

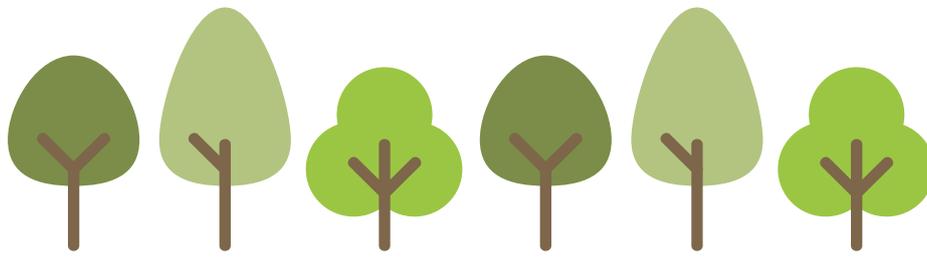
Outdoor Classroom

There are many reasons you might consider taking your classroom outdoors. A nearby creek could lend itself well for a lesson on ecosystems, or you might simply notice that students are happier and more engaged while learning outdoors.

This year, in particular, you might be utilizing an outdoor classroom to limit the spread of communicable disease.

Explore this resource to find tools, tips, and communities of like-minded educators and organizations to turn to as you embark on an exciting new journey.

DASH thanks Megan Zeni at [Room to Play](#) for endorsing this resource!



Prepare for Teaching Outdoors

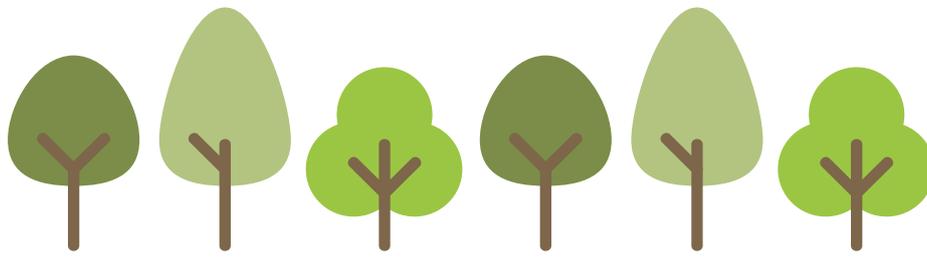
Spend some time preparing for your outdoor lessons to ensure things go smoothly. This section highlights what you may want to consider before taking your class outside.

Location

- When deciding on a temporary location for your outdoor classroom do a reconnaissance with your students.
- Walk around in the schoolyard and take note of natural features that could provide shelter from the elements, boundary lines and points of interest that are connected to your lesson.
- Consider your seasonal needs for shade, shelter, proximity to the school building and natural boundaries.
- Collaborate with school staff and administrators when deciding on the location for a permanent outdoor classroom.
- Safety – assess risks and hazards. Risks can become hazards in relationship to the developmental abilities of your students. Consult with expert knowledge keepers if you are unsure of how wind, flora or fauna present as hazards in your space.

Further Resources

- [Considerations for Outdoor Learning](#) by Evergreen
- [Creating Gathering Places](#) by Evergreeno
- [Building Outdoor Classroom-](#) Guide to Successful Fundraising by Ontario Forestry Association



Establish Routines

- Have everyone use the washroom and wash their hands before heading outdoors.
- Practice entry and exit routines.
- Ensure students have a way to wash their hands while outside, especially if they will be eating or using shared equipment.
- Bring hand sanitizer or a portable handwashing site if your school has one on hand.
- Consider the developmental abilities of your students before heading to spaces without washroom facilities.

Further Resources

- [Health and Safety Measures in School](#) by BC Governmento
- [How to Build a Tippy Tap](#) by the US CDC

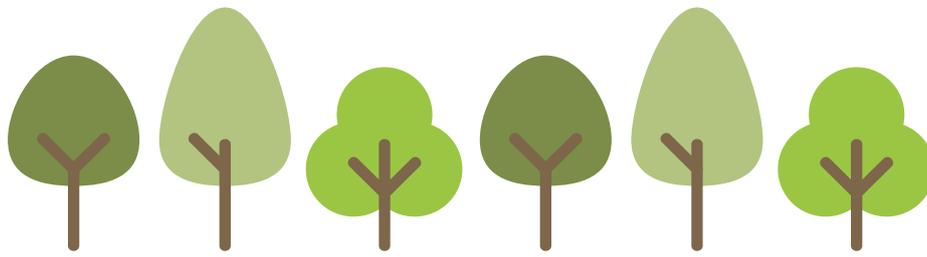


Communication with Parents

- Preparation makes every day and outside day so families send appropriate clothing and footwear.
- Communicate with parents that students will be learning in an outdoor classroom. This will help ensure students come to school prepared for the elements. See page 11 of Into Nature for a sample letter
- Ensure you have reached out to parents and are aware of any significant allergies.

Communication with Administrators

- Follow any school policies and procedures that are in place for taking your class outside.
- Discuss your plans with your administrator.
- Follow all district and site-specific protocols and policies for ratios on walking field trips.
- Ensure the office knows where to find you.
- Consider creating a school schedule to equitably share outdoor spaces for schools with limited outdoor spaces.



Co-create Expectations & Rules for Learning Outdoors

Just as it's important to communicate your outdoor classroom plans with parents and administrators, it's vital that you express your expectations and vision to your students.

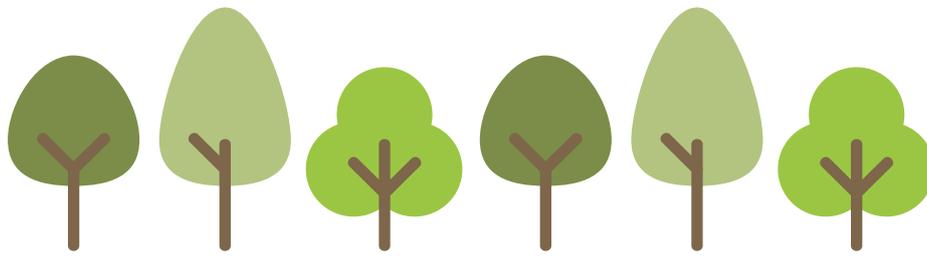
Most educators recommend giving students direct instruction while you are still inside the classroom, especially if you are new to using outdoor classrooms. Here are a few topics we suggest you discuss before heading outdoors.

- Involve your students in creating class expectations to help build a sustainable learning environment.
- Take a walk around your potential learning space and ask students to suggest how the space can be used responsibly and respectfully. Draft a class agreement.
- Talk to students about how the outdoor classroom will differ from being outdoors at recess or lunch time.
- Decide as a group on emergency procedures and practice them.
- Describe and practice any outdoor classroom management techniques you plan to use (e.g. if you have a special signal to get students' attention while you are outdoors).
- Describe the outdoor lessons and activities while still inside the classroom to reduce distractions.

Communicating with students on how the outdoor classroom will work will provide a comfort to those who may be uncomfortable with changes to their learning environment.

Further Resources

- o [Classroom Management- Outdoor Teaching Strategies](#) by Evergreen



Pack a Go Bag

These lists include supplies that will make it more comfortable, safe, and enjoyable for you and your students to spend time outdoors.

If you don't have everything on the list don't let it deter you from heading out. Start small with trips that are close to the school building, short in length, and head out on days when you have the weather on your side.

As you build up your supplies and feel more comfortable, venture farther from the school for longer outings in any kind of weather.

If possible, we recommend building a lending library of outdoor footwear and clothing at the school, in case some students don't have an item on the days you plan to go outside.

Student's Go Bag

- A sit upon
- A clipboard
- Individual school supplies like pencils and colouring materials can be carried in a large Ziploc bag
- An observational journal
- Seasonal comforts (extra socks, surplus clothing, sunscreen, sunglasses)
- Water bottle and snacks

Teacher's Go Bag

- A call and return noise maker (whistle, or musical instrument)
- The class list
- First Aid Kit and any necessary student medication
- Surplus school supplies
- A tarp for keeping supplies dry, building a shelter, or for creating a shared gathering space
- Teacher sit-upon or folding stool
- Lesson materials
- Seasonal comforts (extra socks, surplus clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen)
- Clipboard
- Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer



Community Partnerships

Here is a list of organizations and professional learning communities that can provide additional resources, networking events, and professional development opportunities related to outdoor teaching and learning.

- Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association (EESPA): A provincial specialist Association of the BC Teachers Federation - EEPSA promotes networking, curriculum support, and leadership in environmental education supported by the BCTF.
- Classrooms to Communities: BC Education Network - the C2C Education Network is connecting classrooms and communities across the province to grow collaboration, teacher leadership and mentorship capacity for place-based education and environmental literacy.
- Take Me Outside - works collaboratively with other organizations, school boards and individuals to encourage children and youth to spend more time outside through various projects and initiatives.
- CBEEN Community Organizations Directory provides a summary of excellent resources available to support both classroom and community-based environmental education programs along with a list of organizations in the Columbian Basin area.
- Outdoor Classroom Day is a global campaign to inspire and celebrate outdoor learning and play.

Check out your own local community organizations, partners, businesses that may be able to present, provide hands-on learning or be involved in field trips