



The Outdoor Classroom
Thesis: Celebration and
Presentation
Unit: 14041005

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“Under the new revision of the National Curriculum for the age group of 4-11 year olds, should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning, and if so, how can the Landscape Architect support the development of the outdoor classroom?”

INTRODUCTION

“Outdoor learning is good for children and young people. It helps them gain a practical understanding of the world around them, build self-confidence, test their abilities, take managed risks and develop a sense of responsibility and tolerance towards places and people.” – (The Countryside Alliance Foundation 2010, p2)

Outdoor learning is becoming increasingly recognised as an innovative and fundamental aspect of a child’s learning and development. As Primary Schools throughout England are beginning to focus more on outdoor learning, the need for the design and implementation of outdoor learning facilities are increasing. These outdoor learning environments will be referred to in this dissertation as *outdoor classrooms*. The study will focus on the benefits of the *outdoor classroom*, the process from concept to completion and the role of the Landscape Architect.

The uses of an *outdoor classroom* range from large open spaces for physical education, nature trails, smaller focussed wildlife areas and many other outdoor learning environments. *Outdoor classrooms* also promote environmental psychology with a focus on all the sensory stimuli. These stimuli provide psychological responses and develop the learning experience, whilst improving behavioural attitudes.

“the most memorable learning experiences, help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. They influence our values and the decisions we make. They allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.” – (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom 2006, p1)

Primary education is a crucial stage in child’s formative development and shapes their life (The Learning Trust 2011) and the research throughout this study will focus on this age group, which covers educational phases, Key Stage 1 and 2.

The aim of the dissertation is to cover two key points in the transitional process of state primary education in the UK.

1. During the current revision of the curriculum for Key Stage 1 and 2 is there the opportunity to include and promote the *outdoor classroom* in schools?

2. How can Landscape Architects support the development of outdoor classrooms and should they gain a stronger understanding of educational thinking?

The dissertation will be divided into four sections. The first section will focus on current guidelines and frameworks presently used in Primary Schools throughout the UK, with particular relevance of *outdoor classrooms*. The second section focuses on the benefits of *outdoor classrooms* and how they impact on the development of children in Key Stages 1 and 2. The third section examines the role of the Landscape Architect and how their skills and knowledge

can influence and enhance the design of *outdoor classrooms*. The fourth section focuses on the individual stakeholders involved and their role within the process. Finally, conclusions will be drawn to assess the future of *outdoor classrooms*, with recommendations on whether there needs to be a stronger focus within any new legislation compiled by Secretary of State Education, Michael Gove and how the Landscape Architect can support this.

The research throughout this study is focussed on current educational frameworks, future government intentions and guidelines, the role of the Landscape Architect and the understanding of the *outdoor classroom* by all appropriate professionals involved. The supportive evidence is supplied through a series of interviews with, and questionnaires completed by Members of Parliament on the Education Select Committee, professional landscape experts, headteachers and teachers from a range of Primary Schools in the North West and other specialists both in the UK and overseas. (*Appendix C*)

NATIONAL CURRICULUM AND SUPPORTING FRAMEWORKS

The National Curriculum (NC) is the National Guidance Framework that binds English schools at both Primary and Secondary Level. The aim of the framework is to ensure that the teaching and learning standards are balanced between quality and consistency. The pragmatic approach of the curriculum follows a series of guidelines, including subjects that are taught in school time, providing a base knowledge, skills and understanding of each subject taught, creating a platform to monitor the learning outcome progress of each individual and finally allows for evaluative feedback on the progress made throughout the academic year. (Directgov 2011)

Although most schools in England follow the National Curriculum, there is flexibility to the approach taken to achieve the required learning outcomes. Therefore, teaching plans can be designed to meet the needs of each individual and the best practice for that particular year group.

After examining the National Curriculum, it is apparent that presently, there is no specific mention of *outdoor classrooms* within the guidelines. These guidelines have been archived and are currently in the process of being reformed by the Department of Education, led by Michael Gove.

In addition to the National Curriculum, following legislation in 2003, the 'Every Child Matters' framework was introduced to focus on the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to age 19, in conjunction with the Children's Act 2004. It is the responsibility of all Local Authorities to ensure that the 'Every Child Matters' framework is met and it is their responsibility to work with local schools to find solutions that satisfy the needs and support the welfare of children in that area. Learning outside the classroom provides a perfect opportunity to support the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, in particular enjoying and achieving, staying safe and being healthy. (Every Child Matters 2003)

All schools have been strongly encouraged to embrace the 'National Healthy School Standard' framework, launched in 1999, which promotes opportunities for all pupils to establish a healthy childhood through all aspects of life. The report emphasises that in order for a school to be healthy it must successfully help pupils to achieve and improve on personal standards, commit to continuing improvement and development, promote physical and emotional health by providing accessible and relevant information/facilities, and support pupils development with their skills and

attitudes to make informed decisions about their health. (Healthy Development Agency 2002)

Although there is no direct mention of *outdoor classrooms* within the 'National Healthy School Standard' framework, the opportunity presented by these spaces will greatly improve the success of achieving a healthy school environment. The impact of working outdoors is considerable for all children and will be of particular benefit to areas of deprivation.

"In schools in socially deprived or heavily built up inner city areas, this may be the first introduction a child will get to interact with nature. By creating high quality high quality outdoor play and learning environments, the children are given the opportunity and freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active in a safe and secure environment." – (Nickson, G. 2008, p1)

The National Curriculum is presently undergoing change and schools are waiting for the outcome of the consultations that are taken place. Current Secretary of State for the Education Department, Michael Gove, is currently working on implementing new educational guidelines within the country; however, the transition between the old and the new may take some time to be finalised, communicated and implemented.

Prior to the change in Government, the interim report 'The Rose Review', led by Jim Rose, outlined changes proposed to take place to the curriculum in 2011. The proposals aimed to make the curriculum more manageable and integrated. It was suggested that traditional subjects would be incorporated into six areas of learning, which will:

"give schools optimum flexibility for planning cross-curricular studies, and ample opportunities to teach essential content discretely and directly." - (Rose, J. 2006, p1)

If these changes are to be implemented, the new curriculum will allow teachers more freedom to plan their teaching to suit their pupil's needs and interests. Whilst this could be challenging initially, it also offers teachers and schools unique opportunities to develop creative and exciting ways in which children can learn, which could include *outdoor classrooms*.

"Learning outside the classroom is about raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about what we learn but importantly how and where we learn." - (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom 2006, p3)

A number of educationalists and conservationists believe that there should be a requirement within the National Curriculum that all schools provide high quality outdoor learning.

"We believe outdoor learning should be part of every child's education." - (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom 2006, p1)

"An entitlement to outdoor learning should be created within the National Curriculum to ensure the countryside becomes part of every child's education." - (The Countryside Alliance Foundation 2010, p7)

The Countryside Alliance Foundation champions this view further, believing that legislation should be passed to ensure that this is in place.

“We believe future legislation should be used as an opportunity to create an entitlement to outdoor learning within the curriculum to allow practical learning opportunities to be fully realised.” - (The Countryside Alliance Foundation 2010, p7)

A number of other countries have already developed a clear vision to their approach of outdoor learning in their curriculum, for example Scotland.

“All staff at every level of involvement with the education of children and young people have a responsibility to make the most of the outdoor environment to support the delivery of the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence.” – (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2010, p6)

In the recent School Funding Statement, led by Michael Gove, whilst acknowledging the need and commitment for increased financial support, there was no specific mention of outdoor learning. The primary focus of this document centred around the development of increased school spaces to deal with rising population and improvement of buildings. (School Funding Statement 2011)

One of the major obstacles to providing and developing outdoor spaces for young people can be lack of funding. Schools especially can have their access to outdoor learning constrained by available funds and the pressure to develop *outdoor classrooms* can put further demands on overstretched budgets. The Institute for Outdoor Learning states that the one of major obstacles to developing education through outdoor learning is the availability of finances.

“Young people especially have their access to outdoor learning restricted by available funds.” - (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2011)

A number of charities and organisations are available to assist schools in developing this aspect of the curriculum, although this relies on schools taking the initiative by researching and applying for grants. A number of schools contacted during this study had developed their school outdoor spaces through fund raising within school, relying on parents and families to support. In some cases this can be very difficult, and therefore implementation of plans may need to be staged while funds are raised, especially in the present economic climate. However, these self funding projects can also be extremely rewarding and has resulted in excellent outdoor spaces.

Woodfield Primary School in Wigan, is an example of where all the project costs were met through fundraising events and support by parents, families and local businesses. (Figure 1)

At present there is no discrete government funding to provide *outdoor classrooms* in schools and until there is some legislation that necessitates schools to provide these facilities, it is unlikely that there will be.

Figure 1. - Volunteers from local businesses helping to build the outdoor classroom at Woodfield Primary School, Wigan



THE BENEFITS OF THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The earliest form of the *outdoor classroom* in Britain originated towards the end of the 19th century in response to the outbreak and exposure that children had to Tuberculosis (TB). The idea of taking education outdoors was adopted from the Sanatoria, which were medical facilities that existed throughout Europe, to help and support people recovering from long-term and serious illnesses, in particular Tuberculosis, by providing ‘fresh air and sunshine’ to sufferers, before antibiotics existed. The concept of bringing ‘fresh air’ from the mountains into the classroom was initially used in Berlin, Germany in 1904 and was adopted in British schools about three years later. These schools were named ‘open-air schools’, with the first being at Bostall Wood Summer School (*figure 2*), Southeast London. Although the concept of the ‘open-air school’ was later phased out in the UK between the 1950’s and 1960’s, the ideas were very similar to the use of school grounds today. They focussed on promoting the health and welfare of children, whilst also ensuring education could venture away from the indoor classroom.



Figure 2. - An example of an ‘open-air school’ at Bostall Wood Summer School



An example of an ‘open-air school’ in Amsterdam (www.GreatBuildings.com)

Historically, school grounds have been the last phase of design to be implemented in schools and the first to be cut when budgets are strained. Often the potential of outdoor spaces in schools are under-valued and neglected and viewed primarily as a safe space to be used for break time periods away from indoor classes;

[outdoor] “space is more than just useful or safe, but part of the fabric of learning and a rich reflection of layers of culture.” - (Stine, S. 1997, pXII)

Throughout research carried out by the ‘Learning through Landscapes’ organisation, it has been proven that outdoor educational environments in schools can benefit a child’s development, however, eight in ten teachers claim that their school grounds are not sufficiently developed to maximise learning outcomes, supporting the view that the school grounds may not be fully utilised and just used as an area for break times. (Learning through Landscapes 2003)

Within the last century the major purpose of the school grounds was to support child development through sports and games (Stine, S. 1997), and the design of outdoors spaces have reflected this. However, there is evidence that even a hundred years ago there was recognition that outdoor learning was an invaluable learning resource. In 1925, Margaret McMillan, a British educator and pioneer observed:

“The best classroom and richest cupboard is roofed only by the sky.” – (McMillan, M 2006)

School grounds are often a reflection of current issues and thinking, for example before and during World War 2, it was evident that school grounds reflected a military style theme, with the emphasis being on discipline and structure. The design of the playgrounds regularly consisted of large open asphalt surfaces with little evidence of soft landscaping; boundaries were defined by steel linked chain fences and finished with monotonous colour and no individuality. (Figure 4)

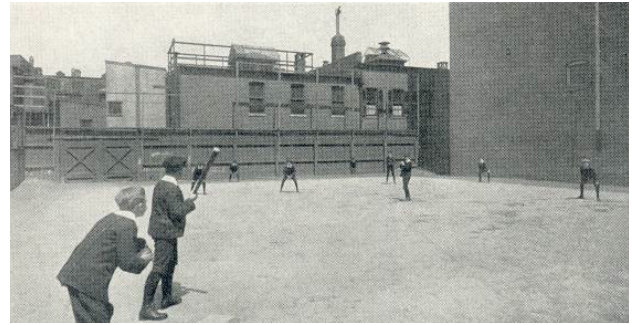


Figure 4 - Historical look at use of playgrounds, mainly used for sports and games

During this time, whilst there was an appreciation of the importance of outdoor learning to aid child development, the grounds were designed for necessity rather than taking into account the schools culture, ethos and individuality.

Presently, as healthy living and experiential learning is high on the priority for the development and learning for children, it is important that outdoor spaces are maximised and explored. The benefits of outdoor learning support a child's development by bridging the gap between theory and reality, creating a much more engaging and creative learning experience and gives each child a larger appreciation to his/her environment, community and own personal wellbeing.

During a recent study conducted by 'Learning through Landscapes', where 700 schools were surveyed, findings proved that schools that had invested in outdoor learning facilities were experiencing tangible benefits. 73% of respondents stated that children's behaviour had improved, with 64% of schools reporting that there had been a huge reduction in bullying within the school and 84% reported that social interaction had increased. (Appendix D) Bullying is a key issue that faces schools today and it is the responsibility of each school to formulate a clear policy to ensure that bullying is actively eradicated, therefore schools are often finding new ways of supporting this. As social interaction is increased during outdoor learning, with a real emphasis on working together, *outdoor classrooms* are therefore a successful way of eliminating bullying.

Ofsted, the official body for inspecting schools, evaluated in their October 2008 report that:

"When planned and implemented well, learning outside the classroom contributed significantly to raising standards and improving pupils' personal, social and emotional development." - (Ofsted Report, 2008)

In a recent study carried out by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), where 1300 teachers were surveyed and 10 schools were studied in depth, reports found that children in schools which have *outdoor classrooms* or actively encourage outdoor learning and gardening become more resilient, confident and are more likely to live healthier lives.

"Schools which integrate gardens into the curriculum are developing children who are much more responsive to the challenges of adult life" - (Dr Simon Thornton Wood 2010)

The report also suggested that *outdoor classrooms* encouraged pupils to think on their feet, become more active in

problem solving, boost their numeracy and literacy skills and have a much more inquisitive approach to learning. It was also suggested within the report that exposing children to outdoor environments and living creatures such as insects helped them to overcome any fears and give them a greater awareness of nature.

Dr Simon Thornton Wood, Director of Science and Learning at the RHS, said:

“As the new coalition government considers a new approach to the primary curriculum, we hope they acknowledge the striking conclusions of our research and that gardens enable a creative, flexible approach to teaching that has significant benefits.” - (Dr Simon Thornton Wood 2010)

Similarly to the physical, educational and personal benefits that an *outdoor classroom* provides, there are also significant environmental psychological factors that can impact on a child's development. The Landscape Architect can implement planting philosophies in their design approach, which have a multi-purpose function. Not only do they provide the basis for the soft landscaping involved in the scheme but also the sensory stimuli to the user in the environment. The combination of plant species such as lavender, sage and thyme as well as a mix of colourful, fragrant flowers can provide seasonal interest, as well as appealing to all children in that environment.



Figure 5. - Children of Woodfield Primary School working in the raised allotment beds

It is acknowledged that sensory stimuli are an essential part of a child's development from an early age. Again as proven in the 'Learning through Landscapes' research, (*Appendix D*) it is established that behavioural attitudes improve and also the same applies for academic achievement.

A further benefit is the ever-changing climate in the UK. Due to the changeable and unpredictable weather, outdoor learning can provide a number of challenges for schools. However conversely, this also provides wonderful opportunities for creative and developmental learning, not only with regard to flora and fauna but also with particular regard to the seasonal and ever changing landscape, and the dynamic changes that occur in the British climate.

THE ROLE OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The necessity and advantages of *outdoor classrooms* have been established in the previous chapters, however, the design and implementation of these environments depend largely on the key personnel involved. The particular emphasis of this chapter focuses on the role a Landscape Architect assumes in this process.

The Landscape Architect brings to the process, skills, knowledge and understanding of the design process and the breakdown of each stage.

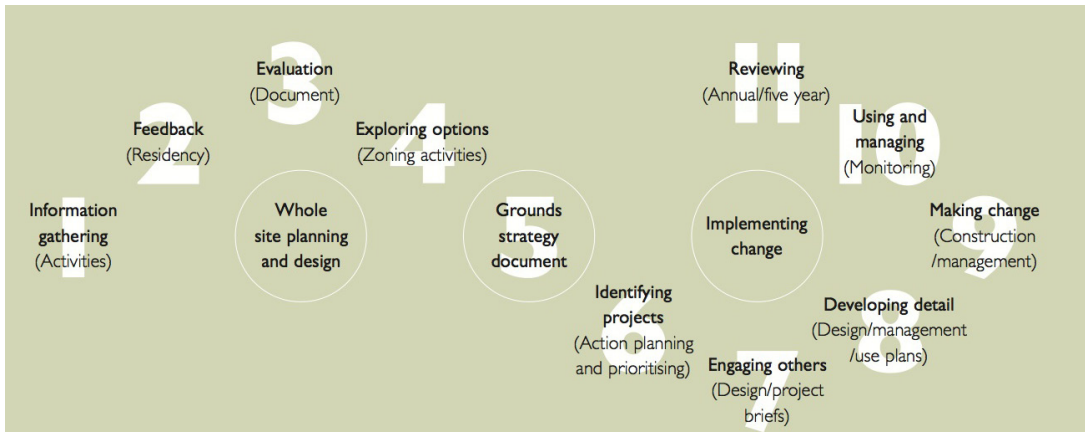


Figure 6. Successful ‘whole school approach’ breakdown at each stage. School for the Future 2006

The expertise the Landscape Architect offers covers site survey, site analysis, providing a diverse range of creative ideas and also the experience of working with other professionals, such as architects and planners. It is assumed that the Landscape Architect should take the lead role in the design process, applying their knowledge and skills into the design of *outdoor classrooms*. (Landscapes for Learning, 1997) However, the ‘whole-school approach’ to the design process could be supported by all members of the school community with the support of the Landscape Architect.

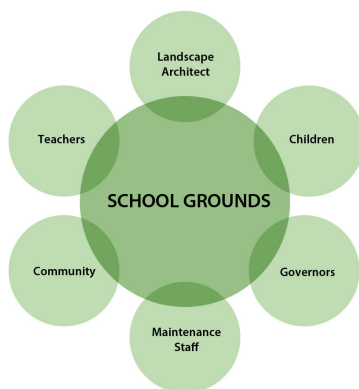


Figure 7. Whole-School Approach to the design of outdoor classrooms. Charnley, D 2011

The Landscape Architect is best placed to instigate the transition from concept to resolution. However, as mentioned previously, the collaboration between the key personnel is integral to providing a design that is sensitive to the schools needs and culture and provides the most effective learning environment.

“The largest contribution a landscape architect can make is transforming a space into a place.” – (Jim Wike 2006, p46)

Jim Wike, highly regarded Landscape Architect and author from Tennessee, USA, mentions in his article on ‘*Why Outdoor Spaces for Children Matter So Much*’ 2006, that he is a firm advocate of well-designed *outdoor classrooms* providing an instrumental foundation for a child’s learning and development. Wike’s experience covers a broad range of learning, play and health care settings across the United States of America. Through his experience and expertise he has compiled his own definition of an *outdoor classroom*:

“I’m not talking about a plant-filled area that is only used as a place for children to study flora and fauna. My definition of “outdoor classroom” is a place where all kinds of learning can occur as children interact with various elements in the natural world.” – (Jim Wike 2006, p44)

Overly designed and innovative solutions are not always the practical answer for the design of *outdoor classrooms*. The *outdoor classroom* needs to reflect and respond to the schools individual location and context. Some schools may require bright colours and artificial designs where others will require a more simplistic approach utilising and embracing natural materials.

“You’ll notice that I didn’t mention plastic structures and rubberized surfacing when I described our demonstration outdoor classroom. That’s because our team believes that it’s crucial for today’s young children to be given daily chances to interact with materials found in nature . . . like wood, stone, water grass, and non-poisonous trees and plants.” – (Jim Wike 2006, p45)

It is suggested in the publication, ‘Landscapes for Learning’, that the role of a Landscape Architect is simply the person who creates the design, generates the built form and provides the final outcome. (Stine, S 1997, p2) However, to achieve a more successful approach with reference to education, a balance in the relationship between all members should be sustained.

Well respected Chartered Landscape Architects, Noel Farrer and Romy Rawlings both support the role the Landscape Architect assumes in the design and development of high quality outdoor learning.

Romy Rawlings understands and advocates that carefully designed and implemented outdoor learning is integral to a child’s development and offers a wealth of opportunities.

“A school’s surroundings should be attractive and welcoming to all who use them - if the quality of the environment impacts directly upon the behaviour of those who use it, investment in the grounds of a school will surely reap many rewards - staff retention, higher student numbers and an improvement in learning to name a few”. – (Rawlings, R 2009)

Farrer’s own personal early learning experiences in the countryside has led him to champion the entitlement of rich outdoor learning environments, individual to each school location.

“For the first time the physical landscape within school grounds is also becoming the focus of debate and opportunity. As a Landscape Architect I work to create spaces that capture the ‘genius loci’ of the place and character of the communities they serve.” – (Farrer, J. 2009)

Although the Landscape Architect can offer expertise, past experiences and an open mind to the design of the school grounds, it should be appreciated that each school has its own individuality and needs a sensitive response to the site, based on that schools ethos and culture. Strategies need to be put in place to achieve best practice from initiation of the brief to completion. To guarantee all cultures and ethnicities within school are considered, good relationships need to be fostered with members of the school community to establish the school requirements.

It has been suggested that:

“Most people who care about child development know nothing about design, and most people who design know nothing about child development.” – (Hart 1993, Landscapes for Learning, p81)

This is a controversial statement and leads to the debate as to whether Landscape Architects need to acquire training or an understanding of educational thinking. At Fabrik Landscape Architects, a proportion of their work focuses on *outdoor classrooms* in schools and to support this, they use the skills and knowledge of an educational specialist to develop their designs.

“Only those with training and talent can design settings.” – (Nicholson 1971, Landscapes for Learning, p8)

Research from ‘Landscapes for Learning’ suggests that a number of Landscape Architect practices have not had much previous experience working with schools and therefore, would further benefit from input from teachers and educationalists.

There are however, projects where school staff, families and other members of the school community designed and created the *outdoor classroom* without employing a Landscape Architect. An example of this is at Castle Hill Primary School in Todmorden, Yorkshire. The design interventions introduced involved a series of tyres, logs and wooden structures, placed in an informal manner. (Figure 8) It may have been the case that the school was fortunate to have experts within the school community, but what is interesting to note is that no external professionals were employed to carry out the design process. The scheme has been completed and is well used by the children of the school.



Figure 8. - Castle Hill Primary School, Todmorden, project designed by members of the school community

A scheme carried out by Kinnear Landscape Architects at Daubeney Primary School in Hackney, was based on designing an *outdoor classroom* on the concept of community engagement. This project was primarily led by the Landscape Architects. The strategic approach placed emphasis on providing areas for games and learning to take place during break time and during classroom period. The design collaborates a series of floor markings and level changes which provides an unusual setting for the children to use.

However, as mentioned, the sole concept was community engagement rather than the focus on educational outcomes. This is where Landscape Architects can bridge the gap between educational thinking and designing for learning outcomes. By providing settings for learning to take place, whether this is a shelter for social inclusion or large group workshops, the facility is provided as a platform for educational development. (Figure 9)



Figure 9. - Daubeney Primary School, Hackney, (www.publicartonline.org.uk)

The final outcome of the design of the *outdoor classrooms* for the Landscape Architect should meet a series of interlinking objectives.

LANDSCAPE OBJECTIVES	EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a landscape setting suitable for school and community • Meet educational and social needs • Provide a safe, diverse and stimulating environment • Accommodate a range of activities/opportunities • Build in flexibility to accommodate change/development • Design buildings and grounds as one entity • Balance design, management and use against aesthetic, functional and financial considerations • Ensure environmental fit • Incorporate sustainability within the design, eg for surface water treatment, and cut and fill where physically possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow children to participate • Provide outdoor teaching spaces that are sheltered, safe and secure • Lay out space and facilities for all forms of play • Stimulate creativity • Contribute to pupils' health and well-being • Create places where nature may thrive • Celebrate diversity • Encourage responsibility through citizenship • Provide opportunities for enriching the curriculum • Provide sports facilities of a suitable standard • Be located at the heart of the community

Figure 10. - Educational and Landscape Objectives, (Schools for the Future 2006)

These objectives (*figure 10*) are design elements that the Landscape Architect should aim to meet and use as a criteria during the design process. The landscape objectives can be easily achieved through the skills and expertise of the Landscape Architect, however, it is the educational objectives that need to be scrutinised in order to meet the requirements of the user/client, which in this case are the children. It is essential for the Landscape Architect to develop a cohesive relationship with all members of the school community, which is labelled as a 'whole-school approach'.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Indications from research, suggest that a 'whole-school approach' is the most successful process to follow when designing an *outdoor classroom*. This 'whole-school approach' involves primarily the pupils, Landscape Architect, teachers, governors, parents, community and maintenance staff. The relationship and working together of these key players' defines the environmental success of the *outdoor classroom* as everyone brings their skills, knowledge, expertise and opinions to a design and by working together will play to the strengths of achieving a successful *outdoor classroom*.

"Most people who care about child development know nothing about design, and most people who design know nothing about child development." – (Hart 1993, Landscapes for Learning, p81)

Whilst the above statement suggests stereotypical roles for those involved in the process, by utilising each member's strength in the design process should lead to an exemplary successful final outcome.

Schools that have not previously been actively involved in outdoor learning may require additional assistance to plan their outdoor area.

“over the last few years with different strategies coming and going Heads are more and more reluctant to make changes with out good hard evidence that it will be beneficial.” - (Catherine Boulton, Headteacher 2011, Appendix C.1)

Therefore, case studies of successful outdoor learning, need to be well documented and presented to the government and made available to schools.

Due to the individuality of each locality and school environment there is no one set course of action of how to approach the design process. The most effective means of achieving this, is when Landscape Architects work together with all stakeholders in a collaborative process. Each stakeholder involved in this process offers their own expertise to arrive at site-specific solutions linking teaching objectives, architectural skills and health and safety regulations. It is essential to develop good communication about the future of the grounds in both the medium and long term. This is supported by Ben Smith, a Landscape Architect at Kinnear Landscape Architects, who when interviewed, suggested that working in close association with teachers and pupils benefited his own personal knowledge and experience, as well as providing the school with a design that reflected its core ethos.

Pupil involvement will allow children to feel this is a special area designed for and in collaboration with them. Children are articulate regarding their view of outdoor learning experiences, and educationalists can draw upon young people's views in their initial planning. The pupils of a school can provide key information in the design and implementation of the *outdoor classroom*.

“It is unfortunate that children can't design their outdoor play environments. Research on children's preferences shows that if children had the design skills to do so, their creations would be completely different from the areas called playgrounds that most adults design for them. Outdoor spaces designed by children would not only be fully naturalized with plants, trees, flowers, water, dirt, sand, mud, animals and insects, but also would be rich with a wide variety of play opportunities of every imaginable type. If children could design their outdoor play spaces, they would be rich developmentally appropriate learning environments where children would want to stay all day.” - (White & Stoecklin 2011)

The design needs to meet the requirements of the children and should be based on the needs of individuals as well as large groups of children. For instance, a sheltered area can provide a space for social interaction between one or two individuals during play time and lunch, but also provides an outdoor learning facility for large groups/ year groups.

“It's good to work outdoors in the fresh air. It gives us more ideas and helps us to achieve more in a beautiful, relaxing environment.” - (Woodfield Primary School Pupil 2011)

Teacher involvement is necessary so they can ensure there is opportunity to develop the progression of skills working towards delivering educational outcomes and in doing so taking ownership of the area once completed. The role that the teacher takes, covers a range of responsibilities, including ensuring the *outdoor classroom* is safe and effective to provide a successful learning potential.

“Teachers thought and decision making in regard to the environment is critical to the entire process of teaching and learning.” - (Loughlin and Suina 1997, Landscapes for Learning, p3)

Teachers are aware of the funding available for the project and they need to see that their priorities are the focus of the project at all times. Teachers can also provide the Landscape Architect with vital information about the core ethos of learning and any traditions associated with the school.

Parent’s involvement will ensure they have the opportunity to see how their children will learn and how they can support this process at school and at home. At Woodfield Primary School, Wigan, not only were the parents informed about the *outdoor classroom* through newsletters, fund raising group (Friends’ of Woodfield) and the Eco-Group but they were also included in the manual labour to build the outdoor classroom. This enabled parents, governors and friends involved to understand the design and implementation, provided them with an opportunity to put forward their own ideas and also saved funding costs, which are vital to the school.

Maintenance staff needs to be aware of the necessary management involved and how feasible and affordable this is in both the short and long term. This is an essential process that needs to be thoroughly discussed and considered with the Landscape Architect and the school prior to the final design.

The timescale of the design and completion of the project is short compared to the longevity of the use of the *outdoor classroom*. Compared to all other stakeholders, the role of Landscape Architect is temporary, albeit heavily involved in the design process. The design needs to be flexible so that the landscape is constantly shaping the learning environment, and adapting to change in use and volumes of children in the space.

In addition to the Landscape Architect offering expertise in site survey, analysis and creativity whilst providing experience of working with other professionals, they can also provide support and knowledge to teachers in the decision making of *‘alternative perspectives to learning’*, *‘providing a catalyst for change’* and most importantly *‘facilitating a thinking process’*. (Stine, S 1997, Landscapes for Learning, p3)

It is essential that the Landscape Architect has the enthusiasm and dedication to ensure the quality of the design can be maintained in future and it is vital that the Landscape Architect can support the school by providing detailed management plans, with particular reference to planting and maintenance upkeep.

Leesland Infant School in Gosport is a school that championed the ‘whole-school approach’ for the design and implementation of their outdoor school grounds. (Schools for the Future, 2006) The school, which holds approximately 250 pupils, is situated within a residential, urban area and had many restrictions within its location. The schools initial plan centred on developing single areas of the grounds, however, following discussions and advice from neighbouring schools, Leesland Infant School became convinced that the ‘whole-school approach’ was the most effective strategy. The school established a strong working relationship with Hampshire Schools Landscape programme (HSLP) to comprise a workable planning and design process. This included Landscape Architects from the HSLP to work with children and teachers to gain ideas about the history and the vision of the school. This approach was very successful and was celebrated by the Headteacher of Gosport Primary School:

“The process was invaluable as we gained a thorough understanding of the whole site and the needs of the children before developing our ideas with expert guidance.” – (Jane Mcdowell, Headteacher 2006)

To summarise, it has been established that the ‘whole-school approach’ to the design of outdoor learning spaces is the most effective strategy to deliver successful learning outcomes. However, with uncertainty and new legislation under the coalition government, how can this approach be sustained and utilised to maximise the potential of *outdoor classrooms*?

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the research gathered throughout the project has culminated to highlight the importance of *outdoor classrooms*. As the curriculum does not currently include outdoor learning as a discrete subject there are no measures in place to gauge the quality and effectiveness of this work.

From research collected it is evident that there is an increase of outdoor learning and a recognition of the benefits this offers throughout the UK and many other countries around the world. Outdoor learning does not take one specific form and there may be a benefit in defining certain measures within the curriculum to allow evaluation and consistency of approach.

It appears that the Scottish Parliament have already made *outdoor classrooms* a priority and have identified the need to maximise outdoor learning in Primary Schools. (Education Scotland 20) The Scottish Government have produced and implemented strategies that outline the importance of *outdoor classrooms* and this is a strategy that could be adopted in England. The importance of *outdoor classrooms* and the impact they have to achieve the healthy schools motive is yet to be fully realised in England and the inclusion of these learning environments in the new revision of the National Curriculum should be a strong consideration. The implementation of the *outdoor classroom* in the revised National Curriculum would further support the ‘Every Child Matters’ framework, which is a legal requirement within each school in the UK.

Although there is no current binding legislation to promote the use of *outdoor classrooms* in schools throughout England, a number of self-organised charities are supporting and promoting the importance and benefits of them. With particular reference to ‘Learning through Landscapes’ and the ‘Council for Learning Outside the Classroom’, the *outdoor classroom* is advocated through press releases, members of these charities engaging with schools to outline the benefits they have on child development, offering practical support and highlighting available funding resources.

Recommendations have been made to the coalition government by Alan Spedding, who in his Environment White Paper document, states that:

“We want to make it easier for people to do the right thing, with action in the health and education systems and in our communities.” – (Alan Spedding 2011, Appendix C.7)

To achieve this ambition he suggests a number of actions including:

“We will remove barriers to learning outdoors and increase schools’ abilities to teach outdoors when they wish to do so.” – (Alan Spedding 2011)

Outdoor classrooms are increasingly being recognised by MP’s, in terms of their importance for child development. There has yet to be any formal indication from the government that outdoor learning will be a strong element of the new curriculum, however, in a recent response to the questionnaire sent to Michael Gove, there was an acknowledgment of the value of outdoor learning.

“We do appreciate that learning outside the classroom is important.” - (Leona Smith, on behalf of Michael Gove, 2011)

During a recent survey to Members of the Education Select Committee, in his answer to the question: *Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?* (Appendix A) Ian Mearns recognised the importance of outdoor learning and stated that:

“As part of a broad and balanced curriculum and experiential learning.” – (Ian Mearns MP 2011, Appendix C.5)

These viewpoints indicate an understanding for the need of the inclusion of *outdoor classrooms* in new government legislation for Primary Schools. Although *outdoor classrooms* are not currently mentioned in any legislation, local MP’s are aware of schools that are utilising excellent outdoor facilities. An example of this is Woodfield Primary School, Wigan, who have championed their *outdoor classroom* facilities and maximise its use. Lisa Nandy, MP for Wigan, responded to the questionnaire stating that Woodfield Primary School had been recently recognised by the Speaker in the House of Commons, as a role model school for its successful outdoor learning environment. (Appendix C.4)

The success of the *outdoor classroom* at Woodfield Primary School is due to the implementation of the ‘whole-school approach’, which has made a massive contribution to the *outdoor classroom* environment present today. Each stakeholder of the school community was consulted in the design process and this led to a flourishing learning environment. In addition to teaching staff, governors and landscape experts, the design and construction process involved voluntary support from local businesses, as well as significant input from families and children of the school. The success is highlighted by the regular use of the *outdoor classroom*, along with the ever-changing learning environment, which reflects the core ethos of the school.

“Outdoor learning benefits children’s physical, emotional and mental health and well-being which supports academic achievement.” - (Kathryn Lowe, Deputy Head, Woodfield Primary School, 2011)

This viewpoint is further supported by the ‘whole-school approach’, which was adopted by Gosport Primary School, Portsmouth, where Landscape Architects worked together with children, teachers and other stakeholders to develop and achieve the most suitable outdoor environment. This reinforces that each stakeholder brings valuable input to the overall process and supports the success of the ‘whole-school approach’.

As previous statements have suggested, Landscape Architects do not necessarily have an understanding of the curriculum and the educational outcomes for children; and school staff do not necessarily have any knowledge and skills to design an *outdoor classroom*. Therefore, it would be advantageous for Landscape Architects to develop

their educational thinking and understanding as to how their design can have a direct impact on learning behaviour, and this again supports the 'whole-school approach'. As highlighted in the document; 'Engaging and Learning with the Outdoors – The Final Report of the Outdoor Classroom in a Rural Context Action Research Project' compiled by the NFER, it is recommended that:

“All concerned need to be much clearer about how (as well as what) outdoor education can contribute to pupil learning” – (NFER 2005, 6.2: Point 7)

The Ofsted Report, *Learning Outside the Classroom* (2008) which evaluated the impact and importance of learning outdoors, stated that:

“the most effectively managed schools and colleges, included learning outside the classroom as an integral part of a well planned curriculum which ensured the coherent and progressive development of knowledge , skills and understanding.” – (Ofsted Report, 2008)

The report further states that:

“schools and colleges should ensure that schools and their curriculum planning includes sufficient well structured opportunities for all learners to engage in learning outside the classroom as a key, integrated element of their experience.” – (Ofsted Report, 2008)

As the *outdoor classroom* becomes more of a focus in schools it is recommended that the Landscape Architect profession is represented and is able to offer their expertise in the early stage of any new guidance for schools. Furthermore there should be a presence and opportunity for input from the Landscape Architect profession at national and local conferences for schools relating to the development of *outdoor classrooms* in the curriculum.

In addition to Landscape Architects increasing their skills and educational knowledge, there is also a need for headteachers and teachers to enhance their understanding of how *outdoor classrooms* can support child development. Again as recommended in the document by the NFER:

“DFES, local authorities and other agencies should aim to further raise school staff awareness and understanding about the range of outdoor learning site sand the outdoor education opportunities they offer.” – (NFER 2005, 6.2: Point 1)

These statements are supported by Vicki Stoecklin, Education and Child Development Director, Kansas, USA, who in response to question 2: *Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?* (Appendix A), stated:

“Here in the US outdoor time is still considered recess where teachers have a free period and someone else comes into supervise the children other than the teacher during this time. Most teachers think that science is the only thing that can be taught in an outdoor setting. Any subject can be taught in the outdoor environment if the setting is designed properly. We (US) needs to create teacher training that addresses the importance of unstructured and structured time in nature and we need curriculum goals that are tied to outdoor learning in all states.” – (Vicky Stoecklin 2011, Appendix C.8)

Ideally, the school building and *outdoor classroom* should be planned and designed together, respecting the school's individuality, ethos and culture. Although new school builds are taking the outdoor environment much more into account, there still needs to be further awareness and understanding of the potential that the *outdoor classroom* can provide. For new school builds it is recommended that an equal emphasis is placed upon the outdoor and indoor environment, taking into account the aims and aspirations of outdoor learning, whilst being sensitive to the schools individual ethos, culture and location. It is important to ensure that at the early planning stages there is a financial commitment to outdoor provision and that this is not of secondary importance.

When developing the outdoor facilities of existing schools it is important to include both children and staff during the preliminary stages, whilst also gaining the expertise of Landscape Architects, to advise how to best utilise and enhance the space available. Through 'whole-school approach' planning meetings, recognition should be given to the potential of the site and opportunities to develop in the future.

The research gathered during this study would suggest that any future revision of the primary school curriculum should include consideration of the importance of high quality outdoor learning. Whether this be a new build or development of existing school grounds, the involvement of all professional bodies should have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge to create the best possible outdoor learning environment.

It is important that the skills, knowledge and understanding of all the professionals are nurtured and encouraged in the UK, to allow creativity to develop and flourish to enable individuals to be leaders in the field of outdoor provision.

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Appendix A - Questionnaire Framework

Dear _____ ,

I am currently studying the importance of Outdoor learning in Primary Schools and would be grateful if you could answer the questions below.

- 1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?**
- 2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?**
- 3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?**
- 4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?**

Kind regards,

Dan Charnley

Appendix B - Questionnaire Feedback
On behalf of Michael Gove (Secretary of State Education)

Dear Daniel,

Thank you for your email dated 23 August about Learning Outside the Classroom.

We are always pleased to hear from people who take an active interest in education. We do appreciate that learning outside the classroom is important. In particular, the Department wants to ensure that schools have the maximum freedom to teach in the way that they judge best for their pupils, including through learning outside the classroom activities. Therefore, we trust teachers to decide how to plan, organise and teach the curriculum. Schools are left to plan and organise lessons and school trips themselves.

We believe all children should have the chance to go on school trips and enjoy the multiple benefits of the natural environment. Evidence shows that green exercise, outdoor activity and environmental volunteering improve young people's wellbeing and personal responsibility, as well as maximising employment chances.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to write to the Department.

Regards,

Leona Smith
Public Communications Unit

Appendix C.1 - Questionnaire Feedback

Catherine Boulton, Headteacher of St. David Haigh and Aspull CE Primary School

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

I would word this has increased focus - it is not a new concept however I doubt that it is been practised in the fullest sense of the word in this country or if it is it would be a rarity. The NC could serve as a way of developing M & L of this element and help to develop teacher understanding of the benefits and where it can fit alongside the classroom (as we know it)so that it supports and enhances the practice there. In particular I see this as very beneficial to particular cohorts of children - reluctant learners and boys.

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

Definitely. Taking into account my comments above I do not think we have the necessary expertise to ensure that outdoor learning did indeed support and enhance current practice. The one area where we have made strides is in EY with outdoor provision but this is tailored to a specific age range and is often highlighted as an area for further development in reports.

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

Difficult one as each setting is unique. Looking at good practice in other settings always gives you a starting point but as said previously how many good examples are there in this country?

Children themselves would be a good starting point - as they will often give ideas of what they enjoy however you need the skills, imagination and expertise to turn these ideas into meaningful learning experiences. At the end of the day we still have to work to ensure that children make progress and achieve their true potential.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

I think most points are included above however to summarise:

- appeals to certain groups of children
- increase of learning opportunities in different settings
- education is not seen as just classroom based
- tapping into a whole new area of resources
- play based learning
- developing children's imaginations

Appendix C.2 - Questionnaire Feedback**Jenny Clarke, Headteacher of Aspull Church Primary School****1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?**

Yes definitely

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

If landscape architects had a greater understanding their role could really have an impact in supporting schools with the development of their outdoor environment

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

The best approach is a combination of educational research and the skills and expertise of landscape architects. The outdoor environment is a great stimulus for engaging learners particularly non traditional learners but educationalists would need the help of specialised landscape architects to assist them so as to make full use of the learning environment.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

- Social and emotional aspects of learning are strengthened: group/team work
- Acquisition of new skills e.g. wood carving
- Appreciation of nature which would lead to a greater awareness of Eco issues generally and an appreciation of Nature
- Sustainability eg growing vegetables which could impact on healthy eating etc
- Greater links with National Curriculum subjects eg Science, Geography, Literacy and Numeracy,
- Inspire groups of learners who do not always engage with traditional methods of learning eg boys, vulnerable children etc,
- The benefits of the Early years curriculum with its emphasis on play based activities is a sound philosophy on which to build on.

Appendix C.3 - Questionnaire Feedback

Kathryn Lowe, Deputy Headteacher of Woodfield Primary School, Wigan

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

There should be a stronger focus on outdoor learning under the revision of the National Curriculum. Outdoor learning benefits children in helping to bring many school subjects alive. Children learn through what they do and discover and outdoor learning enables children to put learning into context so that they can see what is happening. Outdoor learning gives teachers the freedom to decide how to teach effectively to meet the personal, social, emotional and academic needs of their children. Outdoor Learning is an engaging, effective and enjoyable form of learning, whether the emphasis is personal, social or environmental, or is about learning itself.

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

In order to understand the needs of a school, the way in which children learn and current thinking in education, Landscape Architects need to develop specialist skills in educational landscaping. An outdoor learning space can either add value to a school or it can cause long term problems if the Architect does not have the understanding.

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

It is important to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the design and implementation of an outdoor learning space. Pupils, teachers, governors, community groups and parents can all contribute their ideas and expertise. If children are involved in the creation and maintenance of the learning space it creates an awareness of the hard work and skill necessary to produce and maintain an attractive outdoor learning environment. Moreover, all involved gain a sense of pride and achievement and, hopefully, a respect for the space they have been involved in creating.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

The value of teaching and learning in an outdoor learning space is something we are passionate about at Woodfield School. We believe outdoor learning should be part of every child's education as it enhances and complements learning in the classroom. It enables children to make sense of the world around them by putting their learning into a meaningful context and provides many opportunities for extending classroom activities in all curriculum areas.

**Appendix C.4 - Questionnaire Feedback
On behalf of Lisa Nandy MP for Wigan**

Dear Mr Charnley,

Lisa has asked me to thank you for your e-mail and to let you know that she is not an expert on this subject. Lisa does however have a school in her constituency (Woodfield Primary School) which has been recognised by the Speaker in the House of Commons for its outdoor learning and Lisa is certainly very supportive.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Pamela Wall
Office Manager to Lisa Nandy MP

Appendix C.5 - Questionnaire Feedback
On behalf of Ian Mearns MP for Gateshead

Dear Mr Charnley,

Ian has asked me to reply to your email on his behalf.

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum and experiential learning.

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

Yes

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

N/A

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

Experience of a change of environment and a different learning situation.

Good luck with your Masters.

Yours Sincerely

Jeannie Kielty
Parliamentary Assistant
Office of Ian Mearns MP for Gateshead

Appendix C.6 - Questionnaire Feedback
Nic Dakin MP for Scunthorpe

Dear Dan,

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

I think the review should focus on what is to be learnt primarily but should recognize the value of different approaches. Outdoor learning is a valuable teaching and learning resource.

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

Certainly the outdoor space is very important to the school learning environment in all manner of ways. It's important that any architects involved in designing new school buildings should think through the impact on outside space and that proper priority is put on the design of quality outdoor space.

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

Good discussion, dialogue and shared planning between the school community (including students) and the landscape architects. By bringing the expertise about learning together with the expertise about design we can make a huge difference.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

It adds variety. It will connect with some learners who find other approaches less engaging. It is likely to be more kinetic and therefore potentially add to healthy lifestyle.

Appendix C.7 - Questionnaire Feedback**Alan Spedding, RuSource editor, writer of the Enviromental White Paper**

Dear Dan,

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

Yes

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

Yes

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

Outdoor learning spaces need to be as near natural and farmed landscapes as possible whilst giving easy and safe access to learners. There may be a need to intensify the experience in some instances because it is too dilute in its natural form and requires travelling over quite long distances eg on a farm. The design work needs to be done with teachers and farmers and others 'in charge' of landscapes. Landscape architects will need to market the skills they bring to the activity as there will often not be a good understanding of what they can contribute.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

Almost all the ground the curriculum needs to be covered can be learned outside in ways which show how what kids have to learn is part of the real world. This makes it entertaining and the knowledge sticks. It is also important to inform kids at an early age about how their food is produced.

Good luck with the rest of the research

Best wishes

Alan

Appendix C.8 - Questionnaire Feedback**Vicky Stoecklin, Education & Child Development Director, White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group**

Dear Dan,

1. Under the revision of the National Curriculum should there be a stronger focus on outdoor learning?

Here in the US outdoor time is still considered recess where teachers have a free period and someone else comes into supervise the children other than the teacher during this time. Most teachers think that science is the only thing that can be taught in an outdoor setting. Any subject can be taught in the outdoor environment if the setting is designed properly. We (US) needs to create teacher training that addresses the importance of unstructured and structured time in nature and we need curriculum goals that are tied to outdoor learning in all states

2. Do you think landscape architects should develop a greater understanding of educational thinking, regarding outdoor learning to support schools?

I think that landscape architects need to better understand the function of outdoor spaces as they are related to learning goals. Also having a better understanding of child development for each age is also necessary. Children of different ages use space differently.

3. What do you believe to be the best approach to the development of the design and implementation of the outdoor learning space?

Everyone from the school or center should be involved in developing, supporting and implementing the outdoor learning space. It should be supported by the administration, teachers should understand curriculum goals and have access to additional training on how to use the space, the maintenance staff need to understand how to care for the space and parents need to know how the outdoor space will be used and what type of learning children get from being in outdoor spaces.

4. What do you believe to be the benefits of outdoor learning in Primary Schools?

N/A

Appendix D - Learning through Landscapes Research

Learning through Landscapes National School Grounds Survey 2003

Response by school type

School Type	Percentage
Nursery	0%
Primary	53%
Secondary	39%
Special	8%
Not Specified	0%

What motivated you to improve your school grounds?

About Learning through Landscapes

Since 1990, Learning through Landscapes (LTL), the national school grounds charity, has been working closely with schools and their local communities to achieve maximum benefit from school grounds for teaching and learning across the whole curriculum and for the full development of the child.

The Trust was launched following four years of research, which demonstrated a clear failure to effectively design, use and manage the nation's school grounds. To date, LTL has been able to make a positive contribution in over 10,000 schools, but much more needs to be done.

About The Research

This research assesses the benefits that improved school grounds bring to the academic, social and community life of a school.

The research was conducted by LTL between January and June 2003, using a postal questionnaire first piloted in London. 700 schools were selected for survey across the country, each having actively taken steps to improve their grounds during the past four years. 351 schools responded (50%).

What The Research Showed About The Impact of School Grounds Improvement.

Of the schools surveyed, 65% believed that school grounds improvements had increased overall attitudes to learning and over half have seen improved academic achievements (52%). The results also show considerable improvements in behaviour (73%), social interaction (84%) and self-esteem (64%) as well as a significant reduction in bullying (64%).

Relevant to the Government's new Primary Strategy (Excellence and Enjoyment), with its emphasis on children enjoying and being stimulated by their time at school, the research highlights increases in children enjoying and having fun in their grounds (90%) and improvements in active play and games (85%).

Further information about the research may be obtained from:
Learning through Landscapes,
 3rd Floor,
 Southside Offices,
 The Law Courts,
 Winchester, SO23 9DL.
 Tel: 01962 846258
 Email: schoolgrounds-uk@ltl.org.uk
 Website: www.ltl.org.uk

Who has been involved in your school grounds improvement programme?

How did pupils get involved?

Who put forward ideas?

Who put forward ideas?

How did parents get involved?

I would like to thank all who contributed to interviews and questionnaires conducted throughout this dissertation and have given their valuable time to support the completion of this study.

Mrs Catherine Boulton, Headteacher, St David Haigh and Aspull CE Primary School

Mrs Jenny Clarke, Headteacher, Aspull Church Primary School

Nic Dakin, MP for Scunthorpe

Michael Gove, Secretary of State Education

Mrs Kathryn Lowe, Deputy Head, Woodfield Primary School

Ian Mearns, MP for Gateshead

Lisa Nandy, MP for Wigan

Kit Patrick, Landscape Architect, TPM Landscape

Pupils and Staff at Woodfield Primary School, Wigan

Mr Ben Smith, Landscape Architect, Kinnear Landscape Architects

Leona Smith, Public Communications Unit

Mr Alan Spedding, RuSource

Vicki Stoecklin, Education and Child Development Director, White Hutchinson

Pamela Wall, Office Manager to Lisa Nandy