National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative

Campus Assessment Tool for Outdoor Classroom Infrastructure

This assessment tool was developed to help school administrators and designers evaluate their school grounds and begin the site planning process that is needed to move learning outside as schools reopen. Part 1 should be completed by the principal or other school representative. For Part 2, we recommend that the school representative collaborate with someone who has some site design experience, if possible. Part 2 will also be easier to envision while walking through the school grounds, but it may also be done remotely using online aerial photographs and other resources.

The goal of this assessment tool is to **gather information about a school site to assess the initial feasibility of outdoor learning and/or to support the implementation of a school's outdoor learning goals.** This form is meant to be as comprehensive as possible. Skip any questions that are not relevant to your school.

Part 1: Context and Background Information
School and School District

School Name:	School District:	
School Address:		
Size of Campus: _____ S/F or Acres (actual or approximate)	Size of buildings: _____ S/F (actual or approximate)	Urban _____ Suburban _____ Rural _____
School Mission / Special Focus / Vision:		
Describe your campus outdoor space: *(e.g.: A fenced space that is partly paved, partly rubber surfaced, and partly lawn, with a playing field, two play structures, a covered walkway, and doors in five locations. Part of the campus is wooded. We have one seating circle and eight raised garden beds.)*		

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Describe the types of programs and ways your school grounds were used before the COVID-19 crisis: *(e.g.: recess, PE, garden, morning circle, etc.)*

Are there any additional outdoor spaces in your school's neighborhood that could be used by your students during the COVID crisis?
Please list these spaces by name: *(e.g. nearby parks, green spaces, street(s) or parking lots that could be closed, rooftops, etc).*

Team Members – List names and contact information for anyone who is supporting the completion of this assessment tool.

First and Last Name	Job Title	Contact Information

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School Demographics – Use the most current information available.

Grade Levels Served:		**ELEMENTARY** List of the number of groups (or classes) your school would like to find seating for outside, for each grade level. Also list the number of students that will be in each of those groups (or class), by grade level.	**# OF GROUPS # STUDENTS / GROUP** PreK= K = TK = 1st = 2nd = 3rd = 4th = 5th = SpEd =
Total # of Enrolled Students:			
Race / Ethnicity Information:			
% Free and Reduced Lunch:		Estimated # of Classes Onsite Daily During the 2020-21 School Year	
% English Language Learners:		# of Small Group Breakout Areas Needed *(e.g. overall and/or per class)*	
# of Students Who Use Wheelchairs / Grade Level:		**SECONDARY** Create a list of the types of meeting spaces or small group breakout areas that are needed to accommodate a block schedule, for each subject or grade level. *(e.g. five small breakouts for 9th grade, four large meeting areas for 10th grade)*	
# of Students with Behavioral Special Needs:			
# of Students Who Need Other Accommodations: *(add notes)*		Estimated # of Classes Onsite Daily During the 2020-21 School Year	
# of Classroom Teachers		# of Small Group Breakout Areas Needed *(e.g. overall and/or per class)*	
# of Other Staff		Estimated # of Students / Group:	

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Environmental Conditions

What climate zone is your school site in? *Resource:* *https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/*	
List weather events in your area that are frequent enough to require adaptations during the months school is in session: *(e.g. rain, wind, snow, heat, cold, poor air quality)*	
Approximate number of days in an academic year with weather events that could be disruptive: *(Estimate this using past experience with the annual number of days that indoor lunch/recess was required.)*	
Describe any sources of disruptive noise near campus:	
Describe sources of disruptive odors near your outdoor areas:	
Describe safety concerns on campus or in neighborhood:	
Describe any other environmental concerns:	

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Outdoor Learning Goals

What are your school's or district's outdoor learning goal(s) when schools reopen? Here are some ideas to consider:

- *Will the classes held outside this year use the same instructional methods teachers previously used inside, or will teachers use the environment around their new outdoor spaces as hands-on learning resources?*
- *Can classes use clipboards and other simple tools to bring writing outside?*
- *Will you need Wi-Fi outside, or will any online/computer-oriented assignments be accomplished while students are at home (A/B hybrid schedule?)*
- *Will students cycle through school gardens and other special resources onsite, or will those existing spaces become home base for an assigned class?*
- *Can 25% of classes sit outside every day that the weather is suitable? Or 50%? Or 100%?*
- *Will your outdoor classrooms need additional small group work areas, for breakout discussions? If so, how many?*
- *Do you plan to use any of the investments you are making now as a COVID-19 response, to support or expand an ongoing outdoor learning environment for your school? Are you interested in developing a green schoolyard program, over the long-term?*

What is your backup plan for days when outdoor learning is not possible?

In addition to the outdoor classrooms, what other types of programs at your school will need outdoor space? For example: Recess, PE, before and after school programs, outdoor lunch (and other meals), outdoor "specialty wheel" classes such as library, art, music, etc.?
How much space will each of these programs need? Will they require additional outdoor infrastructure? What time of day do these programs usually occur? What is the backup plan for each of these programs when the weather isn't suitable?

For more information as you begin, please see: *Outdoor Infrastructure Strategies for Taking Learning Outside as Schools Reopen*.

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Part 2: School Ground Assessment
Campus Walk-Through

For this portion of the school ground assessment, we recommend that a school representative collaborate with someone who has some site design experience, if possible. Part 2 will also be easier to envision and plan if it is accomplished while walking through the school grounds, but it may also be done remotely using online aerial photographs from Google Earth and using other site maps and resources. A design volunteer might also join a school representative for a virtual walkthrough using an online video conferencing system.

1. To begin, download and read Green Schoolyards America's *Outdoor Infrastructure Strategies for Taking Learning Outside as Schools Reopen*, located on the National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative's website: https://www.greenschoolyards.org/outdoor-infrastructure for site planning strategies.

2. Next, download and print a current, accurate, and detailed aerial photo from an online mapping application such as Google Earth, Google Maps, Apple Maps or a municipal or school district GIS repository.

3. Ask your school district for a site plan (architectural drawing) for the school you are working with, that shows the whole school property including: the property line, building footprints (outlines), major features of the site (fences, parking areas, trees, etc.), fire lanes, gathering areas designated for emergency use, and other significant features. It is also important that the map (and aerial photo) includes a north arrow and the map's scale for reference.

4. If possible, obtain an interior plan of the building that includes the location of restrooms, and the location of all exterior doors, including any cases where individual classrooms or restrooms open directly to the outside.

5. It is helpful to have the following materials with you during a school ground site visit if they are available: camera, a printed copy of this assessment form, a printed copy of an aerial photo (11x17 or larger), printed copy of the seating chart guide (available at the link above), clipboard, writing tools (including colored pens/pencils), tape measure (50' or more, if possible).

6. While walking through the campus, plan to mark the following features on your site plan and/or aerial photograph:

   - Areas that must be kept clear for emergency vehicles and delivery trucks
   - Proposed student entries and exits; drop off areas
   - Electrical outlets, hose bibs, downspouts
   - Areas of campus where Wi-Fi is strong/weak
   - Trash/recycling bins and dumpsters
   - Building entries/exits
   - Bathrooms that open directly to outdoors or near entries
   - Location of each grade level and special classrooms, especially Pre-K and K classrooms

   - Existing outdoor classrooms, seating areas, shelters, nature play spaces, gardens, etc.
   - Areas needed for P.E., recess, meal breaks, or after school care
   - Sources of disruptive noise that must be buffered
   - Sources of disruptive odors that must be avoided
   - Visual distractions that must be screened
   - ADA path of travel
   - Classroom windows that open up onto the schoolyard
   - Areas with significant slope
   - Direction of prevailing winds

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Assessment Chart for a School Campus Walk-Through

Area name and # with a brief description	Size of this area	Ground surface material in this location	Access	Seating: existing and needed	Shelter: existing and needed	Equipment and supplies: existing / needed	Plantings: existing and needed	Barriers: existing and needed	Restroom access: existing and needed	Hand wash access: existing and needed	# of classes that can be located here	Notes
Label your map/aerial photo with the same #s. Take photos!	Approx. square footage (Estimate is OK)	Pavement, soil, mulch, lawn, forest, rubber, plastic grass	ADA compliance (flat or sloped, etc.)	Note: Face children away from the sun	Trees, structures, shade on north side of building	Storage, white boards, and other materials	Shrubs, vines, perennials, trees	Fences, screening plants, visual barriers, etc.	Distance from interior or portable restrooms?	Distance from plumbed or portable sinks?		Existing outdoor learning areas, and other comments

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Public Space Resources

Many school campuses are located near parks that are operated by local, state, or federal agencies. Sometimes parks departments and city agencies are willing to consider hosting outdoor classrooms on the land they manage. Use the chart below to begin to assess the viability of partnering with park departments and other local agencies in your area to increase the potential outdoor learning space available to your school.

Name and Address of Park or Outdoor Space: _____

Operating Agency and Contact Information: _____ Distance from School: _____

Area name and # with a brief description	Size of this area	Ground surface material in this location	Access	Seating: existing and needed	Shelter: existing and needed	Equipment and supply storage needed	Barriers: existing and needed	Restroom access: existing and needed	Hand wash access: existing and needed	# of classes that can be located here	Notes about other park features and amenities
Label your map/aerial photo with the same #s. Take photos!	Approx. square footage (Estimate is OK)	Pavement, soil, mulch, lawn, forest, rubber, plastic grass	ADA compliance (flat or sloped, etc.)	Note: Face children away from the sun	Trees, structures, and other shade	Is storage available? How much can be added here?	Fence, visual	Distance from potential outdoor seating areas?	Distance from potential outdoor seating areas?		Water fountains, parking

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