

Outdoor Classroom Day - What's it all about?

Play for today,
Prepared for tomorrow



Front cover image from Mission:Explore Outside the Classroom.
Find out more at www.missionexplore.net

EMPTY THE CLASSROOMS AND FILL UP THEIR BRAINS!

Outdoor Classroom Day is a GLOBAL campaign to celebrate and inspire outdoor learning and play! Let your imagination go wild...

This is the perfect antidote to the testing culture - anyone that has seen the effect of taking children outdoors to learn and play in the real world around them knows how powerful such experiences can be. Whether you want children to build an understanding of numbers, be inspired to tell stories, or get excited about the flora and fauna around them, we often forget that simply taking them outdoors and encouraging them to explore for themselves can be, as the great educational theorists Vygotsky, Piaget and Erikson said, the most potent way to learn.

But, how can we help ALL schools and children's services everywhere to celebrate the power of outdoor learning and play? Not just in one or two countries, but globally?

With increasing pressures on childhood, kids today are too often overprotected, overscheduled, and overly attached to screens, yet all parents and teachers want is for children to grow up happy and develop the skills they need for the future. This is why it's more crucial than ever before to help get children outdoors.

So how can we send the message to everyone that play and learning outdoors isn't 'nice to have', it is critical? How do we reach teachers, early years, youth workers, play workers,

social workers and critically, through them, mums and dads EVERYWHERE?

Last year over six hundred schools across 15 countries signed up to the UK's Empty Classroom Day campaign, with activities ranging from planting wildflowers, bug hunting and pond-dipping to inspiring class visits to beaches, farms and parks.

This year, backed by Unilever's Dirt is Good brands, we are going global!

The UK will celebrate their 'Empty Classroom Day' on Friday 17th June, with about 2000 schools taking part.

We are now looking to build momentum by working with Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) based in eight to ten countries to coordinate Outdoor Classroom Day on **Thursday 6th October 2016**.

Outdoor Classroom Day is your day to celebrate and inspire learning and play outside the classroom! We want everyone across the world to join up through social media to share how you take your classes outdoors, how your forest school or youth group is better in the open air, how you use the playground and local streets to give children the space and freedom to stand head and shoulders above themselves.

Through getting involved in this global campaign you can find out how children in Turkey, Finland, Vietnam, Canada and Croydon are all celebrating outdoor learning and play, in their kindergartens, schools, youth clubs and everywhere!

Everyone who gets involved will get access to resources and support from some of the world's best advisors on

outdoor learning and creating playful environments. Over the next five years we hope to build the conversation, inviting everyone to share what works – and why – to transform the outdoor learning and play culture so all children everywhere come home glowing, scruffy and full to the brim with new experiences.

Whether you're a teacher, organisation or an individual that cares about childhood, there's a way for everyone to get involved.

THE GLOBAL GOAL IS FOR 10,000,000 CHILDREN TO PLAY AND LEARN OUTSIDE AS PART OF THEIR SCHOOL DAY BY 2020.

Together we are building a movement, reaching children and families everywhere through their schools, so that each and every day, children everywhere get outdoors to play and learn. With everyone's support, we can make sure children everywhere enjoy their childhood and have the foundations they need for the life they want to live.

Play for today, prepared for tomorrow.

Join our global movement at: www.outdoorclassroomday.com

WHY IS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY SO IMPORTANT?

Sometimes we all need a bit of extra encouragement, inspiration or motivation.

If you're looking at this resource, then the chances are that you already think that Outdoor Classroom Day is a great idea and you want to find out more about how to get involved. In which case all you need to do is read on for all the inspiration and practical advice that you need to get playing and learning outdoors on Friday June 17th in the UK and Thursday 6th October around the world.

If you're not yet convinced, however, then maybe these words from Sir David Attenborough might help persuade you:

"The necessity for us to maintain contact with the natural world is essential to the human spirit, yet a gradual disconnection between children and nature is occurring. With over 50% of the human race living in an urban environment, each and every opportunity for children to experience nature is absolutely vital – they are the future custodians of our planet.

Unfortunately, for many children, school grounds are one of the only spaces they have access to for this kind of engagement."

- Sir David Attenborough 2013

Want to know more?

There is a wealth of research reports that point to getting outside as being beneficial for children's play, learning, motivation, health and wellbeing.

Wherever you are in the world you can find easily accessible reports that make the case very powerfully for the benefits of learning outside the classroom.

Children will find a rich play resource in the natural environment and will be able to stretch their imaginations as well as building key motor, communication and team building skills. Playing outside is also known to improve mental health and wellbeing, build self esteem and resilience, and increase physical activity rates.

Tony Kendle, CEO of the Eden Foundation, once said:

"We can't just think about the kind of world we leave our kids. We have to think about the kind of children we are leaving our world."

Playing and learning outdoors will give children a powerful love of their environment, encourage them to love where they go to school, where they live, and the planet around them.

Play is a very immediate sort of activity. It's very 'nowness' gives it the intensity that keeps children engaged, interested, enthralled and enthusiastic for hours. It is important for itself in that moment, and the side benefits are huge. See Michael Follett's book on Playtime to see how improved playground environments and opportunities to play can improve behaviour, accident rates, and play between different ages,

genders and abilities. Play reduces stress and gives children time to reflect on their learning. It's often the missing piece in the jigsaw of essential activities across a child's day.

Sir Ken Robinson, the highly acclaimed educationalist, says:

"Play is a highly beneficial and deeply natural way in which kids learn... Play has deeply important roles in the development of intellectual skills, in social skills, in developing empathy, in stretching our imaginations and exploring our creativity."

The benefits to children are not just during their time outside either – learning outdoors leads to increased motivation in an indoor classroom context as children have real world context for their work.

Many children struggle to sit still for extended periods but have powerful cognitive skills when they are outdoors and working with large scale resources and natural materials.

We don't just want Outdoor Classroom Day to be a one off in children's lives, we want it to shape their worlds. The outcomes are bigger than just the day – it is about having so much fun outside that children want to go outside when they get home from school, they want to drag their family out on the weekend, and going outside with their friends is the cool and fun thing to do.

HOW TO USE THE BOOKSHELF

We have arranged the campaign resources and guides for schools into an Outdoor Library, with books covering each aspect of getting involved in the day itself and how to make outdoor play and learning part of the every day.

We encourage you to dip in and out, selecting the chapters that contain the information that is most relevant to you. You can, of course, read the whole guide if you would prefer.

The individual lesson and topic ideas – and others we are gathering – can be found under the ‘lesson plans’ tab, or looked at as discrete books. We’ve only included a few full plans as there are plenty of those out there. In our guides we’ve concentrated on inspiration, leaving the planning of how the activity will be delivered up to the person that knows their class and environment best – you.

You may have some questions that we haven’t answered, in this case please check the Frequently Asked Questions at the end of this guide or contact us on: info@outdoorclassromday.com or via Facebook or Twitter.

Have a great Outdoor Classroom Day!

THE WIDER DIRT IS GOOD CAMPAIGN

SO WHAT IS THE 'DIRT IS GOOD' CAMPAIGN?

Childhood is changing fast. Today, the average child spends less free time outside than a maximum-security prisoner. It's critical we take action. Our mission? To give children the freedom to get outdoors: to play and learn, and get dirty, too – because by doing so children learn essential skills. Things like curiosity, resilience, inventiveness, independence and bravery – all critical for the future.

Sir Ken Robinson, leading expert in education, creativity and human development, and Chair of the 'Dirt is Good' Child Development Advisory Board, comments:

"Academic research has proven play to be the natural and primary way that children learn. It is essential to their progress, particularly during periods of rapid brain development. Yet, today, play is often taken for granted as being frivolous or lacking benefit. There is a growing, and frankly concerning, tendency to reduce playtime in children's lives - both at school and home."

WHY IS THIS A GOOD THING?

Dirt *is* Good - children need plenty of exploratory, hands-on play – the kind where they can go out and get dirty – because it is essential for their learning and healthy development.

That’s why this campaign represents a commitment to rebalance children’s lives. The Dirt is Good family of brands is working in partnership with NGOs around the world and with parents, educators, and other leading child development experts to investigate the best ways to help children play, explore and get dirty every day so that they can learn and develop to their full potential.

Busy parents need ideas and support to get kids out more, so the ‘Dirt is Good’ team is working with a range of organisations to find accessible and fun places to get out and play.

Because classroom learning can benefit from a more natural environment, the ‘Dirt is Good’ team is also leading a global movement to get children around the world playing and learning outside of the classroom on the world’s biggest-ever Outdoor Classroom Day.

SOME FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW:

- Globally, 2 in 3 (64%) children play out for less than an hour and a half a day.
- 54% of children globally play out for less than an hour a day.
- 1 in 10 (8%) never play out at all other than at school.

High security prisoners in the US are required to have at least two hours outdoors a day. Our children get less.

Parents KNOW how important play is:

- 98% of parents in the UK agree that play enables children to become well-rounded adults.
- Parents see play as helping their children learn many skills, with social skills, creativity and motor skills coming out top.

But so much just gets in the way of making play a priority, and whilst barriers like weather might be easier to overcome, issues like traffic, heavy homework schedules and safe places to play need everyone to work together.

Schools and other children's services – kindergartens, child minders, youth clubs – can help remind parents of the value of outdoor play as a key part of a balanced childhood. All those that shape the landscape of childhood – community organisations, housing planners, police, local government, businesses and national policy makers – all have a role to play.

We all shape the time, space, opportunity and permission that children have to enjoy themselves and find out about the world, so it's up to all of us to ensure children have sufficient opportunities to play and learn outdoors.

We know play isn't just fun. We know it is critical. Please join the movement and help children play for today so that they will be better prepared for tomorrow.

Please join the movement at: www.dirtisgood.com

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY FAQs

REGISTRATION

How do I register?

Go to the Outdoor Classroom Day webpage www.outdoorclassroomday.com and scroll down to the "JOIN US!" area and click on the tab that most closely fits you:

TEACHER, PARENT or PARTNER

Please note that we are also developing websites specific for different countries and in different languages - keep checking back for more information about this.

Can I change my details after I have submitted them?

Register again (using the same school or organisation name) and we will update them for you. Or you can email us to tell us the changes in details: info@outdoorclassroomday.com

How do I register multiple classes?

Just register your school once and make sure that the total number of children includes all the classes who are taking part.

The registration function on the website is not working, what shall I do?

It should be... please email us and let us know: info@outdoorclassroomday.com

Can nurseries sign up?

Yes please, nurseries have a lot to celebrate on the day as they do some of the best work supporting outdoor learning and play. Sign up by clicking on the teacher tab and registering your nursery as a school.

GENERAL

Can you send me more information please?

Yes, once you have signed up you should be emailed more info within a week. In the meantime there are also lots of great resources on the website so have a click around and see if there is anything you find inspiring.

I have contacted you previously but have had no response, can you update me please?

Sorry, hopefully that is because we have been inundated with schools signing up. We will get back to you as soon as possible. If you haven't heard from us within a week pop us an email: info@outdoorclassroomday.com

Can I hold an event on Outdoor Classroom Day if I am not a teacher?

Yes! Whatever your age, spend some time on Thursday 6th October, playing and learning outside, some of the most fun and creativity happens when you are in the great outdoors.

Many outdoor learning and play organisations run special activities on Outdoor Classroom Day for local schools. If that

is you then click on the partner tab and let us know what you are going to do on the day.

If you are a Nursery, Kindergarten, After School Group, Play organisation or Youth Group, or even a university, you can get involved! Just sign up as a school and then just add a note. The more the merrier – and you will have something wonderful to share.

If you are a parent of school aged children, ask their school to sign up and see if they would like you to help out.

Remember to take your children outside after school on the day, if you click on the “PARENT” tab to find out more information about why dirt is good.

Lastly if you would like to get involved yet none of the tabs quite fit, look through our partner info and find an organisation close to you and contact them and offer to volunteer on the day.

Do you have anything specific to early years?

Many nursery and preschools are signed up to celebrate outdoor play and learning on Thursday 6th October. As nursery schools really lead the way in taking their children outside many of the resources on this website are focused on slightly older children, but some of the activities on the resource page are useful for early years, we particularly like some of the activities in the mission explore downloadable book and we think some early years pupils will too.

In my country we have school holidays on 6th October, how can we get involved?

Ah ha, you are not the only one who has that problem! If your school is on holiday you can still register, download the resources and share your amazing day – just choose a day that works for you. If you would like a poster without a date on let us know! Find out more at:
www.outdoorclassroomday.com

I would like to take part but I don't think my country is on your list?

Brilliant! The countries we are looking at running big campaigns in to support Outdoor Classroom Day include: UK, Brazil, Turkey, Vietnam, Portugal, India, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Finland, France, Greece, China, Morocco, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Iran, Tunisia, Nigeria, Algeria, Bangladesh, Chile, Sri Lanka, and Thailand although others may join in too.

If your country isn't on the list, or hasn't got its own designated website yet, then simply sign up at:
www.outdoorclassroomday.com

The most important thing is to get involved and to have a great day learning and playing outside!

I'm an NGO and interested in leading an Outdoor Classroom Day campaign in my country, how do I get involved?

Fantastic! Please email info@outdoorclassroomday.com and we'll get back to you with more information. Even if your target country isn't on the list we should be able to support you with resources!

MEDIA/PRESS

I work in media/PR - can you send me a press pack please?

Please contact us and we will send you some info:
info@outdoorclassroomday.com

CORPORATES AND ORGANISATIONS

How can corporates get involved?

Lots of organisations get involved in the day, spreading the word to their customer base and by providing offers for schools signed up on the day.

Click on the PARTNER tab on the website and fill in the form and we will be in touch.

We would like to help spread the word, what can we do?

Please do, follow up on Facebook and twitter, let your contacts know about Outdoor Classroom Day, fill in the form when you click on the PARTNER tab and we can give you more information.

Could you help boost social media posts? Put up posters in your workplace? Help us print out posters or other resources? Maybe look at the books in the Teacher library and choose one to be professionally printed for a number of schools? There are lots of ways to get involved!

Most of all, plan to do something lovely outdoors on the day and let everyone know...

We love the idea, how can we get involved?

Whatever your age, spend some time on Outdoor Classroom Day playing and learning outside - some of the most fun and creativity happens when you are in the great outdoors.

Many outdoor learning and play organisations run special activities on Outdoor Classroom Day for local schools. If that's you, then click on the PARTNER tab and let us know what you are going to do on the day.

If you are a parent of school aged children, ask their school to sign up and see if they would like you to help out.

Remember to take your children outside after school on the 6th October - if you click on the "PARENT" tab you can find more information about why dirt is good.

Lastly, you are welcome to look through the partner information and find an organisation close to you - get in touch with them and offer to volunteer on the day.

We would like to offer our outdoor space for schools to visit, can I do this?

Brilliant, click on the PARTNER tab and let us know all about it so we can promote it to schools signed up to the day.

We would like to offer a discount on our services to schools on the day can I do this?

Brilliant, click on the PARTNER tab and let us know all about it so we can promote it to schools signed up to the day.

We would like to co-brand a publication to support the day, can we do this?

Please contact the global team on:
info@outdoorclassroomday.com

How can we encourage the schools we work with to take part?

Let them know about the day and feel free to share the great resources on this website with them. Remember that lots of schools do fantastic work supporting outdoor play and learning, so encourage them to celebrate what they do well and maybe even do a bit more on Thursday 6th October.

PARENTS

I am a parent and want to influence my child's school to get involved, can you help?

Brilliant, let your child's class teacher know about the day and ask them to sign up. Feel free to share any of the resources on the website with them if you think they will find them inspiring.

Keep an eye on www.dirtisgood.com for loads of ideas about how to take getting wild and outdoors home with you!

OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY



Outdoor Classroom Day is a global campaign to celebrate and inspire learning and play outside the classroom, supported by Unilever's Dirt is Good brands and led by Project Dirt.

On the day schools across the world will be taking at least one class outdoors, teaching essential skills and raising awareness of the importance of play. We hope this will inspire schools everywhere to make outdoor learning and play a part of their school every day! With everyone's support, we can make sure children everywhere enjoy their childhood and have the foundations they need for the life they want to live.

Play for today, prepared for tomorrow!

Find out how you can get involved and access all the resources at: www.outdoorclassroomday.com



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@OutdoorClassDay

Do be aware you get involved at your own risk! Be prepared to be amazed...



dirt is good

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CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FOR GOOD

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