

How Outdoor Learning Works Around the World

Case Studies and real life examples



The International School Grounds Alliance (ISGA) is a global network of organizations and professionals working to enrich children's learning and play by 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 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
- We have collected together some of our favourite school grounds activities from around the world – we hope you enjoy trying them out.

For more ideas from around the globe or to become a member of the ISGA visit our website at www.internationalschoolgrounds.org



ROBERT'S LITTLE FINGER

AGES

8-11 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Naturskolan i Lund
Lund, Sweden
www.lund.se

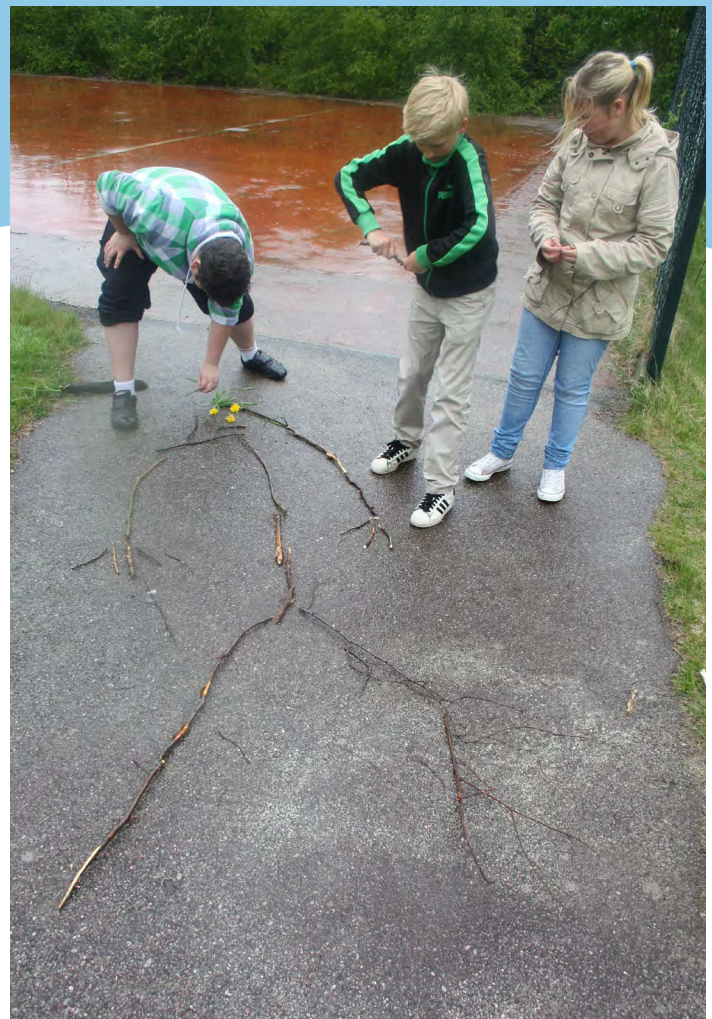
This activity teaches ratios and collaboration. Students work together to construct a scale model of a member of their group. This activity can be further extended by asking students to collect twigs of a variety of sizes before the activity begins.

MATERIALS

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



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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.



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 straight forward 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.



KPOKORO, AN OUTDOOR NIGERIAN GAME

AGES

6-12 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

Elizabeth Babalola
Nigeria



© ELIZABETH BABALOLA

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.



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.)

EMPTY CLASSROOM DAY



Empty Classroom Day is a UK campaign to celebrate and inspire learning and play outside the classroom. The campaign is backed by Persil, led by Eco-Schools England and supported 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.emptyclassroomday.org.uk



/emptyclassroomdayuk



@emptyclassroom

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



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