

What is Get Wild Wyoming?

Get Wild Wyoming is an outdoor learning initiative that allows for outdoor learning in a supported environment.

What exactly is an outdoor learning space?

An outdoor learning space is any outside area where students and teachers can work together to learn, discuss, and explore. Many activities that take place indoors can be conducted outside. For examples, an outdoor learning space might be the shade under a tree, where students can sit in a large circle for a morning meeting. It can be a grassy area near the school, where a large event tent has been temporarily erected with folding tables and chairs. Or, the outdoor learning space can be under a canopy in a school garden. Outdoor learning spaces can be the temporary conversion of areas of your school grounds, or they can be part of a larger initiative to create new outdoor teaching structures. One of the largest components of outdoor learning has to do with disengaging with devices and reengaging with nature.

Is this going to cost more money?

No its simply taking your regular day outside!

Why should I consider creating or continuing to invest in outdoor learning spaces?

Many schools opted to create or reinvest in outdoor in response to changing health and environmental concerns and found the benefits to be a valuable investment into the future. Spending time outdoors for instruction and meals provides numerous benefits to students: Increased social and emotional health, such as social interaction skills, confidence building, problem solving, and independence; Increased academic achievement, improving students' ability to focus, pay attention, and be motivated to learn; Improved physical health, particularly related to increased physical activity; and Improved mental health, such as reducing stress and anxiety.

What are the initial things we need to think about when planning an outdoor learning space?

First, determine areas on your school grounds that might work as an outdoor learning space. Next, communicate with your school community that outdoor learning spaces will be used for instruction if the conditions are safe and conducive to a learning environment (considering 3 weather conditions, temperatures, wildlife, health and safety guidance, etc.). Then, make an investment in materials for this purpose. Lastly, encourage the teachers and staff to use the space!

How much space would a school need to consider implementing outdoor learning?

The amount of space a school needs will vary. As you view your grounds through the lens of potential outdoor learning areas, think about the goals you would like to accomplish with the outdoor learning. How many students do you envision outside at one time? What are they doing? One example that might fit your needs could be an outdoor learning space area of approximately 30-by-30 feet for one class.

What are suggestions to manage set up and break down of outdoor learning spaces at the beginning and end of the day?

One way to minimize the effort of daily set up and break down is to create portable kits for students that they can manage themselves. For example, teachers could give each student a bucket to carry their individual

school supplies; once outside, the bucket can be emptied, flipped over, and used as a seat. For larger items that may be difficult to move in and out of the school building each day, consider using a storage shed or other designated area that is easily accessible to the outdoors. Another strategy is to invest in materials that can be left outside in a designated outdoor classroom arrangement, which can be used into the future.

What are suggestions to address changes in weather that could impact outdoor spaces being used for educational purposes?

Set aside personal opinions about the weather and encourage preparedness and positive attitudes. When looking at your school campus, are there areas that are naturally shady during certain times of day? Perhaps the front lawn area is shady in the morning, or you have trees near the playground. Additional protection from the elements could include umbrellas, shade sails, or tents. Setting up space near a wall might help block wind. What are your policies for outdoor recess? Ensuring the students are appropriately dressed and prepared for the weather is equally important. School supplies may include weather-appropriate clothing, coats, sunscreen, and reusable water bottles. Remember there isn't bad weather just bad clothing choices.

What should we do if we don't have space for outdoor learning on our school grounds?

Parking lots, lawn areas, and playgrounds are among the different areas that can serve as outdoor learning spaces. Most PreK sites are less than 5 miles away from a greenspace that can be used.

What does an outdoor learning space look like? How many students can use an outdoor learning space?

Outdoor spaces can look different across schools based on materials available and student needs. Explore alternatives to desks and chairs that students can manage independently, such as a personal clipboard and blanket or carpet square to sit upon. Tables and seating that are ADA-accessible may not be portable to move daily with ease. Consider accessible picnic tables or other outdoor furniture (perhaps used for accessible outdoor dining in restaurants) that can be left outdoors, or small folding tables and chairs that can be stored in a shed.

What resources are currently available to support teachers in building skills and confidence to successfully engage students in outdoor learning?

Managing students outdoors can be different than indoors. To help teachers envision, plan, and prepare to use an outdoor learning strategy, there are a ton of resources available on the Get Wild Wyoming website.

Could we set up an outdoor eating area that can double as a learning space?

Absolutely! Eating meals outdoors is a great way to incorporate outdoor learning into all parts of the school day.

How can I support my colleagues in using it?

That's great that your school has an outdoor learning space! Sometimes school staff need a reminder that these areas exist. For example, the school administrator can make an announcement encouraging teachers to use the space during the school day or for after school activities. Consider sharing some of the teaching tips included with this FAQ. Lastly, let colleagues see YOU using the space, so they can see the practice in action.

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