Advancing Environmental & Outdoor Learning Using Federal, State, and Local Funding

Monday, July 26, 2021
Our Vision:
Sustained Support for Env. & Outdoor Learning
State & Local Advocacy for ESSER Funds
What do Schools and Districts Need to Know?

• Background Information
• Recommendations
• Evidence Base
• Key Components for Success
• How
Field and Out of School Time Experiences

Recommendations

• Ensure that every PreK-12 student, no matter where they live, experiences at least one environmental and outdoor field experience every year.

• Ensure that every Prek-12 student has opportunities to participate in outdoor and environmental summer and after school learning experiences to boost learning back in the classroom.
Field and Out of School Time Experiences

How

Allocate Recovery Act Funding to allow every PreK-12 student to participate in at least one environmental and outdoor field experience annually.

• #Students x (student bus fee + student program fee) = requested amount

• 800,000 Students x ($15/student bus fee + $25/student program fee) = $32 Million
Green Schools

Recommendations

Ensure that every school engages students in leading activities to become a greener and healthier school.

Ensure that every PreK-12 student, no matter where they live, participates in some aspect of green schools work at least once a week.
Green Schools

How

Allocate Recovery Act Funding to support Green Schools implementation, coordination and professional learning.

- Materials and Supplies for Green Schools Investigations: $500 per school (one time cost)
- Professional Learning: # of Teachers x $150
  - e.g. 125 educators per district x $150 = $18,750
- Green Schools District Coordinator = $50,000 per district
Outdoor Classrooms

Recommendations

• Ensure that every school develops a multi-functional and accessible outdoor classroom.

• Ensure that every PreK-12 student, no matter where they live, learns in an outdoor classroom for at least 1 hour a day.
Outdoor Classrooms

How

Allocate Recovery Act Funding to support the development and coordination of outdoor classroom space and professional learning:

- Materials and supplies for Outdoor Classroom: $5000-$10,000 per space (one time cost)
- Professional Learning: # of Teachers x $150
  - e.g. 125 educators per district x $150 = $18,750
- Outdoor Classroom Coordinator = $50,000 per district
Professional Learning

Recommendation

Ensure that every PreK-12 teacher, no matter where they live, participates in at least one professional learning experience each school year to support environmental and outdoor education.
Professional Learning

How

Allocate Recovery Act Funding to provide every PreK-12 educator with at least one environmental and outdoor professional learning opportunity annually.

Number of Educators X Cost Per Person = Total Cost

Example: In Utah, Project Learning Tree educator professional development is $40/teacher. There are approximately 300 K-8 teachers in the Salt Lake City School District. Professional development for this district would total $12,000
Stimulus funding available to support EE & outdoor learning:

• March 27, 2020: Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES)
  • Provided $13.2 billion to ESSER fund (ESSER I).

• December 27, 2020: Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA)
  • Provided $54.3 billion to ESSER fund (ESSER II).

• March 11, 2021: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
  • Provided $122.7 billion to ESSER fund (ESSER III).
# Using COVID Relief Funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Date Passed</th>
<th>Total Funding</th>
<th>K12 Public Schools Allocation</th>
<th>% Funds to LEAs</th>
<th>Must be obligated by</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CARES Act</td>
<td>March, 2020</td>
<td>$2.2 Trillion</td>
<td>$13.5 Billion</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Dec.30, 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplemental CARES Act</td>
<td>December 2020</td>
<td>$900 Billion</td>
<td>$54.3 Billion</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Sept.30, 2022*</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Rescue Plan</td>
<td>March 2021</td>
<td>$1.9 Trillion</td>
<td>$122 Billion</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Sept 30, 2023*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5 Trillion</strong></td>
<td><strong>$189.8</strong></td>
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*Under the Tydings Amendment, Section 412(B) of the General Education Provisions Act, 20 U.S.C. 1225(B), any funds not obligated at the end of the initial federal funding period shall remain available for an additional period of 12 months, giving LEAs another year to obligate funds from these packages.*
## Where Decisions Are Made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State (10%)</th>
<th>District (90%)</th>
<th>Schools</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Create Guidance</td>
<td>● Support specific local programs</td>
<td>● Support specific local programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Establish Grant Programs</td>
<td>○ Summer Camp</td>
<td>○ Summer Camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Design PD</td>
<td>○ Afterschool</td>
<td>○ Afterschool</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Work with Affiliates or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>State Partners</td>
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- Support specific local programs
  - Summer Camp
  - Afterschool
Taking Action

• How to Use These Documents
• Your Outreach Strategy
• Invite Others to Join: https://forms.gle/AN2Yw4SqqQyptd66
• Share Success Stories: https://forms.gle/DcU97uSHK3scJXhu9
• School Focused Summit
  • Wednesday, September 1, 3:00 pm (ET)
Some tips for outreach

- Start with your existing relationships
- Offer yourself as a resource
- Look for opportunities for public comment
- Seek out timelines for LEA plans
- School board meeting minutes may help to determine who is making key decisions
- Connect with parents of students who attend your programs and engage them as advocates
- Get a co-champion to work with you (e.g. partner orgs, state legislator, outdoor industry, etc)
- Connect with your NAAEE Affiliate organization if you haven’t already!
Resources

• Success Stories
  • Maine
  • Maryland
  • New Mexico
  • Utah

• National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative

• UndauntedK12 & U.S. Green Building Council Center for Green Schools

• Add more
Vision

We envision a future in which:

**CHILDREN**
…all children have daily access to nature right outside their classroom door, enabling dynamic hands-on learning across the curriculum, child-directed play, robust health, and a positive social environment.

**ENVIRONMENT**
…school grounds act as green infrastructure for their cities, helping to foster healthy urban watersheds, rich wildlife habitats, improved climate, and better air quality.

**PUBLIC LAND**
…school grounds are vibrant, welcoming centers for their communities, and the public lands managed by schools also function as public parks after hours. Access to green space on school grounds is equitably distributed and close to every resident.
We are seeking systemic change through three major avenues:

- conducting research that documents the need and value of green schoolyards
- exploring policy shifts that support schoolyard greening
- providing support to school districts and their partners as they make a transition from asphalt to ecosystems
National Outdoor Learning Library

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR TAKING SCHOOL OUTSIDE DURING THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

The data below we chapter in our free online resource library, designed to help schools and districts move their classes and programs outside as a way to address the COVID-19 pandemic — and as an investment in the future of a richer educational environment for children of all ages.

We invite you to click on the photographs or titles of each chapter below to access a wealth of information on each topic.

ACCESS CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION
If this is your first visit to our website or you are looking for materials to share the overall idea with colleagues, this is a great place to start reading. This chapter includes the overall rationale for taking learning outside, strategies for “getting to yes” to begin the work, and ideas to engage the community. It also provides background about our National Initiative, our equity statement, and partners.

HEALTH GUIDANCE
Most health-related guidance during the pandemic has focused on indoor spaces. This chapter addresses how to reduce risks transmission using outdoor environments for learning and play, with specific attention to promoting health and educational equity. It also explores how to create healthier school environments and introduces the health benefits of nature and being outdoors.

CASE STUDIES
What does it look like to reopen outside? Some schools and districts across the country reopened in summer and fall 2020, using outdoor learning to create effective academic environments that improve health and well-being for students and teachers. This case studies in this chapter show examples from a wide variety of climates around the country and include examples at city, county, district, and school scales.

CREATING OUTDOOR SPACES
School campuses and programs can move learning outdoors into the fresh air on school grounds and in local parks and other public spaces. This extensive chapter provides detailed site design and planning frameworks for outdoor infrastructures, cost-cutting and visualization tools, strategies for managing variable weather, information about our design guidelines program, regional grant guides, and many other comprehensive resources.

EDUCATION OUTDOORS
Need more information, ideas, and strategies for teaching outside? This outdoor learning, green schoolyards, and school garden fields have decades of experience to share. This chapter explores planning strategies and resources related to setting up and managing successful outdoor learning initiatives. Information in this section includes staffing, scheduling, teaching, learning, meals, resources, school gardens, and other programs.

POLICY GUIDANCE AND FUNDING
Across the United States, government agencies, public health authorities, and educational institutions are publishing guidance about how to reopen schools during the pandemic. This chapter contains a collection of policy examples from around the country that include recommendations to move classes and programs outside during the pandemic, as well as other school district and state agency policies and funding services that promote long-term, systemic adoption of green schoolyards and outdoor learning.


FREE ONLINE LIBRARY

- A comprehensive collection of 150+ resources to date that address many aspects of outdoor learning.
- Practical resources, tips, and strategies for taking school outside during the pandemic and beyond
- Chapters on health, infrastructure, education, policy, funding.
- Infrastructure includes case studies, tools, articles on seating, shelter, storage, dealing with weather, noise, allergies, insects, outdoor meals
- Filled with detailed examples and photographs that bring ideas to life
Community of Practice for Schools and Districts

OUTDOOR LEARNING AND SCHOOL GROUND GREENING

- Designed for school and district administrators and their colleagues; open to anyone who is interested
- Met weekly during summer 2020 and bi-weekly since fall 2020 (Tuesday)
- Held our 30th meeting recently!
- Most sessions include a speaker from a district that is up and running outdoors as well as time for small group discussion; some presentations are recorded and on our website
- Plan to meet through 2021 and beyond

https://www.greenschoolyards.org/community-of-practice
National Outdoor Learning Movement

Grew substantially this year

- 30+ year old movement in the USA
- It was approaching the tipping point to more widespread adoption before the pandemic.
- May have grown 10x this year

Growth is visible in

- National news coverage (1000+)
- NCOLI participation levels
- Website visitors (98K unique visitors)
Schools and Districts Moved Outside!

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Hundreds (maybe thousands) of individual schools and entire districts across the country
- Smaller institutions were able to make the shift more quickly than larger ones, but wheels are in motion at all scales now
Linden Waldorf School — Tennessee
Outdoor Learning Around the Country

Arlington Public Schools
Virginia

Austin Independent School District, Texas

Lake County School District, Colorado

Washington, DC
Looking to the Future
Trends We Observe

FOCUS IS SHIFTING

- Pandemic triage mode — Emphasis over the last year was on temporary inexpensive infrastructure, implemented quickly

- Increased comfort and happiness outdoors at school — More schools planning to keep a portion of their normal program outdoors in the future to support mental health and resilience.

- Long-term investments — Increasing investments in more permanent outdoor infrastructure to serve current needs and the future
Reflections

HAPPINESS IS A PRIORITY

● Students will return to school in the fall carrying mental health burdens from this year.

● Spending time outside at school will help improve long-term mental health.

● This is centrally important now and will also be crucial in the future.
Q & A Time
Contact Us!

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