



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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{Local Environmental Education Organization:

Muddy Sneakers: The Joy of Learning Outside,

Hosts 1st Annual Summit}

Asheville, NC: Monday April 29, 2013

On Saturday April 20, Muddy Sneakers hosted its 1st Annual Summit at Ira B. Jones Elementary in Asheville, NC. The Summit was a celebration of experiential, nature-based education and the five years of successful collaboration between Muddy Sneakers and its partnering WNC schools/districts that are making a difference in public education.

The intent of the Summit was to provide a forum for participating schools to meet and exchange ideas as well as share challenges while highlighting each individual schools' commitment to connecting elementary school children to the science curriculum as seen first hand in the natural world. Emphasis was placed on the importance of promoting curiosity outside the classroom, enhancing the children's academic achievement and test scores and recognizing that the Muddy Sneakers experience was effecting participating students on a number of levels and across a suite of academic disciplines.

Muddy Sneakers requested the honor of three unique individuals from participating school districts to speak at the Summit including Dr. Gordon Grant, Principal at Hall Fletcher Elementary, Mrs. Renata Crawley, 5th Grade Science Teacher at West Marion Elementary, and Mr. Tony Meachum, Principal at T.C. Henderson Elementary. Each

speaker brought their own distinct story regarding their schools' experience with Muddy Sneakers, including why they felt it was a critical addition to the curriculum.

Dr. Gordon Grant spoke about Hall Fletcher's 80+% free and reduced lunch student population and their desire to provide students with a healthy, active, and positive learning experience. Dr. Grant presented a fascinating analysis of Paul Tough's (author of How Children Succeed) adaptation of Dr. Stephen Covey's "7 Measures to Success". Focused specifically on the '7 Measures to Student Success', Dr. Grant explained how Muddy Sneakers contributed to each component including Curiosity, Grit, Gratitude, Optimism, Self-control, Social Intelligence and Zest. Mrs. Renata Crawley spoke on her efforts to bring environmental education to her student prior to partnering with Muddy Sneakers through G.O.A.L. ("Get Outside And Learn") a program Renata created with funding from NC's Burroughs Wellcome Fund. Principal Tony Meachum of T.C. Henderson Elementary spoke on the incredible academic success his school has seen since partnering with Muddy Sneakers including the incredible achievement of 100% passing on the 5th grade end-of-grade (EOG) science test in 2011.

Mrs. Nan Isaac of Pleasant Gardens Elementary in McDowell County was awarded Muddy Sneakers' 'Teacher of the Year' for 2012-2013. Although she adamantly claimed not to be an 'outdoorsy' person, Mrs. Isaac has been an avid supporter of Muddy Sneakers since its arrival and gave testament to the significant effect the program has had on her students over the years. Mrs. Isaac will be retiring after this school year but plans to stay involved in the program.

About Muddy Sneakers

The 2012-13 school year marks Muddy Sneakers' fifth year of bringing an experiential format to teaching 5th grade science curriculum at participating public schools across western North Carolina. Muddy Sneakers began as pilot program in the spring of 2007 with Transylvania County schools and has quickly grown to serve 16 schools in four counties and five school districts across the region. The organization currently programs with a diverse population of students from Transylvania, Henderson, Buncombe and McDowell Counties and is pursuing regional expansion opportunities. Visit www.muddysneakers.org to learn more and find out how you can help support the experiential education movement by becoming a *Muddy Sneakers Community Sponsor*.