



NATIONAL COVID-19
OUTDOOR LEARNING
INITIATIVE

CREATING
OUTDOOR SPACES

EMERGENCY
SCHOOLYARD
DESIGN VOLUNTEERS



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL — SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA

This PK-5 public school is nestled within a quiet hilltop residential neighborhood in Santa Cruz, is bordered by hiking trails and woodlands, and currently serves 250 students. Outdoor learning is an integral part of the school's values, as manifested in its Science and Garden Emphasis (S.A.G.E.) curriculum. The school's goal is to create and expand upon its existing outdoor learning spaces by developing a more permanent outdoor learning infrastructure that fully serves its students and staff. The design intent is to first meet the school community's immediate learning needs with the long-term goal of creating beautiful, flexible, sustainable, and multi-functional spaces that nurture hands-on learning and creativity.

Site Analysis Considerations

Key Notes

1. Main entry
2. Parking
3. Drop-off/pick-up
4. Administration/staff
5. Transition area (somewhat flat landscape)
6. Library, computer lab, indoor learning
7. Indoor learning
8. Amphitheater
9. Entry garden
10. M.U.R./kitchen
11. Lunch/music/science
12. Indoor learning/Resource Specialist Program/ counselor
13. The Living Classroom (S.A.G.E. Center)
14. Portable housing
15. Athletic field to south
16. Gathering tree and field
17. Trail access
18. Caretaker
19. Kindergarten
20. Shade structure
21. Indoor learning
22. Pre-School
23. Playground



NOTE: These diagrams are intended to provide visual concepts to assist schools in planning. They are neither intended nor may be used for construction. Green Schoolyards America, Earth Island Institute, the Emergency Schoolyard Design Volunteers, and the partners of the National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative do not assume responsibility or liability for the technical accuracy of drawings or for any unauthorized use.

Santa Cruz Gardens Elementary Santa Cruz, CA

School Characteristics

Students

- Current enrollment is approximately 250 students in grades PK-5 with room to grow
- Goal is to increase the frequency and expand upon outdoor learning spaces; outdoor learning is an important goal of the school curriculum
- Request for shared outdoor and hybrid learning spaces to meet large-scale and long-term goals of an outdoor Science and Garden Emphasis (S.A.G.E.) campus
- Provide transitioning and trauma-informed design approach

School Grounds

- School campus is part of the hilltop Santa Cruz Gardens residential neighborhood, bordered by hiking trails and woodlands
- Many students walk to campus
- Minimal noise from street
- Play areas include forested areas, grass field, and playground
- Open campus with live-in caretaker
- Existing Living Classroom and garden zone, science-focused learning center (S.A.G.E. Center)

Climate

- Summer - warm, dry, with occasional morning fog (June-August)
- Fall - can be hot followed by crisp, cool mornings and occasional precipitation (September-November)
- Winter - typically breezy, cool/cold with regular rain (November-February)
- Spring - typically cool, brisk, with rain followed by warming trend (March-May)

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Site Photographs



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



0 50 100 feet








Photographs

1. The linear and relatively level area located near drop-off and outside library - could accommodate tables and chairs
2. Existing amphitheater - opportunity for shade structure and requires accessibility upgrade to meet ADA compliance; opportunity for outdoor learning space conducive to music, arts, performance, maker space
3. Kindergarten learning area - opportunity to expand indoor learning space outdoors
4. Landscape area adjacent to indoor learning spaces - opportunity for temporary outdoor learning zones to develop into permanent outdoor learning or shared library space
5. Rolling lawn with mature tree central to campus used for gathering and lunch - potential for outdoor meeting and class gathering
6. Temporary garden/sciences outdoor learning zone - opportunity for more permanent outdoor learning center with shade structure and desks
7. Existing Living Classroom - level areas are opportunity for outdoor learning with table and chairs in part-sun

Photos: JLJA and Anna Harrison

Potential Outdoor Classrooms

Using Existing Tree Canopy and Shade for Mild Weather

-  Entry from street
-  Entry from building (note: does not include all entries)
-  (5) 22'-dia. circular outdoor seating areas for 8-10 students (seasonal use; may be too wet in rainy season)
-  (16) 20' x 20' areas for 8 students
-  Existing active gardening/Living Classroom (S.A.G.E. Center)
-  Natural screen or divider (straw bales, willow, potted plants or other)
-  (12) storage cart or box, portable 'chalk-board' storage



Santa Cruz Gardens Elementary

Santa Cruz, CA

Scenario #1: Low Cost

Climate Considerations

- Local climate varies seasonally
- Classes will require protection from wind, sun, and rain
- Additional clothing may be needed to keep students warm and dry

Climate Adaptation Strategies

- Use outdoor learning spaces as "Plan A" when the weather is nice; go inside or on-line when it is raining, too cold/hot
- Place seating in areas where existing tree canopies provide morning or afternoon shade

Use and Augment Existing Infrastructure

- Use areas adjacent to buildings and trees; add low cost seating (mats, stumps, benches, and/or existing desks/tables)
- Add storage sheds for class materials
- Preserve space for gardening and nature play








Scenario #1: Outdoor Capacity

- Max: 178 students in 21 seating areas
- Capacity: 71% of enrolled students

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Potential Outdoor Classrooms

Providing Light Shelter for Sun and Rain

-  Entry from street
-  Entry from building (note: does not include all entries)
-  (2) 22'-dia. circular outdoor seating areas for 8-10 students (seasonal use; may be too wet in rainy season)
-  (21) 20' x 20' shaded areas for 8 students
-  Existing active gardening/Living Classroom (S.A.G.E. Center)
-  Natural screen or divider (straw bales, willow, potted plants or other)
-  (14) storage cart or box, portable 'chalk-board' storage



Santa Cruz Gardens Elementary

Santa Cruz, CA

Scenario #2: Moderate Cost

Climate Considerations

Build on Scenario #1

- Install shelters to protect from rain and sun; ideal shelters could be adjustable in height to allow winter sun
- Add outdoor heaters and/or provide rain gear so students will be dry and warm when weather is wet and cold

Climate Adaptation Strategies

- Use outdoor spaces as "Plan A" when the weather is nice or in mild rain; go inside or on-line when it is too cold or wet

Use and Augment Existing Infrastructure

- Add low cost seating (mats, stumps, benches, and/or existing desks/tables)
- Install shelters to protect from rain, wind, and sun in areas
- Add storage sheds for class materials
- Preserve and activate space for gardening and nature play

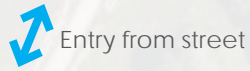
Scenario #2: Outdoor Capacity

- Max: 188 students in 23 seating areas
- Capacity: 75% of enrolled students

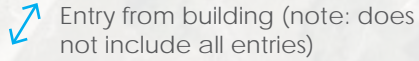
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Potential Outdoor Classrooms

Providing Infrastructure to Support School Programs



Entry from street



Entry from building (note: does not include all entries)

(2) 22'-dia. circular outdoor seating areas for 8-10 students (seasonal use; may be too wet in rainy season)

(21) 20' x 20' shaded areas for 8 students

Existing active gardening/Living Classroom (S.A.G.E. Center)

Natural screen or divider (straw bales, willow, potted plants or other)

(14) storage cart or box, portable 'chalk-board' storage

Potential infrastructure development zone



Image Source: Bing Maps

CABILLO AVE.

WINKLE AVE.

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Scenario #3: Green Infrastructure Investment

Climate Considerations

Build on Scenario #2

- Add low, planted hills (hugels) on top of asphalt or grass along fence line to reduce noise
- Provide potted trees for green views and to divide outdoor class areas; to be replanted in ground later

Climate Adaptation Strategies

- Use outdoor spaces as "Plan A" when the weather is nice or in mild rain; go inside or on-line when it is too cold or wet

Proposed Enhancements

1. Create a pollinator garden with accessible pathways
2. Install sail shades at amphitheater to activate as music and performing arts space; implement accessible path(s)
3. Convert outdoor learning spaces to shared outdoor 'living library' and reading zone
4. Enhance infrastructure of The Living Classroom (with permanent desks and shade structure); plant orchard trees
5. Continue to grow neighborhood connections including formal trail access, trail care, and nature learning
6. Continue to grow informal gathering circles implementing inclusive and compliant ADA access (note: applies to entire campus)

Scenario #3: Outdoor Capacity

- Max: 188 students in 23 seating areas
- Capacity: 75% of enrolled students

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