

Sample Outdoor Classroom Proposal

Purpose

Outdoor classrooms provide a dedicated space to combine the targeted teaching of a traditional classroom with the immersive and interactive natural spaces outside of a school building. Such classrooms can range from open-air physical structures that provide some protection from the elements to wholly open spaces with dedicated areas for instruction and different kinds of engagement. This is a space to explain how you want to tailor your outdoor classroom to your students and the educational opportunities you wish to provide.

Any outdoor learning space is going to variably depend on the natural space available to it, but there are also options to create dedicated spaces to student interests and program goals. For example, an outdoor classroom could have space(s) dedicated towards bird watching where students could use binoculars and journals to identify different species of birds that feed on nearby feeders, plants, or nest in nearby trees; such a space would be oriented to the trees, planters, and shrubs that could be planted to attract birds. A classroom could also contain space(s) dedicated to student creation – either physical through natural materials, or artistic through writing or drawing about what students find outdoors. Tailor your space to your student interests, needs, and goals. There are many possible approaches and combinations to an outdoor classroom – each should be unique!

Budget Justification

- Direct Personnel
 - Wages
 - 3 H.S. / College staff x \$10/10hr/week x 16 weeks = \$4,800
 - Guide student involvement in learning spaces
 - Maintain garden(s)
 - Assist instructors to guide student lessons / activities
- Equipment - Non-expendable
 - \$5,500 for materials
 - Gardening Materials
 - Shed + Gardening tools
 - Constructed tables, chairs, benches
 - Frog pond and constructed stream
 - Constructed stations: wash station, dissection station, construction station
 - Rain Catch
 - Yard compost, Food Compost
- Supplies
 - \$1,200 for educational project materials
 - Bird house kits or materials
 - Plant ID markers / materials
 - Science kits for soil testing



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- Student school supplies (chalk board, clipboards, notebooks, pencils, etc.)
- Training and Outreach
 - Consult Extension Master Gardeners and Educators
- Contract / Consulting
 - \$3,500 for garden design consulting
 - Potentially free or reduced fees from local landscapers
 - UNL Extension: Master Gardener, Educators
- Administrative
- Summary:
 - \$4,800 for 3 student leaders for 16 weeks
 - \$5,500 for materials
 - \$1,200 for student projects and activities
 - \$3,500 for landscape consultation / planning
- Total = \$15,000

Sample Budget adapted from Cozad After School Program

Materials	Price for each	Sample total	Notes
Garden Soil	\$8.00/2 cu bag x	\$61	Soil for 4'x8' raised bed (x2)
Student Trowels	\$4.00	\$20.00	5 total
Student Shovels	\$9.00	\$18.00	2 total
Student Rakes	\$9.00	\$18.00	2 total
Hoses	50 foot/\$20.00	40	depending on you garden size – enough to water the whole garden
Nozzles	\$7.00	\$14.00	2 adjustable from mist to stream
Seeds	\$100.00- \$200.00	\$100	depends on what you choose to plant
Plants	Varies	\$450	depends on what you choose to plant
Raised bed Lumber – 3x3 foot boxes	\$40/premade	\$120	Can buy lumber or kits
Landscaping fabric	3x50 feet/\$20	\$40	helps with weed control
Landscaping staples	box of 50/\$6.00	\$12	use to keep landscaping fabric in place
Seed starting flats	72 cell/\$5.00	\$30	WAY cheaper to start your own seeds but you'll need grow lights
Seed starting soil	8 qt \$5.00	\$30	different than potting soil
Potting soil	2 cu bag/ \$14.00	\$42	Use this to transplant seedlings before putting them in the garden
Student Gardening gloves	\$3.00	\$60.00	nice if they have them to protect their hands
Weed chemicals	\$100.00	\$100.00	weed control is important but there are natural ways also
Watering drip system	varies	\$500	buy by the part – will depend on the garden size

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Garden cart/wheelbarrow	\$90.00	\$90.00	necessary to move things around in the garden
Adult Shovel	\$25.00	\$25.00	One will usually do it unless you have lots of adults
Adult Spade fork	\$28.00	\$28.00	One will usually do it unless you have lots of adults
Sprayer	\$25.00	\$25.00	Necessary for chemicals
Sprinklers	\$20.00	\$20.00	There is a huge variety so garden shape will determine your choice
Mulch	\$4.00/2 cu	\$40	This goes on top of your landscaping fabric to extend the life
Compost	\$4.00/.75 cu	\$60	This will go in your raised beds each year
Storage shed 8-10'	\$1,000.00	\$1,000	Garden materials are bulky and need protection from weather
Library of Gardening books and curriculum	\$500.00	\$500.00	You can also access info online but kids like looking and learning
Outdoor sink that connects to a hose	\$140.00	\$140	Great to wash produce off a bit before bringing it inside or tasting
Rain Barrel (where applicable)	\$300.00	\$300	Applicable if near an approved structure
Total		\$3,830	

Sample Outdoor Classroom Ideas

Ideas			
	Model Stream	Varies ~ 500	
	Play Kitchen / Dissection Station	Varies ~ 250	
	Stump tables	Varies	Table idea
	Stump benches	Varies	Bench idea
	Vine Teepee	Materials - 30	
	Frog Pond	Varies - 200	Additional resource
	Bird Bath	Varies - 50	Recycled Materials
	Human Sundial	160 (consult)	Consulted Plans
	Rabbit Burrow	Recycled materials	Constructed burrow
	Water wall	recycled materials	Ideas

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Materials			
	Outdoor Chalkboard	168	
	Stumps	$\$211 \times 20 = \$4,220$	Find Donations from local tree services – finish with carpenters, volunteers, or contracted services
	Weather Station	\$170	
	Total	\$1,628	

Sample Variation Ideas			
Garden Variations			
Native			
Plants			
	Super Bloom Box / 100ft ²	\$144	Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
	Native Trees	varies	Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
	Zip-code specific	varies	Audubon Plant Finder
		varies	Wildflower Recommendations
General			
Plants			
	Education specific	varies	Sensory Recommendations
		varies	More Sensory Recommendations
		varies	Experimental Garden
	Fruit & Vegetable	varies	Seasonal Guides (at bottom)

Community Connections

- Garden Construction
 - Reach out to local landscaping companies for assistance in construction, excess resources (soil, mulch, old tools), and design assistance - can display logos on structures and promote their work in the community.
 - Reach out to Extension Educators and (if available) any local Master Gardeners for garden design assistance.
 - Reach out to student families & local volunteer groups (churches, Scouts, local businesses, etc.) for help constructing physical gardens.
 - Ask volunteers and families to bring their tools (shovels, drills, wheelbarrows, etc.). Be sure to label or identify which tools belong to whom.
- Gardening Assistance
 - Consider local nursery or gardeners to assist in lessons and activities during planting, tending, and harvesting.
 - Reach out to local farmers markets and food banks for options in using excess produce.

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- Consult school administration and school board to incorporate produce into school lunches.
- Consider inviting a local farmer to assist with lessons and activities.
 - Highlight local food processes and importance of shopping local.
- Invite a local Arborist to assist in lessons on surrounding trees and any trees planted by students.
- Invite a local Biologist to assist with species identification in a BioBlitz.
- Classroom Structures Assistance
 - Consult with local landscape companies for a reduced fee – can display their logos on structures and promote their work in the community.
 - Assistance with design is recommended.
 - Assistance with construction is recommended if building large structures.
 - Assistance with water features is recommended (especially when electronics are included)
 - Consult with local construction and/or carpenters for assistance in designing any structures such as enclosed outdoor buildings, gazebos, pergolas, plant walls, tables, benches, stools/chairs, etc.
 - Consider requesting donations of excess building materials and reduced construction fees - can display logos on structures and promote their work in the community.

Sample Management Plan

Outdoor classrooms are ideal outdoor and environmental education spaces because they specifically provide space for students to engage with the natural world around them, especially when living components like planters and ponds are included. However, a those living components may not flourish the way they were intended to and may not foster the desired life if they are not cared for on a regular basis. The following items are key to identify in order to create a successful living and learning outdoor space.

- Administrative approval
 - Be sure to build the outdoor classroom in partnership with school administration for approval and streamlined future modifications, additions or actions
- Contacts (at least two)
 - Name at least two individuals who will have the greatest knowledge of the space and its components (one primary, one secondary)
- Designate Responsibility (can be revolving or permanent)
 - Define responsibilities and delegate day to day needs of gardening, cleaning, and general maintenance (watering, weeding, etc.)
 - Keep a schedule and contact list to ensure communication and accountability
- Define Purpose, Goals, Objectives, and measurements of success
 - This can be student or teacher-led but should define what the space is being built for (ex. To provide student construction space, observe nearby wildlife, classroom alternative, etc.)
 - What is the specific afterschool purpose?
 - Define objectives within each goal of the garden (educational objectives, production objectives, etc.)
 - How will the success and evaluations of the garden be measured?

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- Create a timeline
 - Understanding variation in weather, create a schedule for construction, planting and afterschool / summer activities. This can be created with assistance from a contracted or volunteering expert.
- Create and maintain a resource plan
 - This grant money can go a long way, but it is important to understand ongoing costs and spending to ensure the longevity of the learning spaces
 - Include a list of potential and realized community partners, tracking interactions including donated resources, materials, time and expertise

Resources

- **Beyond School Bells Curriculum**
 - <https://beyondschoolbells.org/curriculum/>
- **Community Gardening Toolkit**
 - <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/community-donation-gardening-toolkit/>
- **Frog Pond Ideas and Resources**
 - <https://www.froglife.org/learning-zone/wildlife-at-home/>
 - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/garden-activities/createaminipond/>
- **Human Sun Dial**
 - <http://sunclocks.com/net/Plans.htm>
- **Native Plant Database**
 - <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>
- **Native Trees and Shrubs**
 - https://www.gardeners.com/kitchen-garden-planner/preplanned-gardens?id=Salsa_Garden_Sm&SC=XNET0349&gclid=Cj0KCQiAO-6ABhDMARIsAFVdQv9M3Bo2d5sBx2ApKhc7OvyqN6ojWLN2nsDP_pyKsFZE6o_xGgRg_fsaApj9EALw_wcB
- **Outdoor Chalkboard**
 - <https://www.billyboardsmfg.com/collections/outdoor-chalkboards/products/outdoor-chalkboard-with-stained-wood-frame>
- **Pre-planned Gardens**
 - https://www.gardeners.com/kitchen-garden-planner/preplanned-gardens?id=Salsa_Garden_Sm&SC=XNET0349&gclid=Cj0KCQiAO-6ABhDMARIsAFVdQv9M3Bo2d5sBx2ApKhc7OvyqN6ojWLN2nsDP_pyKsFZE6o_xGgRg_fsaApj9EALw_wcB
- **Sensory Recommendations**
 - https://plantnebraska.org/file_download/bb3c3494-11a1-46b0-8a42-4354f9800cc2
 - <https://kidsgardening.org/growing-guide-sensory-garden-plants/>
- **Supplies**
 - Gardener Supply Co.



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- https://www.gardeners.com/home?SC=XNET0348&gclid=Cj0KCQiA0-6ABhDMARIsAFVdQv82E5tKGUMupKXrT61-jvSqw4qmRtqo69REgVnJsMYyT_h0eJvjx-YaAiuCEALw_wcB
- Nebraska Statewide Arboretum
 - <https://plantnebraska.org/plants/bloom-box/at-school/school-garden-options.html>
- **UNL Extension: Master Gardener Program**
 - <https://mastergardener.unl.edu/> (Potential consulting advice)
 - Email: Terri.James@unl.edu
 - Phone: (402) 472-8973
 - Junior Master Gardener Curriculum
 - <https://imgkids.us/lgeg/>
- **Vine Tent**
 - <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/131097039123782016/>
- **Weather Station**
 - <https://ambientweather.com/amws2902.html>
- **Wildflower Recommendations by region**
 - https://plantnebraska.org/file_download/inline/c9385c9d-c453-4e9e-ad39-f0d766ed4810