

Teacher Education & the John Muir Award: A teacher's tale

The University of Glasgow uses the John Muir Award to support teacher education through its Living with Biodiversity module as part of its third year BEd. Using the Award helps to introduce future teachers to the value of outdoor learning approaches, provide knowledge of the curriculum in practice, and demonstrate how pupils can experience nature first-hand through education. Marc Andrew completed his teacher education at the University of Glasgow and is now delivering the John Muir Award for P5 pupils at St Andrew's Primary School, Falkirk. Below he shares his experiences.

As a student teacher at the University of Glasgow I was introduced to the John Muir Award through a module on biodiversity. I was always passionate about the outdoors and a keen hillwalker but I had never heard of John Muir before. This module highlighted the importance of Learning for Sustainability to student teachers.

I felt the John Muir Award would be a great way to approach education for a sustainable future as it can embrace the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence and allows flexibility for teachers and pupils to make the learning relevant to them. As a developing teacher, I could see that the Award offered a good balance between a structured approach and individual autonomy – both for those leading and those taking part.



Fast forward a couple of years and I was in my first job as a classroom teacher, situated in a school across from a large local park with great outdoor learning potential. When asked to plan and deliver my first interdisciplinary study, I decided to make the most of the resources around me and just go for it. Planning and delivering the Award for two P5 classes (65 children) has had its challenging moments but every time I take the children to the park, the enthusiasm of the pupils makes it clear that the hard work is all worth it.



Much of the learning is driven by them – what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. This is a philosophy of education that current teachers in Scotland will be very familiar with. The nature of the John Muir Award makes it easy to support pupils in taking responsibility for their own learning.

Being involved in the Award is having a very powerful impact on the children. Even those who I felt might not like to go outside - especially in the mud and rain - have the biggest smiles on their faces when I tell them we are going to the park. In class, when we are learning about biodiversity, I can feel a real buzz through the questions generated. I'm sure any teacher would agree that this love of learning is something they would wish to instil in all students. I certainly see this happening through delivering the John Muir Award.

As a parting message I would like to say, I was initially hesitant to take on responsibility for delivering the John Muir Award as it is often easy to make excuses not to take learning outside. However, I bit the bullet and I never looked back. The enjoyment, knowledge and skills the children are gaining from the experience is fantastic and hopefully this will build a lasting legacy of a love for the natural world.

Interested in getting involved?

- Get inspired – search Twitter, Facebook or Glow for #JohnMuirAward to see what Award groups are sharing (example tweets opposite).
- Plan a John Muir Award for your class or your school. (See p.10-11 of the free [Information Handbook](#)). Chat to staff and pupils about the wild places nearby and what you can do to enjoy, learn about and care for them.
- Do your own John Muir Award – the Award isn't just for pupils. It's open to all, as a group, individual, staff team or family. Check out our [case studies](#) to see how some individuals and families get involved.
- Once your Award is registered, consider working towards [Professional Recognition](#).



Key resources to support teachers

We have a number of guidance documents and ideas to support teachers in planning and delivering the John Muir Award in Scotland, available on our website: www.johnmuiraward.org

[The Curriculum for Excellence and John Muir Award](#)

– The John Muir Award offers an ideal structure to support pupils and teachers in their engagement with the Curriculum for Excellence.

[Attainment and the John Muir Award](#) – Find out how the John Muir Award can contribute to attainment in an education context in Scotland.

[Suitability](#) – Is the Award right for you and your group? Our experience, and the feedback we've had from the people and organisations we work with, is that the John Muir Award works best with participants from an upper primary level and above (Second Level in Scotland). Read our suitability guidance to find out more.

[Glow](#) – Teaching staff can use Glow as part of the Share Challenge with the hashtags #johnmuiraward and #ifs. The John Muir Award is now on the Learning for Sustainability Professional Learning Community.

[Professional Development](#) – This summary outlines the Professional Standards for teachers in Scotland, and shows how the John Muir Award can be used to promote and meet these standards.

On our [website](#) you can also:

- Watch a 10-minute introductory film
- Download an Information Handbook
- Explore a range of case studies, stories and films on our 'In Action' page
- Find out more about John Muir (www.discoverjohnmuir.com)

Get in touch

If you are a trainee or probationary teacher and want to find out more, or are interested in discussing how the John Muir Award can support teacher education establishments, contact:

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