

# Supporting Outdoor, Hands-On Learning During COVID-19



## Why teach outside?

- Experts agree that outdoor instruction is safer, and should be an important part of every school's in-person learning strategy. Outdoor time also makes indoor classrooms safer by allowing indoor air to ventilate and particulates to settle.
- Using the outdoors as an immersive experiential learning environment deepens learning across the curriculum, promotes inquiry-based thinking, and develops SEL and 21st century skills, making it a critical tool in counteracting the learning loss created by COVID.



## What type of outdoor space does a school need for outdoor learning?

- Schools may use multiple outdoor spaces across a campus of any size for outdoor learning. Students and teachers may utilize existing grassy areas, with or without shade, courtyards, and even parking lots or basketball courts for effective instruction.



## What about managing logistics?

- Students and teachers benefit from outdoor time even in increments, so create a schedule and rotation that allows classes to move outdoors regularly and integrate it into the master school schedule. The rotation may be similar to the recess, library, or specials schedules.
- Consider the age of students learning outdoors. Younger students may be engaged outdoors for 30-45 minutes at a time, while older students may be comfortable outdoors for up to 2 hours at a time.



## What about the weather?

- Utilize the same school or district weather guidelines established for recess. If weather conditions are poor but manageable, shorten class rotations to still provide some time outside of the traditional classroom.
- Utilize existing community partnerships and local charitable organizations to provide cold-weather or rain gear for students in need.



## What about safety?

- Apply existing medical emergency plans, shelter-in-place plans, and other safety protocols to outdoor learning. Adapt protocols used for other outdoor events such as arrival/dismissal, recess, and field days to outdoor learning.
- Implement a walkie-talkie system so teachers can keep in touch with the main office.



## What supplies/equipment do teachers need to take a class outside?

- Teaching outdoors doesn't require special supplies. Students should use their existing journals or notebooks and a pencil, or alternatively a clipboard and lined paper.
- Schools can also invest in sets of five-gallon buckets for students to use as stools or writing surfaces.
- Teachers may also bring a small backpack or bucket with extra paper, pencils, a small first aid kit, tissues, and hand sanitizer.



## How do teachers prepare for a lesson outside?

- Preparing for a lesson outside is similar to preparing for an indoor lesson. Teachers identify the standard they need to teach, how they're going to assess that skill, and then make a plan using the elements outdoors as helpful experiential learning tools.
- Provide guidance and collaborative time during grade-level planning sessions for teachers to collaborate on lesson planning using the outdoors.

**For more information, please visit [bit.ly/OutTeachResources](https://bit.ly/OutTeachResources), or email us at [info@out-teach.org](mailto:info@out-teach.org)**