



Design Services, Workshops & Resources



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Outdoor Classroom Design Services



Overview: Transform your space by collaborating with our expert team to create a tailored concept plan using research-based design principles.

A Nature Explore Design consultation consists of a two-day design visit resulting in a black and white concept plan, a colored concept plan, an implementation guide, a project overview, and a list of recommended furnishings and loose parts. You will also be mailed a Resource Guide, the *Learning with Nature Idea Book*, and *Keeping it Growing: Sustaining Your Outdoor Classroom*.

Outdoor Classroom Design Process



LEARNING ABOUT YOUR PROGRAM

Before our team arrives for your two-day on-site design consultation, our client services representative will send you resources and educational materials to inspire your planning team. During a conference call with one of our specialized multidisciplinary teams, comprised of professionally trained landscape architects and education specialists, we will help you prepare for our upcoming visit and answer any questions you may have.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR SITE

The first day of the consultation begins with an initial presentation familiarizing your planning team with Nature Explore's evidence-based research and field-tested design principles. After we discuss the unique vision you have for your outdoor classroom, we will walk your site together and talk about how you currently use the space, what is working for you and what changes you would like to see.



DEVELOPING YOUR VISION

Following the initial meeting, our designer will take measurements of your space and analyze the existing site conditions. Afterwards, the designer/educator team will develop a cost-effective, low-maintenance and attainable concept based on your vision for the space, the opportunities and constraints of the site, and the Nature Explore design principles.



PRESENTING YOUR CONCEPT PLAN

While our designer/educator team presents your concept plan, we will address any questions you have and help to build consensus within your planning group. Afterwards, we help you determine the next steps to building and maintaining your Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom.



PLANNING FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

We prepare and deliver your final design consultation package which includes an executable concept plan, a watercolor rendering perfect for fundraising, an estimate of material quantities to assist with pricing, a written project summary and a guide for implementing your outdoor classroom project.



OFFERING ONGOING SUPPORT

Every classroom we design is as important to us as it is to you. We want to see your classroom thrive by offering you ongoing support and comprehensive resources tailored to fit your needs. You will be paired with one of our Client Services Representatives for continuous support, available to answer questions as you implement your outdoor classroom plan.

Educator Workshops



Overview: Inspiring Nature Explore Workshops provide research-based activities and resources that support comprehensive learning with nature.

Nature Explore workshops help early childhood, elementary and environmental educators make connections between nature-based experiences for children and curriculum goals, school policies, standards, quality rating systems and accreditation. They are especially effective in providing strategies for supporting children's learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as language/literacy, the arts and social/emotional development.

On the first day of each design consultation, we encourage a three-hour workshop for no more than 50 staff members, community members, administration, volunteers, and parents. During the workshop we will discuss fun and engaging hands-on experiences, and participants will gain techniques for using outdoor classrooms as an integral part of children's daily learning.

Workshop Offerings



IN-PERSON AND ONLINE

Choose from a variety of in-person and online offerings designed to elevate the teaching and learning in your outdoor classroom including:

- Using Your Outdoor Classroom/
Usando su Salón de Clases
al Aire Libre
- Whole-Child Development/
Desarrollo Integral del Niño
- Supporting Infants and Toddlers
in Outdoor Classrooms | Apoyando
a Bebés y Niños Pequeños al
Aire Libre
- And so much more. . .



WORKSHOP THEMES

Join us as we explore the “hows and whys” of connecting with nature to enhance play, learning and development:

- Outdoor Classroom Design
- Whole-Child Development
- Adult-Child Relationships
- Natural Open-Ended Materials
- Visual-Spatial Thinking
- Body Competence
- Social-Emotional Development
- STEAM
- Documenting Learning
- Caretaking and Maintenance
- Workplace Culture & Well-Being
- Supporting Children’s Behavior & Self-Regulation



Please visit [natureexplore.org/
professional-development](https://natureexplore.org/professional-development) to
learn more and register for
upcoming workshops.

Natural Outdoor Classroom Products



Outfit your classroom with a variety of engaging natural materials to support children's interests and deepen their connection to the natural world.

Our research demonstrates the critical value of including a complete mix of activity areas to support a variety of experiences and all the ways that children learn. Natural, field-tested and hand-crafted materials within these areas unleash children's delight in outdoor learning.

Field-Tested, Hand-Crafted



BRING FIELD-TESTED NATURAL MATERIALS TO YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Finding natural items that work well in outdoor classrooms is an important part of our mission to bring the life-changing benefits of daily nature connections to children's lives. An outdoor classroom with natural components is an engaging, creative alternative to concrete and plastic. The precious gift of nature is a profoundly needed influence for today's children.



ENJOY HAND-CRAFTED MATERIALS MADE BY PEOPLE WHO CARE

Offering effective natural materials is a collaborative effort that takes the support of committed craftspeople across the nation. Many of them work in family-owned businesses. They too, are motivated by a desire to make children's lives better. They develop these materials with care, skill and the utmost attention to detail.



ENCOURAGE THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS

Nature Explore is deeply committed to bringing nature's joy and wonder to all children. Our most important goal in offering these natural products is to support children's healthy development while inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards.



Classroom Certification



Nature Explore Certified Classrooms are nature-based play and learning spaces that are located anywhere children spend their days. Each is unique in size, setting, and structure, but they have one thing in common: they help children and adults thrive.

The Nature Explore Classroom Certification Program is a national initiative that recognizes schools and other organizations that have committed to providing outdoor classrooms and comprehensive programming to help children use the natural world as an integral part of learning. Grounded in over a decade of research and field-testing, this widespread initiative is sponsored by Nature Explore in collaboration with environmental, educational, design, and health organizations.

Certification Information



CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Note: Yearly recertification required

1. Well-designed outdoor space: Provide evidence that principles from the *Learning with Nature Idea Book* were used in the design of new spaces, or the redesign of existing spaces. For renewal, provide evidence of annual maintenance.
2. Staff development: Provide evidence that staff have attended a full-length Nature Explore Workshop. For renewal, provide evidence of annual professional development relating to nature education.
3. Family involvement: Provide evidence that activities or materials designed to increase family awareness and involvement in nature education for young children are provided regularly. For renewal, provide evidence of ongoing activities conducted to increase family awareness and involvement.



WHY BECOME CERTIFIED?

You become part of a growing network of schools and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. A specially designated Nature Explore Classroom website will offer access to the latest news and research on children and nature, and encourage the sharing of ideas.



NATURE EXPLORE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM CERTIFICATION

When your outdoor classroom becomes certified, the Dimensions Foundation will send a press release to your local media to help you gain additional community recognition and support. Once certified, you will receive a Nature Explore Classroom sign, which you can post to publicly recognize your commitment, and to encourage others to create similar spaces in their own programs. To apply to become certified, please visit natureexplore.org/certify

Nature Explore Resources



2024 LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (JULY 14–17)

Presented by Nature Explore and The Outdoor Classroom Project

Gather with a growing community of natural outdoor classroom users and advocates to set intentions for positive growth and change. Gain practical ideas and inspiring information through presentations, activities and discussion groups, and meet with people engaged in similar work. Navigate to natureexplore.org/institute for more information.



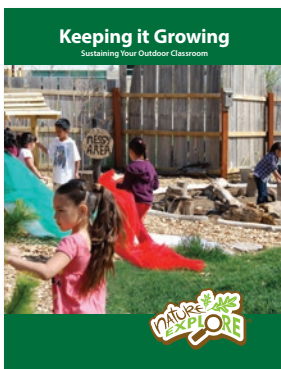
RESOURCE GUIDE

A comprehensive guide detailing the field-tested resources developed to bring nature into children’s daily learning in sustainable, significant, positive, and joyful ways. Request your complimentary mailed or downloadable copy online at natureexplore.org.



GROWING WITH NATURE

Engaging stories and photographs illustrate ways to enhance children’s healthy development in all areas by engaging with the natural world. Ideas for supporting learning in multiple domains (language and literacy, science, social-emotional, mathematical, body competence, creative arts, and visual-spatial skills) are presented for three age groups: infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and elementary students. Be inspired by real-life stories and suggestions from educators around the nation who are helping children enjoy learning with nature as a part of their daily lives.



KEEPING IT GROWING

This practical and inspirational book, grounded in a study of thriving Nature Explore Classrooms throughout the United States, offers research-based principles for keeping your outdoor classroom growing in a sustainable way. Ideas for engaging and supporting staff, families and community volunteers, and for making maintenance an enjoyable part of the learning (instead of a chore), are shared through real-life stories and photographs.