

## STEP 8 | Integrate the OC into your Curriculum

An outdoor classroom provides a wide variety of meaningful, hands-on, outdoor learning opportunities for your students. As you develop your outdoor classroom, look for instances to **integrate the outdoor learning stations** and schoolyard wildlife habitat into your curriculum. Utilizing your outdoor classroom as an educational tool helps ensure that the time and money you and your school invested in developing the outdoor classroom was worthwhile. In addition, the more often teachers use the outdoor classroom with their students, the greater the motivation will be to help maintain it from year to year. Below are suggestions about how to integrate the outdoor classroom into your curriculum which will increase your faculty's use of the outdoor classroom as an education tool.



When students explore their schoolyard wildlife habitat, the area becomes an “outdoor classroom” where learning becomes fun and meaningful.

- Enlist administrative support** to provide time for teachers to examine their lesson plans and plan how they would like to include the outdoor classroom in their curriculum.
- Survey your teachers** each year to make sure that all teachers feel comfortable using the outdoor classroom for hands-on conservation education activities, and address any concerns they may have with your planning committee, faculty, administrators, and Outdoor Classroom (OC) Consultant.
- Schedule an in-service teacher training workshop** with your OC Consultant to learn how to use your outdoor classroom successfully and efficiently to meet academic standards.
- Attend outdoor classroom and conservation education workshops** with fellow teachers. *(Visit the Alabama Wildlife Federation website for educator workshop dates and locations.)*
- Review the Alabama Department of Education's Course of**
- Study Objectives** and identify which objective(s) you would like to teach using a hands-on activity in the outdoor classroom.
- Identify which of the outdoor learning stations** you would like to utilize with each of the activities.
- Inventory any educational resources** that your school may already have available before you invest in additional materials and curricula. *(Use the Outdoor Classroom Educational Resources checklist in the OC Planning Guide & Checklists section of AWF's website.)*
- Create activity kits** by compiling educational resources and materials that can be used in conjunction with specific outdoor classroom learning stations or specific activities and storing these resources in plastic storage bins or backpacks. *(Review the Outdoor Classroom Activity Kit ideas in the OC Activities & Lesson Plans section of AWF's website.)*



- ❑ **Include a materials list** in each activity kit so that teachers can note when new materials need to be added to the activity kit, and establish a refurbishing system to keep the kits stocked.
- ❑ **Develop at least one Outdoor Classroom Activity Kit** per grade level or per discipline that can be used in conjunction with your outdoor learning stations so that all teachers and students will have the opportunity to use them.
- ❑ **Keep your educational resources, materials, tools and activity kits** in one or two central locations such as the media center, science lab, or tool shed in the outdoor classroom where all teachers can easily access the materials/tools.
- ❑ **Ensure accessibility and educational opportunities** to all students, including those with physical disabilities, mental or emotional challenges, or ESL (English as a second language), as you develop learning stations. *(Order a copy of the National Wildlife Federation's Access Nature activity guide from their website.)*
- ❑ **Consider the size of the class(es)** that will be utilizing the learning station and the number of students who will be participating in the activity at one time so that you can limit "downtime." For instance, if an entire class will be participating in a gardening activity at one time, consider creating a four foot by six foot raised bed garden and dividing it into twenty-four (24) 1-foot squares so that each child will have her/his own "square foot garden." Then allow the children to work in their individual gardens in 3 or 4 shifts with 6 to 8 students around the raised bed at a time.
- ❑ **Contact your local nature center, botanical gardens, conservation organization, or environmental educator** to arrange for a demonstration of conservation education activities in your outdoor classroom. If possible, have the visiting educator provide copies of their materials for teachers to reference. *(See*

*the list of Community Organizations and Resources under the OC Grants, Funding & Support section of AWF's website.)*

- ❑ **Recruit parents** to share their outdoor expertise (such as birding, gardening, or hunting) with students, and to help chaperone students during activities in the outdoor classroom.

## FREE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & LESSON PLANS

*(via the Alabama Wildlife Federation website)*

### Themed Outdoor Classroom Activities

for different outdoor classroom learning stations

### Outdoor Classroom Field Journal Activities

students record observations, collect data,  
& use critical thinking skills

### Alabama Outdoor Classroom BioBlitz

biodiversity treasure hunts with iNaturalist

### Alabama Youth Wildlife Art Contests

research & depict native wildlife in natural habitats

### Kid's Gardening Lesson Plans

lesson plans for plants, soils, pollinators & more

### Journey North

track hummingbird & butterfly migrations

**alabamawildlife.org**



Visit the AWF's website for up-to-date details about Educator Workshops that provide helpful resources and activities related to the development, use, and sustainability of an outdoor classroom.



Ask local natural resource professionals from your county Extension office and Soil & Water Conservation office to provide topic-specific activities and presentations for your students.

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