Outdoor Classroom Challenge

A program by Project Green Schools

In your proposal, please address each of the questions listed below. Your proposal will then be uploaded to our application form when you are ready. Please be sure to save your proposal as {SchoolName} OCCProposal.

1. How does your school community currently utilize outdoor space? Please submit 1-3 images.
2. Are you looking to improve on a current space or design and build a new outdoor classroom and learning space?
3. What goals do you have for improving a current space or designing and building a new outdoor classroom and learning space?
4. How do you envision the space being utilized by your school? Please include examples from your traditional academic curriculum (i.e. math, science, social studies, ELA) as well as special focus areas (i.e. music, art, physical education). Be sure to discuss the different types of learning spaces that would be in your outdoor classroom.
5. How do you envision your space being used when school is not in session? Partnerships with other groups? Extended school year?
6. Outline a maintenance plan for your outdoor classroom.
    A. Who will be in charge of general upkeep to the planted/natural area, equipment repairs, etc. during the school year?
    B. Who will be in charge of general upkeep to the planted/natural area, equipment repairs, etc. during the summer (if not year-round school)?
7. Provide a visual design of the layout of your new space. Your design (hand drawn or digital) should be uploaded as a separate JPEG/PNG or PDF. Please also include a current photo of the site. Please label and number, if more than one, all uploaded designs/photos as {SchoolName} OCCDesign
8. Feel free to include additional information you want us to know about your desired space in your proposal.

Additional Documents:

1. Provide a letter from your Superintendent and/or Administrator stating they have reviewed your proposal, budget and design and agree to move forward with the work if you are the selected winner. You will upload this letter separately. Please save your letter of support as {SchoolName} OCCAdminLetter

2. Complete a proposed budget utilizing the template provided. Be sure to download and save your proposed budget as {SchoolName} OCCBudget. You will upload this document separately.

Timeline:

Application Deadline: 11:59 pm EST Friday, January 19, 2024

Finalists will be announced in early February 2024.

Finalists will present their project live on February 27th and 29th. Each school will have a designated 10-minute presentation window, along with 4-5 minutes of Q&A from judges.

Resources:

1. Green Schoolyards America
2. Green Schoolyards America Outdoor Learning Resources
3. Design Ideas for the Outdoor Classroom: Dig it, Plant it, Build it and Paint it!
4. Boston Schoolyard Initiative Outdoor Classroom Design Guide
5. Design and Plan Your Outdoor Spaces App from Green Schoolyards America - Download the app from Apple's App Store and then visit the National Outdoor Learning Library for directions. Runs on iPhones and iPads.
6. Project Learning Tree's Tips for Creating an Outdoor Classroom
7. National Wildlife Federation: Schoolyard Habitat Program
8. Check out this video featuring 2021 Green Difference Award recipient, Elizabeth Viveiros, about an outdoor learning initiative in Portsmouth School District (RI).
9. Start a School Garden - Here's How (article)
10. Whole Kids Foundation - School Gardens
11. School Outdoor Learning
12. Former Project Green Schools Student President builds outdoor classroom.

Building Materials Resources and Tips

1) A great article on Making a Green Schoolyard Out of Natural Building Materials
2) Check with your local hardware store, tree companies and arborists for tree stumps, spare wood, planks, wood chips, etc to use in your design space.
3) Consider upcycling building materials that may already be in your space for example; large rocks, tree stumps or logs.
4) Connect with your school equipment supplier to see what outdoor equipment and seating they offer.
5) Look for Shade Sails to add to your space to provide a shade alternative if large trees are not in your design space.
6) Nature Explore offers outdoor classroom supplies and equipment

7) Check out Trex products for decking as they are made from 95% recycled and reclaimed materials.
8) Gardener's Supply Company