

## Proven Tips to Reduce Vandalism

- ❑ Involve students in the design, development, use and maintenance of the outdoor classroom so that they will take ownership in the project and want to protect it.
- ❑ If possible, try to have all of your outdoor classroom learning stations in one central area (like a courtyard) instead of spreading them out around the campus so that you can keep an eye on it more easily.
- ❑ Keep your outdoor classroom clean and free of litter to reduce the possibility of future littering. Ask the custodians if you can keep a garbage can in the outdoor classroom area that they will empty daily or weekly.
- ❑ Consider the location of your outdoor classroom and how easily it can be monitored as most vandalized areas are also the most secluded. Make sure that the area has appropriate lighting since vandals are less likely to strike in a well-lit area.
- ❑ Properly located entrances, exits, fencing, and landscaping can direct both foot and automobile traffic to discourage crime.
- ❑ Signs can be great deterrents. Post an “Outdoor Classroom Rules” sign near the entrance to the outdoor classroom so that everyone will know what rules to follow and a “For School Use Only” sign to discourage unwanted visitors if needed.
- ❑ Incorporate an educational sign beside each outdoor learning station to explain the purpose of the learning station, and utilize plant identification signs to identify specific plants and explain how these plants provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- ❑ Fence the entire outdoor classroom area if possible—not necessarily to deter entrance into the outdoor classroom area, but rather to delineate the area as “special” so that students, faculty and community members know they are entering an area that should be treated with respect.
- ❑ If your outdoor classroom area is fenced, consider locking the fence with a combination lock and giving the combination to the faculty members. If you use a key lock, place the key in a convenient location that is easily accessible to all teachers - not in another teacher’s room.
- ❑ Involve the community and make your neighbors aware of your outdoor classroom. The more eyes and ears that you have monitoring your outdoor classroom the better.
- ❑ Educate your students, faculty, parents and school volunteers about the importance of creating wildlife habitat for the school and the community. Hold an outdoor classroom “Open House,” conduct a “bug count,” offer “habitat tours,” host “celebrations,” and organize “Clean Up Days.”
- ❑ Make sure everyone understands that vandalism is a crime and that crime and that vandalism will be reported to the police.
- ❑ If vandalized, clean up immediately, report it to the police, and then continue to counsel and educate the students about the importance of your schoolyard wildlife habitat and outdoor classroom.



Outdoor Classroom Rules Signs (left pic) and educational signs that explain the purpose of the learning stations (right pic) help teachers, students and parents better understand the purpose of the schoolyard wildlife habitat and outdoor classroom.