



SALZBURG
GLOBAL
SEMINAR
75th Anniversary

The Salzburg Statement for Greening School Grounds & Outdoor Learning

THE GLOBAL LESSONS ON GREENING SCHOOL GROUNDS & OUTDOOR LEARNING PROJECT

The Global Lessons on Greening School Grounds & Outdoor Learning project engages global leaders and practitioners to build networks of like-minded organizations and individuals to identify scalable strategies and deepen our understanding of how to support the worldwide movement of schoolyard greening.

Since November 2021, the Children & Nature Network, in partnership with Salzburg Global Seminar, the International School Grounds Alliance, International Union for Conservation of Nature, #NatureForAll, and the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families, identified and disseminated successful approaches from around the world to influence and help us, as a society, make significant progress in addressing complex, interrelated problems.

Fellows participating in the online program *Global Lessons on Greening Schools Grounds & Outdoor Learning* developed this Statement to influence thinking, policy, and approaches to school grounds and outdoor learning opportunities.

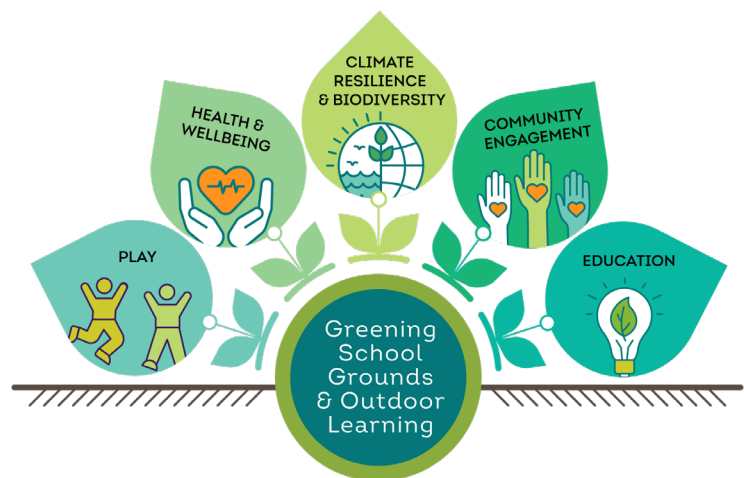
This Statement, drafted by Salzburg Global Fellows, will support a global action agenda to ensure that all children and communities have access to green school grounds and outdoor learning.

For more information, please visit schoolgroundgreening.org

There is growing momentum worldwide to scale school ground greening as a sensible and thoughtful approach to increase climate resilience and improve health and education outcomes, especially for those most impacted by systems of inequity and environmental injustices.

Scientific evidence shows that transforming school grounds into nature-rich environments is a powerful tool that improves physical and mental health, social and cognitive skills, creativity, and academic performance. The ability to play, learn and grow on school grounds allows children and young people to be connected to nature and, in turn, protect it and its inhabitants, which is essential for actions to mitigate climate change.

We strongly recommend greening school grounds and outdoor learning should both be implemented, resourced, and expanded for the following five key reasons:



PLAY

Green school grounds support outdoor, better-quality play.

- Nature-based outdoor play helps stimulate curiosity, creativity, cooperation, and confidence, all related to life-long success and happiness.
- Outdoor play leads to physical and mental development while supporting focus and goal setting.
- Green school grounds provide nature connections and areas for free play in urban communities, where there may be less accessible.
- Children are more active outdoors, and outdoor play reduces sedentary time, improving health outcomes.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Greening school grounds and outdoor learning supports mental, physical, nutritional, and emotional health across age groups.

- Green school grounds with diverse elements are more inclusive and supportive of children and youth's range of needs, neurodiversity, and physicality.
- Nature-based outdoor environments can reduce stress and increase relaxation.
- Green school grounds lead to better social-emotional outcomes while enhancing long-term health.
- Outdoor play helps children and youth develop fine and gross motor skills.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE & BIODIVERSITY

Greening school grounds can increase climate resilience and biodiversity through intentional design.

- Well-designed green school grounds support biodiversity and prevent biodiversity loss (using local species) by providing space for native flora and fauna to thrive.
- Green school grounds can mitigate the local heat island effect. Schools can reduce impermeable hard surfaces and include plants for shade and evaporative cooling.
- Green school grounds offer places to learn about climate change and biodiversity in a local natural environment and can give students an active role in their environments and futures.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Greening school grounds can engage the wider community during design and use, provide a space for the community to play and connect, and reflect the local culture.

- Inclusive school ground design leads to a sense of ownership and empowerment, which supports a sense of belonging. The school ground can integrate local resources, represent the current and long-time communities, and promote cultural heritage.
- Including children and youth in planning leads to spaces that reflect their needs and interests and gives them a sense of agency over their lives in line with the UN convention on children's rights.
- Nature provides a neutral space, belongs to everyone, and is a space for inclusion regardless of socioeconomic background, race, age, and different abilities.
- Quality shared community space encourages and requires shared responsibility and allows strong communities the opportunity to develop.

EDUCATION

Green school grounds support many positive education outcomes - for students and teachers.

- Outdoor learning supports the development of critical social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, e.g., empathy, and reduces bullying while enhancing self-control, care for others, and independent, self-directed learning.
- Frequent time spent in nature helps develop problem-solving abilities, focus, attention span, and executive function skills.
- Outdoor learning brings abstract theories to life and emphasizes learning by doing.
- Nature-based outdoor learning results in higher academic achievement while contributing to improved social skills and care for the Earth.
- Outdoor learning contributes to teachers' mental health and well-being by affording time in nature.

A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant supported Global Lessons on Greening School Grounds & Outdoor Learning. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.