

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2012 – Berkeley, California, USA

New international group forms to address an increasingly sedentary and risk-averse generation of children disconnected from nature.

Growing school grounds movement gains international voice with formation of The International School Grounds Alliance.

Berkeley, California (April 24, 2012) – Organizations working to enrich the lives of children through outdoor learning and play have a new global school ground network where they can turn for ideas and support.

Leaders in the school ground movement from Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have formed the nonprofit **International School Grounds Alliance (ISGA)** (www.internationalschoolgrounds.org), which brings together a wealth of experience in the fields of school ground use, design, education and management around the globe. The ISGA invites like-minded organizations and professionals to become members and collaborate to nurture and grow the international movement to help schools make the most of learning and play opportunities on their grounds.

“Children around the world, growing up in very different environments and cultural settings, all need engaging childhood learning and play experiences for healthy development and enjoyment,” says ISGA co-founder Sharon Danks of Bay Tree Design in California. “The ISGA is not only a resource, but is also a call to action for teachers, parents, and students to go outside, improve their school grounds and explore the world first-hand.”

The ISGA believes that school grounds should:

- provide powerful opportunities for hands-on learning
- nurture students' physical, social and emotional development and wellbeing
- reflect and embrace their local ecological, social and cultural context
- embrace risk-taking as an essential component of learning and child development
- be open public spaces, accessible to their communities

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

To commemorate the founding of the ISGA, the organization has launched a website (www.internationalschoolgrounds.org) and just released a brief new inspirational video, entitled *Voices from the International School Grounds Movement*, which includes perspectives from leaders in the school ground movement and inspiring photographs of school grounds around the world. (www.greenschoolyards.org/blog).

Context

School grounds are crucial childhood landscapes, both in terms of the considerable time spent there and the messages to children (both explicit and implicit) that come from their design and care. They are located in almost every neighborhood, town and city around the world, and often act as important community gathering places in addition to their roles as places of learning and play during the school day. For many children, school grounds are the primary place they play outside—so what they experience there resonates with them and helps to shape who they are.

“In this rapidly urbanizing century, there has been a substantial erosion of children's outdoor time both for play and learning in the space of a single generation. The reasons for this decline - as well as the negative repercussions - are numerous. With ISGA we want to address these issues and reverse the trend.” says ISGA co-founder Cam Collyer of Evergreen in Canada.

In today's world, children's opportunities for outdoor learning and play in nature are disappearing around the globe, due to a variety of influences that include:

- cities that are poorly designed for both children and natural systems
- overprogrammed childhoods that leave children with little free time
- powerful parental fears of "stranger danger" and an increasing fear of risk and liability
- school grounds that are barren expanses with little to support children's play and learning

ISGA co-founder Mary Jackson of Learning through Landscapes in the United Kingdom says, “As research from around the world tells us, learning and play outside can have a truly positive impact on our children. Their results improve, they concentrate more in lessons, they develop their interpersonal and social skills and have improved mental and physical health. Already many schools around the world are seeing this is true as they develop and use their grounds for the benefit of children, but there is still a long way to go and we want to be able to share lessons learned with schools across the globe. The ISGA is a great way of sharing these lessons.”

Join the Movement

We invite organizations and individuals to join us and declare their commitment to creating and caring for these special environments that support children and young people's learning, play and wellbeing. Membership is free. Join the ISGA to help build this global movement:

- Visit our website - International School Grounds Alliance: www.internationalschoolgrounds.org
- Sign up to become a member - www.greenschoolyards.org/home/join_us
- Watch the video - *Voices from the International School Grounds Movement*.
www.greenschoolyards.org/blog
- Join the discussion in our LinkedIn group: “International School Grounds Alliance -- Public Forum”
www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4139778&trk=hb_side_g

The next ISGA conference will be hosted by Evergreen in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in Fall 2013.

For More Information

- Please contact Sharon Danks at info@internationalschoolgrounds.org or 510-872-4554
- Inspiring, full color images of school grounds around the world are available upon request.

Contact: Sharon Danks, Co-Founder, ISGA
Bay Tree Design, inc. – Berkeley, CA, USA
510-644-1320 (office) • 510-872-4554 (cell)
info@internationalschoolgrounds.org

About the ISGA

The nonprofit International School Grounds Alliance (ISGA) is a membership organization, bringing together leaders in the fields of school ground use, design, education and management. Membership is free. We invite organizations and individuals around the globe to join the ISGA and declare their commitment to creating and caring for these special environments that support children and young people's learning, play and wellbeing. To join the ISGA, please visit our website: www.internationalschoolgrounds.org. The International School Grounds Alliance also invites organizations and the public to join an ongoing dialogue about school grounds on our LinkedIn group: "International School Grounds Alliance -- Public Forum" (www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4139778&trk=hb_side_g)

The ISGA formed in Fall 2011 as a result of the *Engaging Our Grounds: International Green Schoolyards Conference* held in California in September 2011, co-hosted by New Village Press/ADPSR, San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance and Bay Tree Design, inc. This event was the first international green schoolyard conference held in the United States, and the second in a new series of international school ground conferences organized by the ISGA's three co-founders: Cam Collyer, Evergreen (Canada); Sharon Danks, Bay Tree Design (USA); and Mary Jackson, Learning through Landscapes (United Kingdom). The conference series began with an international school grounds conference in Winchester, England in June 2010, entitled *The World Outside the Classroom*, hosted by Learning through Landscapes. The next ISGA conference will be hosted by Evergreen in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in Fall 2013.

ISGA inaugural steering committee members include (in alphabetical order; * = ISGA co-founders):

Atlanta Taskforce on Play (USA)	Learnscapes Planning and Design (Australia)
Bay Tree Design, inc. (USA) *	Life Lab Science Program (USA)
Boston Schoolyard Initiative (USA)	Movium - Centre for the Urban Public Space at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sweden)
Center for Ecoliteracy (USA)	Naturskolan i Lund (Sweden)
Children in Nature Collaborative (USA)	New Village Press/ADPSR (USA)
City Sprouts (USA)	Occidental Arts and Ecology Center (USA)
Community Built Association (USA)	Play Learning Life (United Kingdom)
CONCERN, Inc. (USA)	PLAYLINK (United Kingdom)
District of Columbia School Garden Program (USA)	REAL School Gardens (USA)
Environment Design Institute (Japan)	San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance (USA)
Evergreen (Canada) *	San Francisco Unified School District (USA)
Green Schoolyard Network (USA)	School Ground Greening Coalition (USA)
Grün macht Schule (Germany)	Teichmann Landschafts Architekten (Germany)
Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (USA)	Trust for Public Land, NYC Playgrounds Program (USA)
Learning Landscapes (USA)	450 Architects, inc. (USA)
Learning through Landscapes (United Kingdom) *	

Individuals who appear in the ISGA video entitled, *Voices from the International School Grounds Movement*, include (in order of appearance):

Cam Collyer, Program Director, Evergreen (Canada)
Dr. Petter Åkerblom, Landscape Architect, Movium (Sweden)
Prof. Robin Moore, Director, Natural Learning Initiative (USA)
Manfred Dietzen, Landscape Architect, Coordinator, Grün macht Schule (Germany)
Dr. Ko Senda, Landscape Architect, Environment Design Institute (Japan)
Ayesha Ercelawn, Garden Educator, Tule Elk Park Early Education School (USA)
Arden Bucklin-Sporer, Executive Director, San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance (USA)
Julie Mountain, Director, Play Learning Life (United Kingdom)
Mary Jackson, Development Manager, Learning through Landscapes (United Kingdom)
Helen Tyas Tunggal, Director, Learnscapes Planning and Design (Australia)
Sharon Danks, Principal, Bay Tree Design, inc. (USA)
Bernard Spiegel, Principal, PLAYLINK (United Kingdom)
Birgit Teichmann, Dipl. Ing., Landscape Architect, Teichmann Landschafts Architekten (Germany)

Voices from the International School Grounds Movement was filmed and edited by Erika Brekke. The video was co-produced by Erika Brekke and conference director Sharon Danks. The video was filmed during the ISGA's 2011 conference, co-hosted by New Village Press/ADPSR, San Francisco Green Schoolyard Alliance and Bay Tree Design, inc. Video link: www.greenschoolyards.org/blog