This report by Janet E. Dyment presents findings from her 2003 study on the impacts of green school ground initiatives at 45 elementary, middle, and high schools in the Toronto District School Board. As part of this study, Dyment surveyed nearly 150 parents, teachers, and principals about the impact of greening initiatives on a variety of outcomes, including curriculum delivery, student learning and academic achievement, teaching practices, and student behavior. The author also conducted in-depth interviews with 21 respondents from 5 schools. Despite the variety of schools studied, Dyment found a number of common benefits of greening initiatives. For example, 90% of respondents reported that student enthusiasm and engagement in learning increased on green school grounds as compared to teaching indoors and 70% of respondents reported that their motivation for teaching increased on green school grounds as compared to teaching indoors. Dyment also questioned participants about key challenges and opportunities for improvement with regard to green school ground initiatives. Commonly identified barriers included availability of funding and adequate logistical support and human resources. Respondents also provided a variety of suggestions for improvement, including professional development and training opportunities, assistance with physical design, and additional funding support for construction and maintenance. Importantly, this study demonstrates that the benefits of school ground greening initiatives are numerous and varied, and can be realized by different schools with a variety of different types of greening projects. Dyment concludes the report by providing a series of high-level policy recommendations to assist schools across Ontario in successfully implementing and realizing the full benefits of school ground greening initiatives.

Author Affiliation: Janet Dyment is with the University of Tasmania in Australia. Country where research was conducted: Canada.

Dyment, J. (2005). “Gaining ground: The power and potential of school ground greening in the Toronto District School Board: Evergreen.” This report was commissioned by Evergreen, a charitable organization focused on bringing communities and nature together and is available online at: http://www.evergreen.ca/en/resources/schools/research-policy.sn