTS THAT GROW WELL IN NIBBLING GARDENS IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA INCLUDE:

• Blackberries (Rubus spp.)
• Borage flowers (Borago officinalis)
• Fava beans (Vicia faba)
• Grapes (Vitis spp.)
• Lemon balm (Melissa officinalis)
• Nasturtiums (Tropaeolum spp.)
• Raspberries (Rubus idaeus and others)
• Scarlet runner beans (Phaseolus coccineus)
• Snap peas (Pisum sativum var. macrocarpon)
• Sorrel (Rumex acetosa)
• Spearmint (Mentha spicata)
• Strawberries (Fragaria spp.)
TRADING POST

AGES
4-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
The Carey School
San Mateo, California, USA
www.careyschool.org

Trading Post is an activity created by the students and inspired by lessons learned about the Native Americans trading goods with early American settlers. Children find materials to use for this activity around the school’s natural play space. These items are then brought to the Trading Post for trade, sale or barter.

MATERIALS
• Small items to barter with, such as pinecones and acorns found in the schoolyard or child-made artwork

DIRECTIONS
• Set up a space in your green schoolyard to be your Trading Post.
• Give a lesson on early American life and explain the bartering system that was used at Trading Posts.
• Tell kids they will be trading items and they should either collect natural items or make art to trade.
• Ask the students to bring items to trade, sell or barter to the Trading Post, and let them experiment with the terms of each trade to get a feel for this type of economy.
• The students can then use the new items they receive in their trades to make new creations.
**KPOKORO, AN OUTDOOR NIGERIAN GAME**

**AGES**
6-12 years old

**CONTRIBUTED BY**
Elizabeth Babalola
Nigeria

This is a game usually played by girls, ages 6 – 12, in different parts of Nigeria and usually outdoors. There are a number of variations to the game depending on the location but the emphasis is on rhythmic clapping, coordination of leg movements, quick thinking and the ability to predict your playmate’s moves. The following directions are for the horseshoe variation of the game.

**DIRECTIONS**

- Number of players needed: At least two girls, and usually up to a maximum of ten.
- The objective is to accurately predict and mirror your playmate’s leg movement two consecutive times while clapping and skip jumping rhythmically.
- Players stand in a horseshoe formation and the first player, selected randomly or by lots, takes turns with each player in the horseshoe.
- Player 1 (the leader) starts by standing face-to-face with Player 2 (the mirror). Player 1 leads them both in clapping and skip jumping to the same rhythm: “Clap pause clap pause clap-clap-clap pause”. At the 3rd pause the leader randomly puts forward one of her legs.
- To win, the Player 2 must simultaneously mirror the leader’s leg choices two consecutive times. If Player 2 is successful in mirroring Player 1 on two consecutive attempts, they exchange places (switch), and the “mirror” becomes the “leader” and plays the next round with Player 3. If Player 2 is unable to mirror Player 1’s movement, the latter immediately moves on to Player 3. She maintains the rhythm without pause and leads them both in clapping and skip jumping. Although the switch can happen at any point along the horseshoe, the new leader must begin at one end of the circle and work towards the end.
- The winning player is the one who successfully moves from one end of the horseshoe to the other without being “mirrored” by any of her playmates.
- For instance, I face you and begin to clap my hands, skip jumping to the rhythm. You clap exactly as I do. I then quickly put out my right leg on the 3rd pause. If you mirror my movement (putting out your left leg) you get one point. On the second round if you again successfully predict and mirror my movement, you get a second point, exchange places with me and take the lead.

**RULES**

- The mirror’s leg choice must be done simultaneously to the leader’s. There must be no hesitation from the player standing in the horseshoe.
- If the player in the horseshoe is unable to mirror the leading player’s leg choice simultaneously on the first try, the “leader” moves on the next person in line.

**ACCOMPANYING MYTH**

There is a story of a clever goddess, who comes to a group of young women offering each one a crown, an opportunity in life. Each girl has to correctly interpret the signs and seize her chance at the exact moment it is offered.

ACORN GUIDED MOVEMENT

AGES
4 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY
David Sobel
Antioch University New England, New Hampshire, USA
www.antiochne.edu

In this guided movement activity, students listen to an adult read a descriptive narrative that helps them to imagine that they are an acorn, growing into an oak seedling. They move their bodies as the story is read to them, and experience the natural world around them from a new perspective. Words written below in **bold** are intended as movement prompts.

NARRATIVE TO READ TO STUDENTS

Attach yourself to a tree. What a great view it is from up here. Bright, blue sky, dry October day. You’re an acorn attached to the twig of a sturdy oak tree. You can see all the way out to the glistening expanses of the Great Bay with tendrils of rivers coursing into it from all directions. The gentle breezes waft the leaves and branches and you sway back and forth, *clacking* up against the twig and other acorns, like your friend Corny who lives next to you on the branch. You *rock rhythmically* on your branch, and then gradually become still.

In the distance you hear a whoosh, like the breaking of waves on a distant beach, a big gust of wind coming towards you. You take a deep breath, anticipating the swishing of your branch. The gust of wind *rattles* the branches of your big oak, you hold on tight, clinging, but then you’re free, *falling*, *ricocheting* off lower branches, uplifted for a moment by a gust of wind, and clomp, you hit the ground, *bounce* in the leaf mulch and then settle in, rolling until you’ve nestled into a comfortable nook. Not as good a view, but much cozier down here on the forest floor. You *like* your new location, you take deep breaths and slowly *drift* off to sleep.

What’s that? You awaken suddenly, aware of noises around you. Something is clattering the leaves, somehow you know it’s a squirrel nearby. You hear gnawing and you realize the squirrel is sinking her teeth into another acorn. “Oh no, maybe it’s Corny!” You make yourself as small as possible and you try to *scrunch* under the leaves so the squirrel doesn’t see you. And it works, the squirrel scampers away.

Other leaves fall on top of you, it’s like a warm blanket, you *nestle* down into the leaves and ready yourself for a long winter’s nap. Your hardly notice when the snow falls and covers you. You’re deep down under the leaves sleeping.

It’s springtime, it’s raining and you’re surrounded by wet leaves. You feel something *stirring deep* inside you. Your feel like you’re *swelling*, like a sponge soaking up water, like a balloon being blown up. Your shell cracks, little by little, the crack widening. Then a little piece of you starts to *wiggle out*, your tap root, grows out to the side and then turns and starts to go down into the earth, *burrowing* through the leaves into the soil.

Now another piece of you, your stem, does just the opposite. This piece of you, slender and pale, *reaches upwards*, pushing aside the leaves, splitting your seed. You break through the leaves and move towards the sun, pushing your fleshy seed aside. This part *twists* and *stretches upward*, slowing reaching towards the light.

Now little parts of your leading tip start to separate. Your thin *growing tip spreads* and three tiny leaves emerge. They reach out widely, embracing the spare sunlight on the forest floor, *flattening out* to be horizontal to the sun’s rays.

Then another pair of leaves, lower on the stalk and more tiny leaves from your leading bud open—first tiny as mice ears, then *stretching* and *straining* to become full-sized leaves. Your leaves *flop* and *wave* in the gentle breezes that stir the forest floor, you *soak* in the nourishing sunlight. You have become an oak seedling, perhaps destined for great things.

THE SECRET PICTURE

MATERIALS
• Conduct this activity in a schoolyard or park environment that is rich with “loose parts” from the nature world such as stones, leaves, flowers, pinecones, etc.

DIRECTIONS
• Divide the group into couples. Ask every couple to fetch two sets of objects, for example, three black stones, two small leaves and one flower.
• The couples should now sit down with their backs against each other.
• One of the children in each pair uses his or her own set of objects to create a pattern or picture of his or her choice.
• After this, it is time for the other child to recreate the same pattern or picture only by taking verbal instructions—no peeking!
• When the couple thinks they have finished, they turn around and check if the pattern came out correctly.
• What similarities and dissimilarities are there? Were the instructions easy or difficult to understand? What could have been communicated more clearly?
• The best part: Everybody wins!

AGES
5 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY
Naturskolan i Lund
Lund, Sweden
www.lund.se

This curriculum-connected activity helps children to practice cooperation and communication skills in a relaxing outdoor setting, while also improving their vocabulary for mathematical and spatial terms and concepts such as “over”, “under”, “below” and “beside”.

© NATURSKOLAN I LUND
INSPIRING SPEAKING AND WRITING IN YOUR SCHOOL GARDEN

AGES
5-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
CitySprouts
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
www.citysprouts.org

A school garden can provide great inspiration for students’ writing. When teaching a unit on living things, ask students to make lists of things in the garden that are living, not living or dead. This initial question can lead to interesting conversations which can develop into proper science discussions.

The next part of the activity is for each child to choose a plant in the garden to study over time and think about questions of dead versus alive. Discussions can also look at how living things respond to the environment such as changes in the weather. Visiting the garden weekly means that students can continue to observe, sketch and collect data on the changes they see.

Some questions to ask the students include:

• What do plants need to grow?
• Is that the same for other living things such as animals or you and me?
• What happens to the plants if it doesn’t rain for a while?
• What happens to the plants when the sun shines?
• What can you do to make a difference to how well things grow?

Other literacy activities in a school garden might include descriptive writing, solving puzzles and word-searches, but the most important thing is for students to engage with the environment and in real-world applications of the skills they are learning in language, in the arts or mathematics.
THE ABC MAT

AGES

5-12 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Naturskolan i Lund
Lund, Sweden
www.lund.se

In its simplest form, this curriculum-connected game teaches young children about the alphabet and helps them to work on their language and spelling skills. For older children, teachers can modify this activity to teach more complex grammar lessons and practice foreign language skills. The game also helps pupils tune in to the natural world around them.

MATERIALS

• ABC mats, showing the alphabet, with letters in four or five rows, as shown above. These mats can be hand drawn and made from a large sheet of paper.

• Conduct this activity in a schoolyard or park environment that is rich in “loose parts” from the nature world such as stones, leaves, flowers, pinecones, etc.

DIRECTIONS

In the playground or woods, lay out a mat on the ground that shows the letters of the alphabet. The aim is for pupils to notice the details of their surroundings. A normally insignificant stone can now grace the “S” on the ABC mat and a bit of moss can now proudly take its place on the “M”. Pupils scan the area and try to name both small objects and large objects in their hunt for the correct first letter.

Divide the class into groups of three to five. Each group is given an ABC mat. They must find an object for each first letter. This activity can be made into a competition, where each letter of the alphabet gives one point and where the teacher sets a limited time of, for example, ten minutes.

VARIATIONS WITH ADDED COMPLEXITY

Groups receive two points for each object they can be more specific about: for example, a leaf on the “L” receives one point, whereas a maple leaf on the “M” receives two points. You can, of course, play bingo using the ABC mats.

The activity can be repeated with slight changes:
• collect nouns, adjectives or verbs
• collect opposites
• collect species (for example, not just a leaf but a maple leaf, not just berry but a blueberry)
• collect imaginative words
• move to another area
• allocate points for synonyms: one point for the word “leaf”, two points for the word “foliage”
• collect objects that rhyme
WATER DETECTIVES

AGES

5-14 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Evergreen
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
www.evergreen.ca

Water is a rich source of learning at any age. Just think how impressed students will be to learn that the rain falling on their school grounds is the same water from a puddle that a dinosaur splashed through 200 million years ago! School grounds provide an opportunity to bring the water cycle to life as students act as detectives through direct observation and experimentation.

MAKING OBSERVATIONS

When rain falls on your school ground, where does it go? Go outside and explore your school grounds when it is raining to look for clues:

• Where does the water get “soaked up”? Where does the water pool? Where does it flow? Can you see any curves on your school grounds that indicate which way the water will go? Where the water might end up?
• After a rainstorm, find puddles in your schoolyard. Make observations about the puddles. Label the puddles with chalk. Visit the puddle locations again later in the week. What do you notice?

EXPERIMENTATION

Follow up with some experimentation to further explore your observations:

• Pour buckets of water over different surfaces (pavement, grass, sand) to explore the concepts of percolation and runoff. What happened to the water on each surface?
• Make evaporation tangible. Place tinfoil pans of water around the school grounds, leaving some uncovered and some covered in plastic wrap. Predict what you will see when you go back outside to check on your tinfoil pans in three hours. What will you see when you go back the next day? The next week? Discuss your observations.

EXTENSIONS

• Experience water’s journey through drama and music. Invite students to become water molecules and act out the water cycle. Create a musical rainstorm using body percussion.
• Measure the volume of rain. Use a rain gage to measure the rainfall on your school grounds.
• Design a landscape that reduces runoff. Invite students to design a school ground that reduces runoff. Explore a variety of approaches. (e.g. permeable pavers, green roofs, rain gardens)
• Live in a snowy climate? Embrace winter. Learn how snow is formed and how to identify snowflakes using the International Snow Classification System.
• Go on a water quest in your community. Look for more clues about where the water may go in the natural and built community beyond the school grounds. Look for storm sewers, creeks and streams, ponds, drainage ditches and other clues.
GEOCACHING IN YOUR SCHOOL GROUNDS

AGES
6 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY
Evergreen
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
www.evergreen.ca

Geocaching is the fastest growing outdoor recreational activity in the world, with more than five million participants in over 200 countries. The basic premise is that a person can go to the official geocaching website (www.geocaching.com), type in a location such as a city name or postal code, pick a hidden geocache in the area, load the coordinates into their GPS unit, and then go out and search for it.

You’ll be amazed at how many geocaches are hidden all around you in both urban and rural areas! Usually the geocache takes the form of a waterproof container with tradable items inside. Once the container is found and the contents explored, the logbook is signed and the cache is returned to its hiding spot. Then the find is recorded online. This last step enables the finder to communicate with the geocache creator, and to describe their experience as they searched for and found the cache.

Many educators have also recognized geocaching as a valuable tool that can enhance curriculum right across the board. Using the website at www.geocaching.com, teachers can find creative ways to incorporate teamwork, social skills, problem solving and other academic challenges into their lesson plans—all while getting their students outside!

Activities for younger students could include finding containers with different coloured counters inside, which the students could then sort by number, size and colour, and then colour a graph to display their results. Older students might have to solve a math problem, sort out a logic puzzle or decrypt a code in order to find the longitude and latitude coordinates of the next geocache, and so on.

For environmentally themed lessons, students can be given coordinates for a certain area of a pond, or a specific type of tree where they may find nature at its best. Other tasks could be to measure the height of a certain species of tree, identify the type of animal tracks on the bank of the creek, count the numbers of fossils in a large rock or simply take a crayon rubbing of a word on an historical plaque. The possibilities are as endless as the creative ideas one possesses.

Geocaching is the perfect outdoor activity because anyone can do it! No matter your age, physical abilities, or interests, you can find a geocache that fits your needs and encourages you to get outside, engage in a fun and challenging activity, and explore. Remember, “it’s the journey, not the destination.” So grab a GPS and head outdoors—there is a whole world just waiting to be discovered.
ANIMAL PERSPECTIVES: MAPPING THE SCHOOL GROUND

AGES
6 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY
Evergreen
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
www.evergreen.ca

Students will use this activity to map the assets on their school grounds through the lens of a living thing.

MATERIALS
1 per group:
- Clipboard
- Paper
- Pencil, pen or marker

DIRECTIONS
- Divide students into small groups of 3-4 students
- Each group will assess the outdoor space from the perspective of a living thing. Choose animals, or other living things, that are appropriate to your region. (e.g. squirrel, raccoon, ant, butterfly, bird, toad, worm, snail)
- Each group is to explore the school ground and map it identifying any assets (treasures) and barriers (troubles) from the perspective of their living thing.
- Encourage students to look at the big features of the school grounds as well as the smaller details.
- Encourage students to examine the school grounds closely (check under rotting logs, etc.) for additional treasures and troubles.
- As the students identify treasures and troubles, they should outline and label them on a “treasure map” of the school ground from the perspective of their living thing.

MODIFICATIONS:
- Include a base map of the school ground and let students fill in the details, or make three-dimensional representations of the features of the school ground.
- For older students you may wish to map the school grounds and surrounding community from the perspective of different stakeholders. (e.g. a developer, a child living in community, an urban planner, etc.)

References: This activity was inspired by Hilary Inwood, Instructor, Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto and “Nature Mapping” by Mark Batcheler, found in Green Teacher Magazine, Issue 84.
**THE MAGPIE GAME**

**AGES**
6-10 years old

**CONTRIBUTED BY**
Naturskolan i Lund  
Lund, Sweden  
www.lund.se

This curriculum-connected, wildlife-oriented game gives students an understanding of the competition birds and other wildlife face from one another as they gather the resources they need from the environment. It also teaches students about strategy (“Where should you place your nest so others don’t pick up all of your sticks?”) and basic mathematical concepts and terminology used to describe the outcome of the game (e.g. “fewer sticks” vs. “more sticks”). This game also involves a lot of running and gives the children exercise as they learn academic concepts.

**MATERIALS**
- A large number of sticks, gathered with permission from the school grounds or other free, local source. We recommend that you gather enough sticks for each “magpie couple” to begin with 20-50 small or medium sized sticks for their initial “nest”. If you don’t have a natural area onsite, distribute the sticks over a wide area of the school grounds before beginning the game, so the “magpies” will be able to “forage” for them.
- It’s often easiest to acquire a large number of sticks when the shrubs and trees on school grounds are pruned. Make arrangements with the maintenance department for the school, or a local park, to save the sticks for you when they do their pruning work.
- Prepare some colored string, in a wide variety of colors, in short lengths the children can use to tie to selected sticks. You will need five pieces of string per “magpie couple”, in a different color for each couple.

**DIRECTIONS**
Start the game by letting the children form “magpie couples”, pairing off into groups of two. Each magpie couple should decide how many sticks they believe they can collect in one minute and then tell the others what they think. Start the clock and let the magpies “fly out” and collect as many sticks as they can. When the minute is over, the children count their sticks. What is the result? Did they fetch a higher or lower number then they thought? Double, half, a third, less and so on. Practice different mathematical words.

Each magpie couple should now build a nest of all the sticks except five nice sticks that they mark with a piece of colored string. Build the nest like a circle big enough for the magpie couple to sit or stand inside. The magpies should now fly to the other nests to steal the marked sticks and put them in their own nest. They are only allowed to take one stick during each flight. No magpie is allowed to stay in the nest to protect their own sticks. The teacher will decide when the flight is over, and this will also be the time to count the sticks again. How many marked sticks are in the nests now? Did the number increase or decrease? What strategies did the couples chose to build their nests? Once again, use mathematical words to discuss what happened.
BOTANY BOUQUET

AGES
6-18 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Earth Partnership for Schools
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
www.uwarboretum.org/eps/

This activity introduces various plant species from the same or different ecosystems and encourages observational, organizational and taxonomic skills. It could be a good introduction to a plant unit, or it could be used as a creative and interactive “icebreaker” among a group of students who do not know each other well.

BACKGROUND
There are a variety of languages spoken around the world. For a long time scientists were confronted with the challenge that one plant or animal species could have many different names, depending on what language was spoken. This challenge created all sorts of language barriers when scientists from different parts of the world wanted to talk about their research. In 1758 a Swedish biologist, Carl Linnaeus, decided everyone should use the same name to describe a given species. He proposed a universal naming system, using Latin as the root source. He chose Latin, which is often a combination of Latin and Greek, because it was historically the language used by educated people in his part of the world, Europe.

This activity will help students understand the scientific naming process and familiarize them with the diversity and unique attributes of species they plant on their school grounds. Students will learn to closely observe the variety of patterns and shapes of plant parts. The next step can be applying names to what they observe in terms of plant structure.

MATERIALS
Before the activity begins, prepare a bouquet of plant species representing one or more ecosystems. You will need multiple samples of plants from a handful of different species. The number of samples of each species should equal approximately a third to a quarter of the total number of students in your group. For example, a group of twenty students might break into four smaller groups of five, which would require five samples each from four different plant species.

DIRECTIONS
• Mix the bouquet well and give one plant to each person. Those who know the names of the plants being passed out should not share that information until the end of the activity.
• With your plant in hand, find other students who have the same plant and form a small group. If you don’t know the other students, introduce yourselves to one another.
• In your small group, come up with a creative description of your plant based on your close observations. Describe it in a way that would help others identify the plant.
• Then, come up with a creative name for your plant.
• At this point, have representative(s) from each group present their plant’s creative name and description.
• Once each small group has shared their creative name and plant description, find out if the larger group knows the common and scientific names of the plant. If the names are unknown, the teacher can share them along with a further description, especially identifying the plant’s ecological and human uses.
• After this activity, discuss as a group why you think there are scientific names for plants. Then review the history of why plants have scientific and common names. Visit the library to further research the plants used in this activity, their habitat preferences and their human uses. Expand on the activity to include different plants and animals that would be found in the habitat you are restoring on your school grounds.

WORM LIFE CYCLE

AGES
7-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Education Outside
San Francisco, California, USA
www.educationoutside.org

In this lesson, students examine worms at different life stages and diagram each stage. Students will learn the concept of life cycles and produce an accurate drawing of each stage of worm development.

MATERIALS

- Worm bin with worms
- Diagrams of worm life cycle and worm anatomy
- Containers
- Magnifying glasses
- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons or colored pencils
- Clipboards

PREPARATION

- Search in your worm bin for worm eggs, baby worms, juvenile worms and adult worms, and place each in separate containers.
- Make sure there are enough pencils, magnifying glasses and paper for each student.

DIRECTIONS

- Ask students to define the word “cycle” and identify the stages of the human life cycle.
- Ask students if they know the stages of the worm life cycle. Show diagrams of the worm life cycle and worm anatomy. Ask students to note the attention to detail and labels on the diagrams.
- Break students into four groups. Have groups rotate along life cycle stations, using magnifying glasses to observe worms and start drawing their own diagrams.
- Give students time to finish drawing and labeling their detailed diagrams.
- Ask students to regroup and prompt them to share their diagrams and discuss some of the differences they noticed in the different life stages of the worm.
- For a more challenging exercise, ask students to find, identify and categorize examples of the worms’ life cycle stages, themselves, instead of separating them from the worm bin before the lesson.

WORM LIFE CYCLE AND ANATOMY DIAGRAMS
www.teara.govt.nz/en/earthworms/3/1
ROBERT’S LITTLE FINGER

AGES
8-11 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Naturskolan i Lund
Lund, Sweden
www.lund.se

This activity teaches ratios and collaboration. Students work together to construct a scale model of a member of their group. This activity can be further extended by asking students to collect twigs of a variety of sizes before the activity begins.

MATERIALS
• 20+ twigs, from 2-20cm long
• Flowers or other small, natural elements for making faces for the stick figures

DIRECTIONS
• Divide pupils into groups of about five.
• One pupil from each group must take one of the twigs.
• Now each group must use the remaining twigs to create a model (stick figure) of the group member who took the single twig. The single twig represents that group member’s little finger.
• Pupils create the model on the ground and must decide on the proportions of their model. When each group has finished, they must guess the scales used by the other groups.
• If the pupil’s little finger is 4 cm, with a twig that is 2 cm, the scale will be 1:2. With a twig that is 20 cm, the scale will be 5:1.
UNDERGROUND STEMS TELL THEIR STORIES

AGES
12-16 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Abruzzi School Garden Program
Siankhore, Baltistan, Pakistan
abruzzischoolgarden.com

This lesson was created for tenth graders who were learning about underground stems. Their biology teacher divided them into four groups and had each group plant one underground stem per group and make observations as the plants grew. Instead of writing only about the plants’ biological properties, the students also wrote stories with illustrations pertaining to basic scientific data or they wrote entirely fictional stories. Most of the students chose to write stories that in very subtle ways describe the prevalent culture of their region—Shigar—viz a viz Shigris and young people like themselves elsewhere. Indirectly these stories became a social studies lesson, recording social history via the prism of plant life.

MATERIALS
• Outdoor planting area, such as a raised bed or small planting container with potting soil, that can be placed in any sunny, well-ventilated part of the school
• One pod of garlic, ginger, onion and/or potato per group
• Drawing journals or paper for each student, plus colored pencils or any coloring medium you choose

DIRECTIONS
• Divide the class into four groups.
• Ask each group to choose a stem (garlic, ginger, onion or potato) to plant and observe over time. Ask the students to watch the growth of these underground stems over the course of several weeks or more, and instruct them to spend time researching the biological, physical and cultural properties of their vegetable.
• Ask students to use their research about their plant to develop a story about it. Stories can be written in their native tongue or in a foreign language they are studying. This writing activity can be directed toward factual information about their scientific findings or students may be given the option to write a fictional piece, loosely based on their observations.
• Encourage students to illustrate their stories, transforming the vegetables into talking, hearing, seeing, feeling characters.
MAY DAY CELEBRATION

MAYPOLE DANCING

Maypole dancing is part of a lively celebration of spring. It can include simple circle dances for younger children, and gain increasing complexity for children in older grades. Older student ensembles can also play music to accompany the dancing. The Maypole is a tradition going back to the 16th century in Europe—originally a decorated tree set up on May 1st that was often part of a village festival.

MATERIALS

- One 12’-15’ (3.5-4.5 m) tall pole, 3” (8 cm) diameter
- One 18” (45 cm) diameter round wooden disk (for the top of the pole) and a 6” (15 cm) carriage bolt to attach the disk to the top of the pole.
- Twenty four 2” (5 cm) bolts with accompanying flat washers, spring washers and wing nuts to attach the ribbons to the wood disk.
- Twenty four colorful ribbons made of cotton or satin cloth, 25’-30’ (7-9 m) long and 4” (10 cm) wide—in two contrasting colors or a variety of colors (rainbow). Attach sturdy grommets to both ends of each ribbon.
- A piece of plastic or metal pipe, 3’-4’ (1-1.25 m) long and 5” (13 cm) wide, to insert in the ground to hold and stabilize the vertical pole.
- A basket with a flower bouquet, to place at the top of the Maypole. Wire to attach the basket to the pole.

DIRECTIONS

- Preparation before the May Day Celebration: Dig a narrow, 3’-4’ (1-1.25 m) deep hole in the ground with a post-hole digger and insert the pipe vertically, to provide a sleeve that will support the tall pole.
- Day of the celebration: Attach ribbons to the wooden disk that will go on top of the pole and anchor the disk to the pole using the carriage bolt.
- Install the tall wooden pole by placing it into the pipe sleeve in the ground. Use two to three people to lift and place the pole into the sleeve in the ground.
- Using a tall ladder, attach the flower basket to the disk on top of the pole using wire.
- Spread the ribbons out around the pole. Use bamboo sticks, placed through the grommets at the ends of the ribbons, to hold them in place until the dancing begins.
- Begin Maypole dancing! Younger grades start first with simple dances and older grades continue with more intricate weaving. Traditional Maypole dances result in creating different types of ribbon patterns down the length of the May Pole. Dances include: Circle Dance, Barber’s Pole, Spider’s Web and traditional Single Braid.
- For more information about Maypole traditions and Maypole dances, please visit this website: www.ldssplash.com/traditions/may_day_traditions/mayday_dances.htm

AGES

4 years old and up

CONTRIBUTED BY

Children in Nature Collaborative
San Francisco Bay Area, California, USA
www.cincbayarea.org

© WALDORF SCHOOL OF THE PENINSULA
SCHOOL GROUND CELEBRATION SONG

AGES
5-10 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Play Learning Life
Winchester, England
www.playlearninglife.org.uk

For this activity pupils can work individually, in small groups or as a class. Different pupils or classes might do different things. For example, one class might come up with the ideas, another write the words and another write the tune. One group might create images to illustrate the song and another group might perform the final song, perhaps with another group accompanying it on instruments made from items found in your grounds.

Think about where you might perform a song in your grounds and who might listen to it. It could take the form of a procession around your grounds or be performed in one place with an audience listening to your performance. You could create actions or a dance for your song, too. You might even record your song with photographs, drawings or other images used to illustrate it.

DIRECTIONS

Start by thinking about all the things that are great about your school grounds—create a list of these. Here are some things you might include:

• What you see when you arrive in your school, or as you look out of the window
• Features in your grounds, such as a special tree or pond
• Things you do outside, maybe what you do at play times or during lessons
• What you and your friends do outside, what games you play together

Use these ideas to put together phrases, then lines, then verses for your song. You can then create a tune for your song, using instruments to accompany your piece. Decide where you are going to perform your song and you might even record it for your website.
In the United Kingdom in June 2014, schools took part in The Big School Grounds Festival to celebrate National School Grounds Week. To help them with their ideas Learning through Landscapes created a range of resources on different themes. Here we share some of our comedy ideas.

MAKE ‘EM LAUGH

• Performing comedy pieces in the outdoors is a wonderful experience, but does carry a few challenges.

• Decide on your performance area early in order that any rehearsals indoors can reflect the actual space you have available outside. There is nothing worse than children huddled together when there is a lot of the stage available to use. Solo performances need to make good use of the space without leaving the performer out of breath!

• Sound is often an issue so do a few test runs to make sure that the voices/sounds that need to be heard can carry effectively to all the seats. Also think about your backdrop and how you will orient your stage. Having your audience facing into the sun is not a good idea so think about that when you select your location, and plan accordingly for that time of day.

• Visual comedy can be particularly good for younger children whilst older children can discuss why the work of some comedians is controversial. You may want to find extracts from comic plays for children to perform, or ask them to work on examples from their favourite TV programmes. Parody can also work well so they could look at a programme that is not a comedy, and then look at ways it could be parodied.

• A comedy show might include sketches, stand up, extracts from a Shakespeare play, physical comedy or even comedy songs.

PUPILS CAN PARTICIPATE IN MANY WAYS

• Design and make costumes
• Direct or be stage managers
• Design and build scenery
• Manage the technical aspects of the production such as lighting and sound, or video and audio recording
• Write scripts
• Produce an accompanying sound track
• Produce programmes and write reviews for the local media, school website or magazine
• Set up a micro-enterprise (door charges, drinks, etc.)
GUERRILLA SUNFLOWER GARDENING DAY

AGES
7-17 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY
Crops in Pots
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
www.facebook.com/cropsinpot

As freelance gardening teachers, we encourage all schools and individuals to participate in this wonderful activity on May 1st each year. The idea is very simple. Plant sunflowers on any empty piece of land, an unclaimed plot, a neglected container, around your school, in a public park, in short just anywhere!

Why Sunflowers? Sunflowers are not only loved for their bright and vibrant colours, they are also valued for their ability to improve the ground soil by acting as a green manure and by suppressing weed growth. The stunning flower is rich in nectar and pollen that attract beneficial insects, especially butterflies, and improves bee forage in the summer. A single sunflower plant looks just as striking as when these massive flowers are bunched together in a group. The best part is that sunflower seeds are an excellent source of Vitamin E.

Since sunflowers are native to Pakistan, seeds are very cheap and available in most general and horticulture stores. Sunflowers are drought resistant which makes them ideal for Karachi. And birds love to eat them.

MATERIALS

- Heirloom sunflower seeds or seedlings
- A watering can
- Some tools and gloves
- Organic compost

DIRECTIONS

- Arrange a trip to a public park with your students or select any other location, such as your school grounds, for your activity.
- Let your students pick the spots where they want to see a giant sunflower grow in future.
- Students can carefully dig a hole and transplant their seedlings or simply sow seeds 0.5 inch (1 cm) deep. Encourage them to water them softly with a watering can. Return to provide additional water to the sunflowers as needed.
The non-profit International School Grounds Alliance (ISGA) is a global network of organizations working to enrich children’s learning and play through improving the way school grounds are designed and used. The wellbeing of children and the ecological diversity of their learning landscapes are intrinsically linked. The ISGA aims to support all schools in making the most of the opportunities excellent school grounds afford.

The international school grounds movement is growing rapidly and flourishing in many places. Schools near and far are reimagining their grounds, replacing extensive paved surfaces with a vibrant mosaic of outdoor learning and play opportunities. Schools in dozens of countries are leading the way, finding innovative approaches that weave learning into their landscapes, diversify their recreational offerings, enhance their local ecology, and reflect their unique location and cultural context.

The ISGA believes that school grounds should:

- provide powerful opportunities for hands-on learning
- nurture students’ physical, social and emotional development and wellbeing
- reflect and embrace their local ecological, social and cultural context
- embrace risk-taking as an essential component of learning and child development
- be open public spaces, accessible to their communities

The ISGA does this by:

- focusing on the way school grounds are used, designed and managed
- facilitating a dialogue about innovative research, design, education and policy
- fostering partnerships between professionals and organizations across the globe
- organizing international conferences, gatherings and other programs
- advocating for student and school community participation in the design, construction and stewardship of school grounds
- promoting the value of enriched school grounds as uniquely positioned, engaging environments for children

The ISGA is a membership organization, bringing together leaders in the fields of school ground use, design and management. Membership is free. We invite you to join the ISGA to declare your commitment to creating and caring for these special environments that support children and young people’s learning, play and wellbeing. You will also be ensuring that the ecology and biodiversity of school grounds remains high on the agenda of those who influence and pay for school ground design around the world.

To join ISGA, please visit our website. We also invite you to participate in our ongoing discussions online in our LinkedIn group, the “International School Grounds Alliance -- Public Forum,” and contribute your school ground-related news and announcements to our Facebook page. We hope you will also attend our conferences, held in different countries each year.