



Design Consultation Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is unique about the Nature Explore design process?

Our multidisciplinary teams of professionally trained landscape architects and education specialists allow us to view your outdoor space comprehensively. Working as a team, we ensure that your design supports your unique curriculum, approach and faculty—balancing functionality and environmental stewardship. We recognize that sustainable spaces are created when we view them from multiple perspectives.

A significant element of our approach is our process and field-tested design principles. In partnership with Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, our evidence-based research and observations are continually developed at our three research sites. To learn more visit our Design Approach webpage.

2. What should I consider when selecting a potential site for our outdoor classroom?

With more than 400 certified Nature Explore Classrooms around the country, we have worked within a variety of settings ranging from high-density urban areas to vast open spaces. We pride ourselves on our flexibility and ability to incorporate outdoor classrooms into any space. Our experienced team can assist you in the site selection process. When posed with the challenge of selecting a potential site consider the following:

- **Access:** Ideally, your outdoor classroom will be in a location that is easy to access on a daily basis and encourages regular use by visitors of all abilities.
- **Vegetation:** Existing vegetation can be a great asset to a Nature Explore Classroom. We encourage the incorporation of existing trees and natural spaces.
- **Size:** An average Nature Explore Classroom ranges from 2,500 to 7,500 square feet. However, we have worked with spaces as small as 1,000 square feet. Additionally, there are outdoor classrooms that are much larger.

3. Who should I invite to this meeting?

Think critically about whom you choose to invite to the design consultation. Include key decision-makers and stakeholders you would like to influence the design process. We encourage a diverse group of perspectives including teachers, administrators, maintenance/grounds staff, parents/family, etc. who are important to the implementation and success of your outdoor classroom. Each program is unique, but as a general rule of thumb, we recommend keeping the number of attendees to less than fifteen.

4. How do I prepare for the consultation?

Before we come to your site, it is helpful to review the resources mailed to you with your entire team. Discussing our research-based recommend and supplemental activity areas as a group will also allow you to develop a vision for your space and help determine the areas and materials most appropriate for your outdoor classroom.



5. What if someone from my team can only make it to one day?

We strongly encourage team members to attend both days of the design consultation. However, in the event that a team member is only able to attend one day, we recommend they join the first day. This will provide them an understanding of our approach and will give them the opportunity to take part in the preliminary conversations and brainstorming that influences the design.

6. What if the traditional two-day process does not work for my team?

If you are absolutely unable to schedule two consecutive days for a traditional design consultation, our client service representatives are available to explore additional options and schedules.

7. What if our children have special needs? Do you design for ADA Accessibility?

Our professionally trained designers and educators consider children of all abilities when designing a Nature Explore Classroom. An accessible pathway connects all activity areas, giving every child the opportunity to fully engage in your space. We have a wide range of experience addressing any unique challenges you may face in your design.

8. What does a Nature Explore Classroom cost?

Each Nature Explore Classroom is different so costs vary. Most outdoor classrooms are constructed for considerably less than a traditional playground. Higher budgets can accommodate things like larger or more elaborate spaces, upgraded surfaces and planting areas, irrigation systems, and removal of existing structures, concrete or asphalt. Using donated materials and volunteers where appropriate may help decrease cost.

9. How long does it take to build a Nature Explore Classroom?

Much like the discussion of cost, there are many variables when considering the timeline for implementation. Budget, weather and availability of skilled labor all influence your construction schedule. We will help you discuss a plan for implementation and identify any challenges you might face in the development of your space.