

Outdoor Classroom Management

*Some simple strategies and thorough planning create a **safe, effective, and enjoyable learning experience.***

Before you go outdoors...

- Get the support you need from administrators, colleagues, volunteers and community members; let them know when you plan to go outdoors
- Bring a cell phone, and make sure you have all the materials you need
- Survey the site before going outside with students, and then have them help you make a PEEP assessment for the group—Be conscious of Personal, Environmental, Emotional and Physical Safety
- Be aware of allergies and other special needs (Personal safety)
- Show students poison ivy, natural hazards, and have the “don’t put stuff in your mouth” talk (Personal and Environmental safety)
- Create a first aid kit that includes sunscreen, band aids and drinking water
- Set the tone with your students
 - Time in the outdoor classroom is a learning activity, not recess
 - Create a name for the space where you’re learning – Outdoor Classroom, Outdoor Lab, School Garden, etc.
 - Set boundaries and assign places to sit, as well as behavior expectations
 - Go over the instructions for the learning activity before you go outside, and again when you get to your outdoor space

When you’re outdoors...

- Establish a routine – start each session in a circle going over instructions, and end each session back in the circle reflecting on learning
- Agree on a call back signal – a whistle, hand clap, or whatever the group agrees on
- Help students stay comfortable outdoors – water, shade, etc. (Personal safety)
- Create a “Garden Pledge.” Start with values and turn them into guidelines – for example: We stay on the path because we respect all living things, including plants.
- Bring your current classroom management system outdoors
- Create posters with photos for procedures such as cleaning and storing tools
- Plan and role play safety rules for garden tools--
 - Sharp end down; don’t run, walk with tools; cleaning and storage protocols
 - When student use tools, adults should watch closely and immediately remove any tool that is not being used safely
- Give everyone has a job; appoint student leaders to help you
- Use distractions as a teachable moment – view them as a bonus!
- Balance quiet, reflective activities with physical, hands-on opportunities
- Encourage respect for nature