

Elementary & Middle School

# Getting Outdoors: USING OUTDOOR RESOURCES AND SPACES FOR LEARNING

TOTAL  
NM

From the Teachers and Administrator in the  
Outdoor Educator Leadership Program





# Areas of Focus



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- CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

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- OUTDOOR RESOURCES

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- BRINGING IN OTHERS

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- CONNECTING CULTURE AND OUTDOOR LEARNING

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- STUDENT PERSPECTIVES AND LEADERSHIP

**6**

- STUDENT VOICES



# Curriculum Alignment

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Connecting Multiple Subjects in the Outdoors

Always Reflect and Use Senses!

- From measuring fences, throwing objects, nature journaling, reflecting, looking for patterns, reading a book, writing, drawing, experimenting, or simply being STILL, the teachers found many ways to use the outdoor resources in the schoolyard to teach many subjects at ONCE!



Drawing, Science, and Math  
Ex. Creating Competitions: How fast will your car go?

Track Patterns and seasonal changes

ELA and Social Studies  
Ex. Book: Everybody Needs a Rock!

Reading, Writing, Measurement  
Ex. Fences, throwing objects, sticks, Trees, buildings, etc

Connecting Senses with EVERY LESSON

Phenomic Awareness, speaking, and listening,  
Ex. Exploring the Playground

ELA, science, Art, Math  
Ex. Nature Journaling

Observing our surroundings  
Ex. iNaturalist Nature's Notebook



# Using Outdoor Resources for Teaching

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## Big Take Aways:

- Redesigning the Spaces- Teacher and Students brainstorm together
- Using rocks, sticks, leaves, plants/trees, gardens, any natural resource/outdoor space safe for picking up and learning with
- Looking at shadows
- Objects in the sky (Discovery)
- Tracking and Observing natural resources over time
- Patterns and Shapes in nature





# Bringing in OTHERS

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## Big Take Aways:

- Interviewing family members about their experiences in the outdoors
- Working with other classes and developing an “Outdoor Buddy” system
- Students mentoring other students
- Bring in families to observe the learning
- Students designing activities with their families/teacher/other classmates based on their interests





# Connecting Culture and Outdoor Learning

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## Big Take Aways:

- Invite students to share their family stories and experiences
- Taking what students are learning and finding the ways to incorporate the learning into other facets of their lives
- Students recognizing their surroundings
- Connecting identities to surroundings
- Put on a school wide Outdoor Cultural Fair!
- Design lessons to students personal experiences and backgrounds





# Student Perspective and Leadership in the Outdoors

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How students show leadership in the Outdoors after one month of going outdoors often:

- Peer Mentorship: Reminders for other peers of expected behavior and expectations in the outdoors
- Leaders of mini groups
- Familiarity by Repetition: Students are getting comfortable with knowing what to do and how to respect the outdoors
- Taking Charge: Students are beginning to make suggestions







# What are the students saying?

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I want to go outside!

I see the same plants at my house and at my school!

Nature is amazing!

All students should be able to learn outdoors!

Are we going outside today?

Learning outside is *JUST* like recess!

I never noticed how beautiful our school is!

I feel connected and motivated to learn!

I now have a better appreciation for nature, my friends, and the learning I am doing every day outside.

-Belen Elementary and Middle School Students



## Obstacles

- Managing distractions
- Needing more time to plan and adapt lessons
- Need an outside cart
- Thinking through the physical needs for myself and my students

## Successes

- Students are more engaged outdoors than indoors
- Students showed an increase to connection when the lessons were outdoors
- Excitement and eagerness were high among students!
- Students enjoy the quiet and rest
- LESS IS MORE: Smaller lessons equalled greater success!

## What is next...

- Daily outdoor education is happening now
- student voice and choice: Students and teachers are now beginning to think about a future design of the space/s.



-All ideas, information,  
and pictures shared are  
directly from the  
Educators and their  
students who are part of  
TOTAL NM's Outdoor  
Educator Leadership  
Program.

