

How to effectively take students outside... And not lose them!



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Use the Outdoor Classroom early and often.

**Students are taught from an early age that we go
outside only at recess.**

**The earlier in the school year that you begin to use the
classroom and the more often you use the classroom,
the “recess” mentality will be lessened.**



Establish Rules. Better, yet... Let the students establish rules.

**Just like homeowners take better care of their home,
if students are allowed to help establish the
outdoor classroom rules, the more likely they are
to abide by them.**

There are some exceptions...



Establish boundaries

This is not as important with the school's outdoor classroom as there are clearly boundaries – fences, the building, etc.

But, if you want students to look specifically at the garden vegetables, tell them this.

Or, if you want them to take measurements of plants, tell them that their boundaries are within the planted area... Not the open field.



Always have a specific task when in the outdoor classroom.

Giving students a specific task to do will keep them focused and reduce (not eliminate) goofing off.

Clip boards and data sheets are always good for keeping on task.

If possible, give each student (or group of students) a different task.



Give directions BEFORE heading to the outdoor classroom.

Once you're outside, it's too late!

Give simple instructions in specific order. Have data sheets with the directions on them (for older students!).



Model the behavior you want to see.

DO NOT JUST SIT ASIDE while students are working in the outdoor classroom!

Walk from group to group, student to student to discover, explore, and learn with them.

If you want students to dig in the mulch, do it with them.

This validates the students learning and shows them that what you are asking them to do is actually important.



Give students a five minute warning.

It is easy to get off task in the outdoor classroom.

Constantly give students a 15, 10, 5 minute warning.

Walk around to each group/student to make sure they are understanding the task and staying on task.



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HAVE FUN!

**Remember that exploring is fun! Experimenting is fun!
Wondering is fun!.... LEARNING IS FUN!**

Try to allow for 10 minutes a week to just go exploring in the outdoor classroom. The task is to find the “coolest” thing you can find.

Questions?

