

EFFECTIVE OUTDOOR LEARNING



CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOLYARDS

Outdoor learning is a highly effective way to engage students and accomplish educational goals. It can also become a critical tool for safe and effective operation of schools in light of Covid-19. Some modifications may be necessary, however, to ensure that outdoor learning is as successful, meaningful, and practical as possible.

These recommendations are meant to assist teachers and school administrators looking to consistently and regularly use their schoolyards as an extended classroom space. Different considerations may be necessary for outdoor learning that takes place off-campus, in less "groomed" environments, or less frequently over the course of the year.

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Every student needs a **good clipboard**, ideally one that is waterproof and that has a strong rubberband slipped over the bottom to keep papers from flapping.



Even teachers with great "teacher voices" may have a hard time being heard for extended periods outside. **Portable lapel microphones** or amplifiers might help.

Consider **seating pads**, lap trays, cushions, or lawn chairs if students will be doing significant work outside without picnic tables. Cardboard or garbage sacks can work in a pinch.

Explore options to **expand Wi-Fi** and **reduce screen glare** if using electronics outside.

Additional equipment to consider: classroom storage sheds, wagons, tarps, shade structures, and portable outdoor whiteboards.

PREPARE STUDENTS

Guide students through establishing **clear expectations** for outdoor learning early in the year. Discuss specific outdoor challenges (insects and spiders, sun in your eyes, trucks driving by) and how students can overcome them.



Establish routines. Start and end outdoor learning sessions in the same way each time. Have each student select a designated, consistent, and safe **outdoor spot** they will use for independent work time.

Consider **practicing activities** inside first, especially those you will do frequently. Make sure students are comfortable with outdoor learning routines before introducing new academic tasks and activities.

CREATURE COMFORT

Adjust **dress codes** to accommodate hats, sunglasses, and other outdoor attire.

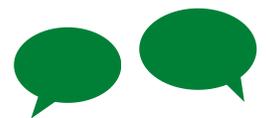


Provide families with detailed lists of any **all-weather clothing and gear** that students will need. Explore ways to assist those students unable to provide their own.

Make a bathroom plan. Will students go to indoor restrooms together at designated times or individually when needed? Should you consider a **port-a-potty**?

Designate specific times to apply **sunscreen or bug spray**. Expect that students will need to be taught how to safely and appropriately apply them, especially sprays.

PLAN, MODEL, COMMUNICATE



Ask "**What about this lesson requires me to be inside?**" Build your outdoor learning plans first around those things that don't require indoor space. Low-hanging fruit to move outside might include independent reading time, teacher read-a-louds, or small group work.

Model **positive and focused outdoor behavior**. Use distractions or outdoor surprises as teachable moments when it works, ignore them otherwise.

Communicate early and frequently with school and community ground crews, neighbors, other teachers, and other stakeholders to limit distractions--**especially mowing lawns**--during the school day whenever possible.



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Our staff is available for further assistance and support.

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