

## **Outdoor Classroom**

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**Overview:** An Outdoor Classroom is a learning space outside of the classroom. It might be a circle with log seats and an outdoor lesson board or a set of tables under a tree or canopy. This area is ideal for students to make entries in their science journals or to work on lessons.

**Targeted Grades:** PK-12

**Materials needed:** Space, seating depending on your “classroom” style: log benches or seats (cut for appropriate seat heights for the grade level), old tables and chairs or benches, a canopy, outdoor chalkboard, contact parents for support in labor and set-up.

Students might also build the benches needed with parent support and donated materials.

**Standards-Based Curricular Connections:** The Outdoor Classroom can support your curricular goals in many ways including, but not limited to, the example below. Among other schools Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School, in Rocky Hill, CT, has an outdoor classroom. Their outdoor classroom has log seats for students and teachers and is a place of engagement and hands-on learning. Common Ground High School, in New Haven, CT, has a table and chairs classroom area under a canopy.

The following list provides a general overview of other possible uses for the Outdoor Classroom.

**Science** – Providing outdoor seating will allow a place for your students to record their observations as well as a quiet place to sit and observe nature at work.

Students could investigate and observe various types of plants, birds, and insects in their natural habitats.

**Math** – The outdoor chalkboard might be blank on one side, and marked for a graph on the other side to facilitate classroom data discussions. Make sure the board is at student level so they can participate in making their graphs.

**ELA** – The outdoors is a great inspiration for writing. Students could make daily or weekly entries in their science journals about observations made from the classroom seats.

**Social Studies** – Students can read maps of the school grounds, and make their own maps.

**Art** – Students can make drawings and paintings of the trees, insects, and other animals found near their outdoor classrooms.

**Resources on how to create an outdoor classroom:**

- “Planning First to Make Your Outdoor Classroom Last” from the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia at [http://www.eealliance.org/assets/Documents/COOL\\_resources/bmps.pdf](http://www.eealliance.org/assets/Documents/COOL_resources/bmps.pdf)
- Some great examples of Outdoor Classrooms certified by Nature Explore can be seen at <http://certified.natureexplore.org/certified-nature-explore-classrooms/> Check out the case studies for great ideas!



Photo from <https://www.pinterest.com/wendyreinhart/outdoor-classroom/>.

**Standards** Navigate the Next Generation Science Standards (<http://www.nextgenscience.org/search-standards>) and Common Core State Standards (<http://www.corestandards.org/>)

*These suggestions are examples only, and may require adaptation. Check your grade-specific standards to determine whether or not the suggestions provided meet your individual curricular needs.*

*For more information, contact [ctgreenleaf@ctgreenschools.org](mailto:ctgreenleaf@ctgreenschools.org)*

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