An outdoor classroom setting featuring several tables and benches made from tree stumps. The tables are topped with a light-colored material, possibly stone or concrete. The benches are also made from tree stumps. The ground is covered in wood chips. In the background, there are trees and a fence. The overall scene is green and natural.

BUILDING OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS:

A guide for successful fundraising

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Inspire you to get started on an outdoor classroom for your school,
- Support your school community as you develop successful outdoor classroom plans, and
- Enable your school to create stronger funding applications to support these initiatives.
- Provide checklists, details of funding opportunities, planning templates, and inspiring case studies.

About Us

Focus on Forests

Focus on Forests is an online learning tool that provides curriculum linked resources to bring forests into any classroom. Activities, fact sheets, discussion forum, e-newsletter and lesson plans all make learning about forests easy and fun for any grade.

Visit: www.focusonforests.ca

Ontario Forestry Association

Focus on Forests is a program of the Ontario Forestry Association (OFA). The OFA has been a leader in forest education and stewardship programs for over 60 years. The OFA is a non-profit, registered charity that is dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of all aspects of Ontario's forests and to developing commitment to stewardship of forest ecosystems.

Visit: www.oforest.ca

TD Friends of Environment Foundation

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation (TD FEF) is a national charity that funds environmental projects and programs across the country. Since 1990, TD FEF has provided more than \$60 million in funding to more than 20,000 environment projects across Canada. In 2012, TD FEF provided more than \$4.8 million in support of more than 1,000 projects. Thousands of donors give to TD FEF on a monthly basis and TD Bank Group contributes in excess of \$1 million annually. TD also covers the management costs of running TD FEF, which guarantees 100 per cent of every dollar donated funds environmental projects and programs. For more information on how to donate, visit www.tdfef.com.

Visit: www.fef.td.com



TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation

This guide can be downloaded in English or French at www.focusonforests.ca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2** What is an Outdoor Classroom
- 4** Checklist: Is your school prepared to implement an outdoor classroom?
- 5** 10 Tips for successful applications
- 5** Organizational Chart
- 7** Funding options for your outdoor classroom
- 9** Your outdoor classroom
 - Getting Started
 - Things to Consider
- 11** Budget and Maintenance
- 14** References
- 16** Case Studies
- 11** Resources

WHAT IS AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM?

Outdoor classrooms bring learning to life. An outdoor classroom is a space that brings learning outside. It becomes a gathering place for teachers and students and provides an opportunity to integrate nature into your school grounds. By giving students the opportunity to get outside and experience nature, they can bring learning to life.



Outdoor classroom designs incorporate seating, teaching platforms and natural elements to explore. A well-planned outdoor classroom that is integrated into the school community will become an important part of your school and can be used for every subject, in every season. There is no standard design for an outdoor classroom; the key is to develop the classroom that will work best for your school grounds and the needs of your school. But before you start, it is important to make sure that your project fits in with the policies and guidelines of your local School Board - some Boards even offer site visits or design consultations to help you along the way. Once you have permission, there is no limit on how this space can be developed and used by the school community. All you need is a great plan and plenty of school commitment.

Elements of an outdoor classroom can include:

- Seating
- Outdoor chalkboard
- Musical area
- Gardens
- Greenhouse
- Natural features (trees, shrubs, greenery)
- Fitness and balance elements

For a list of terms, refer to Appendix A

While this guide provides some information to consider when planning your classroom, there are many resources available in print and online that can provide more in-depth information on planning your project. The goal of this guide is to give you information about building a successful plan to help you find the funding to make it a reality.

WHAT IS AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM?

Benefits of outdoor learning

Everyone benefits from learning outdoors, especially young people. In addition to the educational value of nature-based programming are the health benefits of getting outdoors.

Benefits include:

- Improved mood and happier students
- Enhanced appreciation for the outdoors through interaction
- Increased retention rate for subject material
- Improved learning experience for tactile and experiential learners
- Lowered school violence and bullying, and improved social skills
- Increased understanding of complex ecological concepts
- Incorporation of physical activity across subject areas
- Opportunity to get out of the classroom if the school does not have the funds to go on field trips
- Community engagement for outdoor spaces that are used beyond the school community

As taken from “*Planning First to Make Your Outdoor Classroom Last*” by the Georgia Wildlife Federation:

Top 5 Reasons Outdoor Classrooms Succeed

1. Community support
2. Student involvement
3. Funding
4. Teacher training
5. Administrative support

Top 5 Reasons Outdoor Classrooms Fail

1. Lack of a maintenance plan and upkeep
2. Teachers unsure or unable to incorporate usage into lessons
3. Inadequate funding
4. Vandalism
5. School expansion or relocation

IS YOUR SCHOOL PREPARED TO IMPLEMENT AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM?

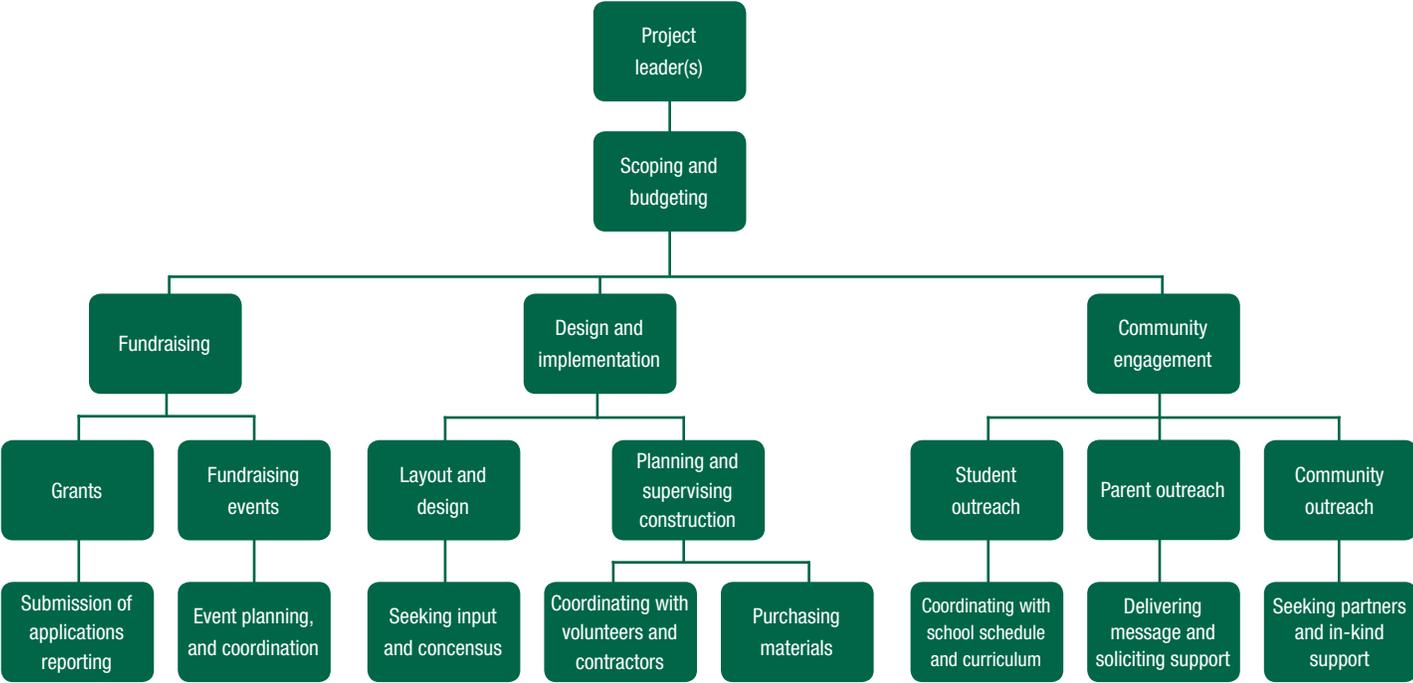
Below are some of the key questions you should ask before you begin your project in order to determine whether an outdoor classroom makes sense for your school. If you can answer yes to most (if not all), then you are well on your way!

.....

Question	Answer
Would your school ground benefit from an outdoor natural area?	
Do you have an area that can be converted to an outdoor classroom?	
Is your school community supportive and engaged in this project? (Principal, Vice-Principal, Teachers, School board, Maintenance staff)	
Do you know who will care for the outdoor classroom during off-school times? (holidays, summer, etc.)	
Have you had similar projects in the past at your school that have been successful?	
Can you concisely describe the potential benefits of an outdoor classroom for your school? (Think of an 'elevator pitch' which sells your idea in two minutes or less)	
Have you considered all the possible challenges (funding, approvals, conflicts, etc.) and considered solutions?	
Do you have any community partners that could help to reduce the cost of the outdoor classroom?	
Have you considered how the outdoor classroom will be used throughout the year?	
Do you have a project leader(s) that's willing to work long volunteer hours to coordinate all aspects of this project?	

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

This chart will help you organize your school and school community around the variety of tasks and roles involved in developing and completing your project. Depending on the size of your community and your project, there may be only a few people responsible for all roles below. Nevertheless, it's important to be aware of the range of responsibilities and organize appropriately.



TOP 10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATIONS

1) Get support and get people involved

Bring together an Outdoor Classroom Committee that includes: administrators, faculty and staff, students, parents, building and maintenance department, and the local community. Make sure to highlight the benefits of outdoor learning. Contact your school board to get their support.

2) Create a landscape plan that includes existing schoolyard features and usage

Your school might already have mature trees or great features that could easily fit into an outdoor classroom plan. This can save you money and speed up the process of development. Look at your assets and include them in the concept. You may need to reach out to a professional landscaper to help you – ask parents or community members if they have the expertise to help.

3) Make a thorough realistic budget

Don't forget to include all the aspects of building a project and look to community partners for in-kind support. In-kind support involves no exchanges of money but rather an exchange of goods or services (e.g. materials, labour, consulting).

4) Include a timeline

A big project may not be achieved in one year so think about spacing your plan over several years, especially to match potential funding.

5) Maintain to succeed

Maintenance is critical in planning for a successful outdoor classroom and should not be overlooked in the plan or budget.

6) Talk about using the classroom

Make sure to highlight what type of learning or activities you will be doing in your outdoor space. Go beyond the traditional sciences to show you can take any class outdoors!

7) Build and show sustained enthusiasm

Excitement about the possibilities and opportunities can help to drive a successful plan and garner more support.

8) Tell everyone, and talk about it often

Get your community excited about the possibility. Creating awareness of the project may help to secure partners, in-kind donors or even volunteers. Send flyers home with students, contact the local media, and contact your municipality.

9) Know your funder

Research the funder you are applying to, and be aware of their mission, scope and what type of project components they will fund. Approach your funder when you are ready and at the right time of your classroom progress. Make sure your school is ready to implement the classroom, so when funding is secured you can hit the ground running! Ask for support well in advance of the start of the project. Ensure that you answer all questions in the application.

10) Build off past successes

Even small successes can help show that your school is dedicated and able to take on a project, so focus on things you have achieved in the past.

FUNDING OPTIONS FOR YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Outdoor classrooms can cost anywhere from \$500- \$150,000! The scope and size of your project will determine your budget. It is important that your project is a success and that the scope of the project matches the availability of resources in your school community. Small projects that are done well have a lot of merit and can lead to future successful projects.

There are several different options for funding your outdoor classroom. Your best plan may be a phased approach with several different funding sources that build and add to your outdoor classroom over several years.

Possible Sources of Funding

- **Foundations** - These granting organizations support projects that contribute to their own vision or mandate. There can be independent, corporate or community foundations. Community foundations may be one of the best ways to secure small amounts of money because they are more invested in programs that directly benefit their community. Contact your local community foundation to find out if they fund outdoor classrooms.
- **Grants** - Grants are often focused on a specific project and come from a variety of sources including federal, provincial, private, public charity, Individual, and non-profit grants.
- **Corporate Giving** - this type of funding comes from businesses that have giving programs that are generated by their profits. As with other sources such as grants, corporate funding may require online applications.
- **School Boards** - Availability of board funds will vary from board to board. Some school boards may have funding allocated to school renovation that can be put toward your outdoor classroom. Contact your local school board to see if it is available.
- **Local Community** - Your local community may be your best support for both financial and other support. Look to local businesses to secure cash or in-kind contributions to reduce the overall costs. In-kind contributions may include materials such as

mulch, plants, or tools. In-kind contributions should always be included within the budget to show the value of the whole project. Looking to your local Lions or Rotary Club may also be a good start.

- **Fundraising** - Fundraising enough money for an outdoor classroom can require a lot of effort and time however it can also create a strong connection with the community. These types of funding efforts usually generate low amounts and should be used as support in addition to other funding options. Showing that your school and community supports an initiative could make your project more appealing to funders. Fundraising ideas:

- Bake sales
- Merchandise Sales
- Memorial stones
- Garage/Yard Sale
- Walk-a-thon
- Concerts
- Carnival
- Seed/Plant sales

Lots of other great fundraising ideas can be found online - just look around!

Examples of Funding Sources:

- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- MAJESTA Trees of Knowledge Competition
- Community Foundations
- Evergreen
- Canadian Wildlife Federation
- World Wildlife Federation
- Earth Day Canada

FUNDING OPTIONS FOR YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM



Pay specific attention to what your funders will and will not fund. For example, some funding sources may cover only capital expenses, while others may allow inclusion of labour costs. If you are unsure, give them a call to verify. *Including ineligible expenses may disqualify your application and waste your time.*

It's also important to make sure that your project is properly planned out, including approval from your principal and permission from your school board, before you approach a funder for support. An application for a project that is still just an idea, or that is unsupported or unplanned will not only be rejected, it may influence a funder's opinion of your group for future requests.

Where appropriate, develop a working relationship with a potential funder to help increase chances of success.

Check out Appendix D for three case studies of classrooms with three different budgets.



Photo courtesy of Royal Roads Public School

YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Getting Started

School Support One of the most important things about developing an outdoor classroom for your school is that you have the support of the school behind you. A successful outdoor classroom will continue to grow and must be maintained beyond the planning and development process.

If you have spaces in your schoolyard that are currently neglected make sure that your school is prepared to invest in the new infrastructure, and that your outdoor classroom does not meet the same fate.

Designing your outdoor classroom must involve your whole school community, and it should meet the needs of teachers, students and the local community. Develop an Outdoor Classroom Committee that has members of school staff, administration, the maintenance staff, parents and the local community. This committee will work to make the project a reality by setting objectives, developing the plan, sourcing funding, and using the classroom. For an idea of the different roles on the committee, visit Appendix A.

Goals and Objectives An outdoor classroom can be anything from a small learning space that includes natural areas, to a large scale educational area with a broad range of activities and classroom ideas. When developing your ideal outdoor classroom, it's important to think of both long- and short-term goals.

E.g. Long-term goal: to develop an outdoor amphitheatre and learning space that includes seating, a display area, and play structures over the next 3 years

Short-term goal: install several natural play areas within the next 6 months

Be sure each of your goals has a specific outcome and timeline.

Master Plan vs. Phase Plans The master plan gives an idea of the entire scope of the project that you wish to achieve in your school yard. The phase plans focus on the smaller components that make up this master plan. By breaking up the classroom into small pieces, you are helping to make the project more achievable from a funding and logistical point of view.

Your school may have a lot of great ideas for your new outdoor learning space, but that doesn't mean that everything needs to happen in the first year. Building an outdoor classroom may consist of small projects over a couple of years to build an amazing workspace. If you are able to acquire enough funding up front, then you may choose to transform your outdoor classroom in a short period of time. Choose a timeline that works best for your school! See Appendix C for a sample timeline.

When setting out your phase plans, you will need to consider how the timing of (see Sample Timeline in Appendix C). It's important to ensure that installing one component of the project doesn't interfere or detract from previous or subsequent phasing. For example, installing a garden phase may seem like a great starting point, but if you are also planning on planting large trees in an area behind the garden, consider whether that can be done later without destroying the garden in the process. Or if the first phase is too small in scope, it may happen that too many students will be using the area, causing damage from overuse.

YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Important Considerations

Accessibility An outdoor classroom in the back corner of the schoolyard may not present the same opportunities as something closer to the school. Highly visible and accessible classrooms will make them more usable for teachers and students. However, it should be a distinct area on the school grounds so that the teachers and students see it as a new learning space. Try to limit any accessibility barriers for students with special needs.

Location Do you notice a puddle that forms in your schoolyard every spring? This might not be the best location for your classroom. Understanding these types of concerns and limitations of the current schoolyard will help with the site selection. Work with the school maintenance group to ensure that the right space is selected.

Ideally your classroom will optimize underused parts of the school grounds. If you're converting an area used for sports to a garden for example, you'll be trading off usage values, and may create a conflict within the school community. It may also mean that students continue using the space for sports activities, destroying the green space in the process. The same can be said for existing 'walk lines', or paths that students prefer to take to cross the school yard. If naturalized areas are created in an area through which students often walk on their way to a school entrance, they are likely to be damaged by compaction and disturbance. It's important to plan around established use patterns.

Local natural spaces/ current school features Is there a place on your school grounds that seem to be a gathering area for students? Perhaps this might be a great area to install an outdoor classroom. Maybe a local park or natural space might be the perfect backdrop to your classroom. Consider the natural features of your school grounds and include them in your design.

Design The right design will ensure that the classroom will always be used! One of the best ways to get ideas for your schools is to ask your students. Get them involved in the process to ensure that they feel a sense of ownership in the project. Ask for input from groups in the school- creative ideas may emerge. Refer to the Focus on Forests Lesson Plan- 'Growing Knowledge Outdoors' for a great activity to get your students engaged in the design process.

Once the students are engaged and teachers are committed to using the space, it's just as important that the design be strong enough to accommodate the level of use you're expecting. For example, if you know that students will love your seating rocks, don't plant around their base where little feet may trample your new garden spaces. Or if you have 100 students who want to sit in the shade, make sure that you have enough trees, and some protection around the base of the tree to prevent compaction.

Scale An outdoor classroom does not have to be elaborate for it to be valuable and functional. If your school only has a small area, then design something appropriate to fit the scale of that space. A few logs, or a small garden can go a long way. A multistage plan may also help you to build several smaller components over a number of years.

YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Plants Native vegetative species should always be considered as the top priority when choosing the vegetation to include in your outdoor area. Native species are generally low maintenance and adapt well to their local environment and are therefore easier to maintain in the future. Consulting a local landscaping company may be a great way to get some recommendations for the best species. Just be sure that they are suggesting native plants and not cultivars, which are generally ‘designed’ for appearance, often at the expense their ecological value.

Other things to consider when choosing plants and greenery:

- Maintenance (watering, pruning)
- Water needs (drought tolerant or water-loving depending on your site)
- Hardiness zones (look up <http://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/nsdb/climate/hardiness/intro.html>)
- Danger factors (poisonous, thorns, allergens)
- Compaction (response to compaction)
- Salt tolerance (for those plants near areas that get salted in the winter)

Seating Most outdoor classrooms contain seating areas so that a classroom lesson can be held in the space. There are several options that can be used for natural seating including logs, stumps, rocks, benches, and hills (raised grassy areas to create a theatre style seating). Make sure that your seating area is large enough to accommodate a full class of students. Also consider shade and sun-safe designs that ensure your classrooms are protected from harmful UV rays.

Soil/Ground Cover Since outdoor classroom areas will experience high volume of traffic, it is important to consider using ground cover that can withstand compaction. Some suggestions include mulch, pebbles, gravel, wood chips, or grass. Consider that compaction will occur and that maintenance or replacement of the ground cover will be necessary over the years.



Photo courtesy of Royal Roads Public School

YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Budget

First things first - you can take learning outside at no cost! Do not let money be a barrier to outdoor learning. However there are great benefits to creating a space that makes it easier for people to begin learning outdoors. Refer to Appendix D for sample budgets.

Important things to include in your budget:

1. Landscape Plan
2. Labour
3. Materials
4. Maintenance

Landscape Plan Developing a landscape plan may require the help of consultants or landscape architects. First determine if anyone in the immediate school community (e.g. PTA committee) or with your School Board has expertise in this area. If not, you should consider soliciting in-kind support from local professionals. Landscaping or construction firms might donate services in exchange for advertising and profile in the community. *Make sure to include these in-kind values in your budget since they are partnerships that your funding source will view as valuable.*

Labour Labour will be required for site preparation, installation and building of structures. Labour can be the most costly component of building an outdoor classroom. As noted above, in-kind partnerships with local firms may offset this cost substantially.

As much as possible, use your funds for material, not labour. It may mean rallying the community to help out with digging, planting, mulching or transporting material. *Again, make sure to include any in-kind support in your budget to strengthen grant applications.*

Materials Materials can be a significant cost for outdoor classrooms. Work with local partners and providers to get donated materials or at a discount. Remember to focus on choosing native plants, as these can help to reduce maintenance costs and provide many ecosystem benefits. Refer to Appendix D for sample budgets that include material costs.

Maintenance

Create a maintenance guide for your school that is easily accessible by anyone. Have a clear outline of what needs to be done, when, and by whom. One easy way to maintain the outdoor classroom during the school year is to make it a part of the curriculum. Incorporate weeding, watering, or pruning into your lesson plans. For more ideas, visit Focus on Forests.

Most schools run from September to June, and in some parts of Canada the only growing season may be at a time when no one is actually using the school. This means that trees or plants in the outdoor classroom will need care over summer months to ensure their survival. This can be arranged through the students, teachers, maintenance and grounds staff, or by reaching out to the local community for partnership.

Maintenance should not be an afterthought! It is integral that this is considered before any construction takes place. Ongoing funding may be required.

YOUR OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

An outdoor classroom can be used for subjects beyond environment, science and geography. All classes can be taught outside and should be encouraged among all teachers at your school. Focus on cross-curricular studies.

Art Use the soil as paint and create beautiful canvases. Or have rock piles for students to create rock art. Using natural elements such as bark and leaves are great for rubbings.

Science Learn about the biology of the plants and animals found in your classroom. You can include concepts such as habitat, life cycle and food webs.

Math Many students learn more effectively through tactile interaction. Use natural items (rocks, leaves, branches) to demonstrate addition, subtraction division, etc.

Music Organize an outdoor drumming circle or create music based on the sounds of nature (bird songs, wind, etc.)

Geography Have students learn about scaling and mapping by using their schoolyard or outdoor classroom space.

History Discuss Canadian history in the context of the natural environment. What did the first explorers and settlers see when they came to your area? How does this compare to what the students see now?

Consider developing kits that can be made available to any teacher that makes the outdoor learning experience easier and therefore more enjoyable. If you have a natural leader who knows how to use the outdoor classroom, consider asking them to host a teacher training event. Teachers that may be hesitant will become more familiar with using the outdoor space and therefore more comfortable.

For lots of great FREE lesson plans, activities, and fact sheets make sure to register for Focus on Forests at www.focusonforests.ca

REFERENCES

.....

What is the Outdoor Classroom? Community Playthings. 2012.

<http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/naturallearning/outdoorClassroom.html>

Fundraising. Techsoup Canada. 2012.

http://www.techsoupcanada.ca/learning_center/articles/grant_seeking

Outdoor Classroom Guide. Multi Materials Stewardship Board. 2011.

<http://www.mmsb.nl.ca/uploads/file/MMSBOutdoorClassroomGuide.pdf>

Classroom in Nature. nd.

<http://classroominnature.weebly.com/analysis-of-existing-outdoor-classrooms.html>

Guidelines and Features for Outdoor Classrooms. Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry. 2012.

[http://www.nacdnet.org/education/resources/outdoorclassrooms/Guidelines_Features_OC_NACD_2012_8-12\(lr\)\[2\].pdf](http://www.nacdnet.org/education/resources/outdoorclassrooms/Guidelines_Features_OC_NACD_2012_8-12(lr)[2].pdf)

Planning First to Make Your Outdoor Classroom Last. Georgia Wildlife Federation. 2004.

http://www.eealliance.org/assets/Documents/COOL_resources/bmps.pdf

Adventures in Nature: Tools for the Outdoor Classroom. Arkansas Forestry Commission. 2001.

<http://forestry.arkansas.gov/Services/KidsTeachersEveryone/Documents/adventures.pdf>

Outdoor Classrooms – Guidelines & Features. Indiana Department of Natural Resources. nd.

http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-Guidelines_Outd_Labs.pdf

**Thanks to the following individuals, organizations
and schools for participating in creating this guide:**

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

Mike Halferty

Royal Roads Public School

St. Paul Elementary School

APPENDIX A – INDEX OF TERMS

General Terms:

- **Budget** – an estimate of expenses and revenue for a set period of time
- **Collaboration** – working with your school community to complete the project (e.g. teachers, school staff, parents)
- **Deadline** – the latest time that something should be completed and submitted
- **Expense** – the money spent on your project, money going out
- **In-kind** – exchange of goods or services in lieu of money (e.g. donated time, materials, expertise)
- **Landscape/Site plan** – The proposed outline for the design of your outdoor classroom. This should be detailed, to scale and should work with current school features
- **Maintenance** – the required care of the classroom to keep it in good condition
- **Materials list** – A list of materials that you need to purchase to complete your outdoor classroom (e.g. plants, mulch, seating)
- **Report** – a written documentation of the project indicating the outcomes and final budget
- **Revenue Sources** – amount of money being received
 - Expected – those that have been applied for or are in the process of securing
 - Secured – confirmed sources of revenue
- **Sustainability** – a plan and idea to ensure the success of the classroom into the future
- **Timeline** – a schedule of intended actions including planning, fundraising, implementation, and launch

Roles:

- **Curriculum Committee** – this committee focuses on ensuring the classroom is used through teacher training, resources and outreach
- **Fundraising Committee** – this committee focuses on brainstorming ideas to fund the classroom space including researching and applying for grants and planning fundraising events
- **Maintenance staff** – staff of the school that are focused on ensuring the maintenance of the outdoor space (e.g. mowing, weeding, watering)
- **Outdoor Classroom Committee** – group composed of many of those listed below; objective is to bring together people to collaborate on the classroom concept including ideas, roles, funding and use of the space
- **Parent representative** – a parent lead who represents the needs of the parents and students, may be the lead on reaching out to other parents for expertise or support

APPENDIX B – CASE STUDIES

Case Study #1

Royal Roads Public School, Ingersoll, Ontario

400 students, K-8

September 2011- October 2012

The Outdoor Classroom

Three areas make up the larger outdoor classroom setting. Area one has a large seating area to hold a whole class. The second area is a cluster of outdoor activity tables and the third space is an outdoor amphitheatre. Large mature trees already exist on the schoolyard and acted as the foundation for the classroom development.

The ideas were developed with support from students who submitted their thoughts on what should be included in the classroom. To ensure that all students became a part of the process, every step of the outdoor classroom was viewed as an opportunity to turn it into a lesson. Engaging parents through the parent-teacher committee was used to encourage parent participation.

“I would encourage other schools to divide a large-scale project into smaller phases that can occur over the space of a few years. Take one school year to develop the design of the space and obtain approvals, apply for funding in the fall so that construction can begin in the spring.” says a teacher involved in the project. “Find out who knows who within your school community and don’t be shy about asking for people to donate their time and expertise. Build relationships with school administration, staff, teachers, students and parents – projects are much more likely to be successful if the relationships are in place first.”

Approval was first required by the school principal and maintenance staff. Both of these groups were consulted at every step of the way. Approval was then required from the school board.

The most challenging aspect of the project was the coordination of all the different aspects of the project – making sure all the equipment, material and people were in place for each phase of the project. Flexibility and creativity were enormous assets!

Maintenance

During the school year the space is maintained by students and parents. During the summer months parent volunteers help to care for the newly planted trees.

Budget and Funding

Total classroom cost: \$12,000

Funding sources: TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Metro Green Apple, Thames Valley Education Fund, Earth Day Canada/Sobeys and Toyota/Evergreen

In-kind contributions: Labour provided by parents and families, material donations (e.g. stone, supplies), discounted materials and plants, support from municipality in site plan

APPENDIX B – CASE STUDIES

“Make sure you have a very good understanding of each potential funding agency and make sure your project is a good fit if you want to ask them for money. Take the applications very seriously; answer each question exactly as asked, but don’t hesitate to “sing the praises” of your particular project. “ - Teacher

Using the classroom

Teachers have used the outdoor space for all subjects. Having activity tables offered a great deal of flexibility.

Lessons Learned

Proper project planning is essential. “Most phases of the projects offered unanticipated challenges that needed to be quickly resolved. For example, it was discovered that the ground was too compacted to hand-dig holes for our new trees. The local equipment rental business was consulted and they suggested a gas-powered “two-person” auger and donated it for free.” - Teacher

Case Study #2

St. Paul Elementary School, Beaconsfield, Quebec

350 Students, K-8

September 2011- June 2012

The Outdoor Classroom

The outdoor classroom includes stump seating, a chalkboard, a musical area, balance logs and a games area. The idea for the outdoor classroom came from the school yard committee. The outdoor classroom was designed based on needs assessment for their school and research on outdoor classroom design elements. The design was specifically geared towards the school population needs and current environment in mind. “Take the time on several occasions to observe how the outdoor space is used currently. “ - Teacher

The biggest challenge for the school was the amount of time dedicated toward the project. Two lead volunteers worked mostly on the project and donated about 20 hours per week for over a year. These individuals along with the committee researched, planned and implemented the outdoor classroom.

The school was inspired by the outcome of the learning space and watching the children and faculty enjoy the outdoor learning space. The local community and those who provided in-kind support were thrilled to be part of a different project that brought a lot of positivity to the local community.

Focus on creating an outdoor space that will be used by all teachers. Talk to teachers and take the time to understand why areas are not currently being used and what types of elements would encourage teachers to use the outdoor space.

APPENDIX B – CASE STUDIES

Budget and Funding

Total cost: \$15,000

Funder: Single corporate funder

In-kind contributions: Wood chips, labour, consulting

Lessons Learned

“Create a committee of parents dedicated to improving the outdoor school space that can work well in a team setting. Previous project management and/or team management would be assets. Develop a work plan and then organize the committee based on skills to execute work plan. i.e. make grant proposals, source out vendors, research design ideas, oversee construction etc.” - Teacher

Properly cost various elements and look at ways to obtain funding. Reach out to families within the school that might have leads on donations of money or resources.



Photo courtesy of Royal Roads Public School

APPENDIX C – SAMPLE TIMELINE

Phase I, Outdoor Learning Space: September 2013-June 2014

Date	Activity	Status
September, 2013	School community meeting to discuss the project	Complete
September, 2013	Create planning committee for the project	Complete
October, 2013	Community submission of ideas for the classroom	Complete
November, 2013	Approach local businesses for in-kind support	Complete
December, 2013	Submit funding application for TD Friends of the Environment	Pending approval
March, 2014	Purchase of materials	
April, 2014	Installation of outdoor seating and planting of 10 trees	
June, 2014	Official launch of outdoor classroom	

Phase II, School Garden: July 2014-June 2015

Date	Activity	Status
September, 2014	Introduce curriculum linked School Garden Project to students	
November, 2014	Solicit donations of gardening supplies and planting material	
Fall/Winter, 2014-15	Students learn about agriculture and food production in classes.	
Spring, 2015	Students create and plant local food garden on school grounds	
July-August, 2015	Volunteer committee waters and tends garden	
Fall, 2015	Students harvest garden and learn about agriculture and food production	

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE BUDGETS

The following three outdoor classroom scenarios are meant to give you an idea of elements to include in your outdoor classroom budget. These budgets are based on estimates and quotes from local providers. It is best to double check with a supplier to get the real cost to your school. Budgets include in-kind labour costs, but not discounts or donations which can significantly reduce the overall cost to your classroom. The goal is to give schools an idea of the costs associated with projects and which project items to include in a budget. Consult local suppliers to get the appropriate costs for your region.

Outdoor Classroom #1 – Under \$2,000

This outdoor classroom features a garden, log seating, and several low profile shrubs. The current schoolyard is bare and the ground cover is grass. The location of the classroom is in the front of the school on the way to the front entrance.

Expense	Description	Cost
Plant Materials	Several native shrubs and flowers	\$250
Tools	Shovels, wheelbarrows, rakes	\$200
Mulch	Ground cover, includes delivery (3 cubic yards)	\$300
Top Soil	For garden and shrubs (1 cubic yard)	\$110
Logs	For seating – donated by local municipality	\$0
Labour	Volunteers, students and staff	\$0
Maintenance	Watering, weeding, mowing – maintenance staff	\$0
TOTAL		\$860



Photo courtesy of Jessica Kaknevicus

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE BUDGETS

Outdoor classroom #2 – Under \$10,000

This outdoor classroom uses the already mature trees on the property as cover for a seating area. The tables and benches were made using dead trees, plywood for the table tops, and covering to protect the top of the tables. Armour stone was also included as seating, with mulch acting as the ground cover. Several shrubs and other native vegetation were planted on the outskirts of the classroom space.

Expense	Description	Cost
Benches	Seating and table tops	\$2,000
Armour Stone	For seating – includes delivery and placement (7 @ \$500 each)	\$3,500
Mulch	Ground cover, includes delivery (30 cubic yards)	\$2,500
Plant Materials	Flowers and shrubs	\$300
Tools	Shovels, wheelbarrows, rakes	\$200
Labour	Volunteers and donation	\$0
TOTAL		\$8,500



Photo courtesy of Royal Roads Public School

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE BUDGETS

Outdoor Classroom #3 – Under \$25,000

This outdoor classroom features an outdoor learning area complete with a gazebo, greenhouse, large mature trees, benches, stone seating area, and a vegetable garden. The current space is blank and requires site preparation as the ground is unlevelled and needs grading.

Expense	Description	Cost
Site Preparation	Grading and excavation (basic, includes labour)	\$2,000
Stone Seating area	Stones (10 @ \$500 each) – includes delivery	\$5,000
Mature Trees	6 mature trees (@ \$700 each)	\$4,200
Gazebo	Wooden gazebo	\$4,000
Mulch	Ground cover, includes delivery (30 cubic yards)	\$2,500
Benches	Picnic benches (5) (@\$250 each)	\$1,250
Greenhouse	Small greenhouse, 6ft x 8ft	\$400
Outdoor chalkboard	Plywood, chalkboard paint, accessories	\$500
Tools	Shovels, wheelbarrows, rakes, buckets, tools	\$500
Planting beds	Timber siding	\$150
Soil	For garden beds and shrubs (10 cubic yards)	\$400
Plant Materials	Shrubs, seeds and flowers	\$500
Labour	Volunteers and in-kind	\$0
Consulting	Landscape plan and design – donated (value of \$2,500)	\$0
TOTAL		\$21,400