



Now that you have a clear understanding of where you would like to create your outdoor classroom site, you can now **develop your master plan** that includes the committee’s short-term and long-term goals, faculty survey results, list of prioritized projects, and estimated budgets and timelines for each project. In addition, your master plan should include a site map of your outdoor classroom that demonstrates where the various learning stations will be located once the outdoor classroom is completed.



Teachers who help maintain the outdoor classroom with their students are more likely to use the outdoor classroom as an educational tool.

Master Plan Details

Your outdoor classroom planning committee should work together to create a detailed master plan using the free online Master Plan Checklist on the Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) website which includes the following information:

❑ Long-term Goals

Discuss the long-term goals for your outdoor classroom before you begin to develop any learning stations to help your planning committee prioritize your projects and guide your plans for years to come.

Common long-term goals include the following:

- ❖ Meet Alabama Department of Education course of study objectives
- ❖ Utilize Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math (STEM/STEAM) activities
- ❖ Use hands-on, outdoor activities
- ❖ Provide inquiry-based learning opportunities
- ❖ Increase standardized test scores
- ❖ Teach about conservation
- ❖ Get students outdoors
- ❖ Make learning fun
- ❖ Develop wildlife habitat

If you wish to receive support through the Alabama Outdoor Classroom Program, then your long-term goals must include providing hands-on, outdoor activities and developing a schoolyard wildlife habitat. *For outdoor activity ideas and Schoolyard Habitat Tips, visit AWF’s website.*

❑ Purpose Statement

Write your purpose statement in a concise message that can be posted in your outdoor classroom and used on grant applications to educate others about why your school wants to develop, use and sustain an outdoor classroom.

❑ Current & Proposed Outdoor Learning Stations

Review the list of preferred outdoor learning stations in your school’s faculty survey results with your outdoor classroom planning committee, and create a list of the learning stations you would like to include in the completed outdoor classroom site. These are the learning stations that will be included on the Outdoor Classroom Site Map created by your local Outdoor Classroom (OC) Consultant. *See the “Tips for Choosing your Outdoor Learning Stations” textbox on the following page.*

□ Short-term Goals

Meet at the beginning of each school year to discuss your planning committee's short-term goals as these will change from year to year as you develop, use and maintain your outdoor classroom.

Example short-term goals include the following:

- ❖ Begin developing our outdoor classroom
- ❖ Expand our current outdoor classroom
- ❖ Increase the number of classes utilizing the outdoor classroom as an educational tool
- ❖ Increase student participation in the maintenance of the outdoor classroom
- ❖ Expand the learning opportunities in our outdoor classroom
- ❖ Increase community involvement in the outdoor classroom
- ❖ Provide service-learning opportunities for students
- ❖ Increase the number and diversity of wildlife visiting the outdoor classroom

□ Prioritized Projects

Your prioritized projects will change from year to year depending on what you hope to accomplish during the school year. These projects should help you accomplish your short-term and long-term goals, address any faculty needs expressed in the Faculty Survey, and include projects that need to be completed from the previous year. Remember, be careful not to take on too much!

Example outdoor classroom projects include the following:

- ❖ Learning Stations (ex/ pitcher plant bog garden or songbird sanctuary)
- ❖ Construction Projects (ex/ benches or educational signage)
- ❖ Activity Kits (ex/ educational resources such as field guides and magnifying loupes)
- ❖ Educational Signage (ex/ sign with info about carnivorous pitcher plants or outdoor classroom rules sign)
- ❖ Communication Projects (ex/ bulletin board or newsletter articles)
- ❖ Fundraising (ex/ grants or fundraisers)
- ❖ Maintenance (ex/ OC Work Day or Learning Station Adoption Program)
- ❖ Special Events (ex/ OC Activities Day or OC Certification Ceremony)

□ Project Coordinators, Budgets & Timelines

For each of your projects, be sure to discuss who will coordinate each project (from your planning committee or faculty), what the estimated cost of each project is (if any), and when each project will be completed.

Example "project plans" that include a list of materials needed and estimated budgets for various learning stations, construction projects, activity kits, and educational signage can be found on the AWF's website. In addition, you can find a list of grant opportunities, maintenance tips, and planning materials for events like an Outdoor Classroom Work Day on AWF's website as well.

Outdoor Learning Station Ideas

- ❖ **TIP #1:** Use the internet to review outdoor learning station ideas on AWF's website, Pinterest (look at the Alabama Outdoor Classroom's Pinterest boards), and other outdoor education websites.
- ❖ **TIP #2:** Review the Faculty Survey results to find out which types of learning stations the faculty supports.
- ❖ **TIP #3:** Attend Alabama Outdoor Classroom (AOC) educator workshops to learn about potential learning stations and how they can be used as educational tools. *Visit AWF's website for workshop dates and locations.*
- ❖ **TIP #4:** Visit other schools enrolled in the AOC Program to find out what types of learning stations they included in their site. Don't forget your camera and a notebook so that you can take pictures and notes to share with the rest of your planning committee. *Visit the AOC Schools Map on AWF's website for OC schools' contact information.*
- ❖ **TIP #5:** Choose effective and sustainable learning stations that help teach Alabama Department of Education course of study objectives while also piquing student's interest and curiosity.



This example songbird habitat includes native berry-producing bushes for food and cover, birdfeeders, a bird bath for water, and nesting boxes.

❑ Outdoor Classroom Partners & Sponsors

List the names and contact information for your local OC Consultant, volunteers, Master Gardeners, businesses and/or agencies along with an explanation about the type of support and assistance they provide for your school and your outdoor classroom.

Annual Tasks Checklist

The following tasks should be included in your committee's "To-Do List" each year to help you and your outdoor classroom planning committee sustain your outdoor classroom from year to year:

❑ Outdoor Classroom Webpage

Update your school's outdoor classroom (OC) webpage photos and information including your planning committee's email addresses so that everyone will receive the Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) Outdoor Classroom E-newsletter which includes activity ideas, grant tips and workshop opportunities. To review and update your school's OC webpage, visit the interactive Alabama Outdoor Classroom Schools Map on AWF's website.

❑ Wildlife Habitat Assessment

Assess the wildlife habitat resources (food, water, shelter & places to raise young) available in your outdoor classroom using the tips and activities found on page 21 of the Outdoor Classroom Planning Guide and in the Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Tips section of the AWF website.

❑ Outdoor Classroom Site Map

Contact your local Outdoor Classroom (OC) Consultant so s/he can create a map showing where the different learning stations will be located in the outdoor classroom once it is completed, so that you can see how the learning stations fit together to create your school's outdoor classroom site.

Before the OC Consultant begins the layout of your outdoor classroom, s/he will email you a Site Approval Form, which must be signed by your principal and your school system's Buildings and Maintenance Supervisor. Once you provide the signed Site Approval Form, the map of your school's utility lines in the outdoor classroom area, and a list



Keeping key people like the principal, faculty, and maintenance staff informed and involved are vital to the success and sustainability of your outdoor classroom.

of your planning committee's outdoor learning station preferences, your OC Consultant will create the outdoor classroom site map.

Each year, review your school's outdoor classroom site map(s), and work with your OC Consultant to update the site map(s) if needed.

❑ Maintenance Plan

Utilize the Outdoor Classroom Maintenance Tips on AWF's website to help establish an effective, sustainable maintenance plan for the year. Each year, review your Maintenance Plan from the previous school year and summer, and discuss what worked and what did not.

Encourage teacher and student participation in the maintenance by creating an "Outdoor Learning Station Adoption Program," and by utilizing student clubs for weekly maintenance needs such as picking up litter or watering plants. Teachers who help maintain the outdoor classroom with their students are more likely to use the outdoor classroom as an educational tool.

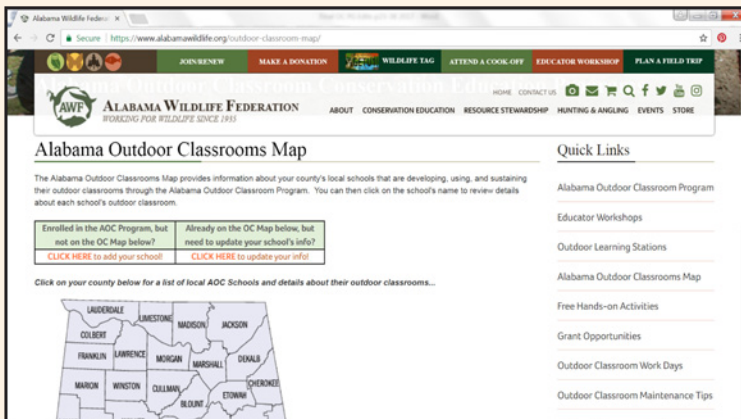
❑ Faculty Update

Provide an update about the outdoor classroom to the faculty at the beginning of each semester and throughout the year on an as-needed basis. Keeping key people like the principal, faculty, and maintenance staff informed and involved are vital to the success and sustainability of your outdoor classroom.

Master Plan Tips...

Your master plan will help you stay organized and focused, and will help you create a sustainable outdoor classroom site that is an effective educational tool.

- ❖ Fill out the online Master Plan Checklist for your school on the Alabama Wildlife Federation (AWF) website. Once you click “Submit,” a link to your Master Plan will then be located on your school’s outdoor classroom webpage on AWF’s website.
- ❖ Review and update your online Master Plan Checklist each August to help you create a comprehensive “game plan” for the upcoming year.
- ❖ Create a master plan that can be implemented in phases from year to year with realistic timelines.
- ❖ Gradually introduce more outdoor classroom learning stations and projects at a rate that equals the support your planning committee receives.
- ❖ Be flexible as you carry out the projects in your master plan since funding sources and plans can change.
- ❖ Be patient and allow excitement and interest to grow as teachers begin to see the possibilities of what their outdoor classroom could look like and how it can be used as an educational tool.
- ❖ Make sure that all faculty members, even those not serving on the outdoor classroom planning committee, know your long-term and short-term goals and understand the purpose of your outdoor classroom.
- ❖ Have a long-term maintenance plan that includes what types of maintenance will be required for each learning station during each month or season, including summertime.
- ❖ Make sure that you have the future time, money and resources to maintain the outdoor classroom as you have designed it.
- ❖ Keep copies of your master plan, project plans, and receipts in an outdoor classroom binder for future reference.
- ❖ Remember—Keep It Simple and Have Fun!



To view your school’s online Master Plan, visit AWF’s OC schools map, click on your county and then click on your school’s name. The link to your Master Plan will be on your school’s outdoor classroom webpage once you have filled out the online Master Plan Checklist.

Faculty Survey

Contact your local Outdoor Classroom Consultant so s/he can set up a free online survey for your faculty at the beginning of each school year. The faculty survey will help you gather feedback such as which learning stations the teachers would/do use the most, what resources they may need to use the outdoor classroom as an educational tool, and who would like to serve on the planning committee.

Parent Update

Present an update about the outdoor classroom to the PTA/PTO each school year. Parents can provide valuable volunteer and financial support. Keep them involved!



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