



*Cultivating the Future  
of Environmental Education*  
Environmental Education  
of New Mexico

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION  
OF NEW MEXICO

# STATEWIDE OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS & OUTDOOR LEARNING

EENM/NMOST Listening Session - 6/3/21



*Cultivating the Future  
of Environmental Education*

## What has EENM network already learned about outdoor classrooms?

- Three years of community conversations -> ***Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way***
  - *This shared vision and strategy, the first of its kind in the country, provides a framework for systemic change to support equitable daily access to the outdoors and environmental learning in New Mexico.*
- 30+ community events since March 2020 to support outdoor learning
- May 13th community gathering on outdoor classrooms (in support of ***Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way*** - and part two coming June 10th)
- Bipartisan support of Senate Memorial 1 in support of outdoor classrooms

# Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way

*A multi-year shared vision and strategy  
to provide daily equitable access  
to the outdoors and environmental learning  
for all New Mexico kids*



*Cultivating the Future  
of Environmental Education*  
Environmental Education  
of New Mexico

Statewide Outdoor Classrooms:

*Design, Build, Learn*

incorporates Policy  
recommendations # 1, 3, 5  
(pgs. 5-7)



THE STATE OF OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING  
SOEL | A Landscape Analysis of Opportunities in the Southwest

Data from <https://eenm.org/soel/>  
updated May 2021

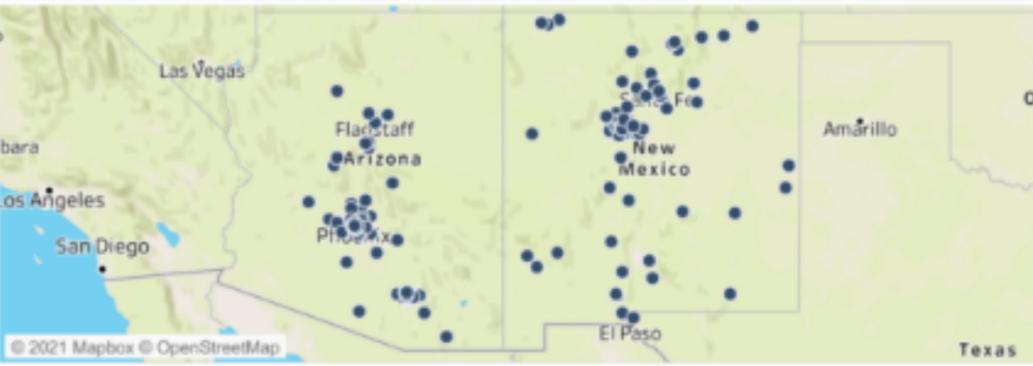
ORGANIZATIONS  
231

CURRICULA/PROGRAMS  
587

SERVED PER YEAR  
483,411



MAP OF ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS



CURRICULA/PROGRAMS BY PROGRAM LOCATION



CURRICULA/PROGRAMS BY ORGANIZATION TYPE

	501 c(3) Non-profit	Government	Independent School	Private	Public School	Tribal	University
AZ	109	25		21	5	1	22
NM	180	159	11	26	18	1	16

State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning  
*A Landscape Analysis of Opportunities  
in the Southwest*



THE STATE OF OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING  
SOEL | A Landscape Analysis of Opportunities in the Southwest

Data from <https://eenm.org/soel/>  
updated May 2021

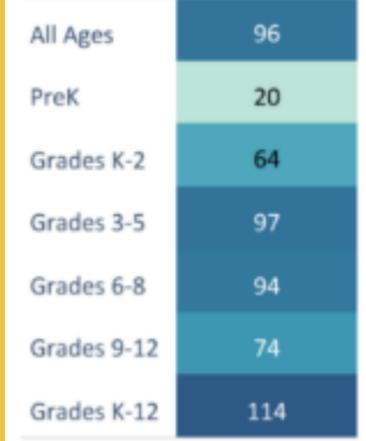
FILTER BY STATE  
 Arizona  
 New Mexico

ORGANIZATIONS  
161

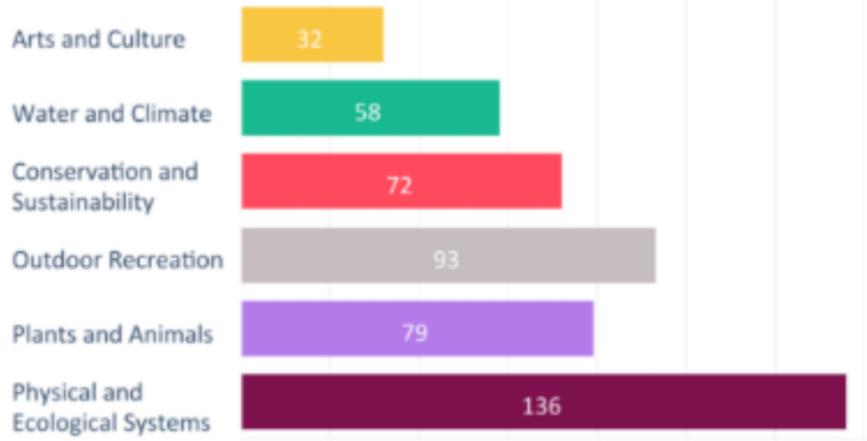
CURRICULA/PROGRAMS  
405

SERVED PER YEAR  
287,691

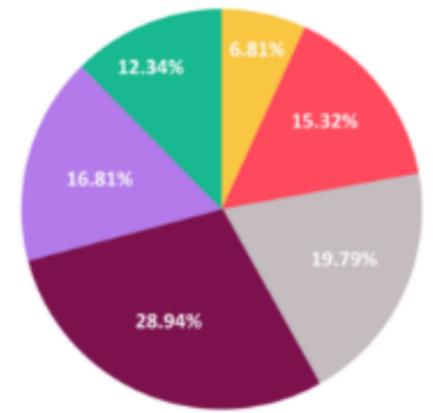
CURRICULA/PROGRAMS BY AUDIENCE SERVED



CURRICULA/PROGRAMS BY CONTENT COVERED



% OF TOTAL CONTENT COVERED



**New Mexico Outdoor Learning**  
GUIDANCE FOR 2020-2021 SCHOOL REENTRY

**EE NM**  
Cultivating the Future of Environmental Education

# NM Outdoor Learning Guidance

The outdoors is a resource for enhancing learning, social engagement, and health and should be available to all New Mexico students in every community. Experiences in nature and access to the outdoors are associated with greater health and wellbeing and academic success.

In New Mexico, children are experiencing higher rates of stress, depression, obesity, diabetes, and other health risks. These health risks, which increase with health inequality, have been further exacerbated by the pandemic, utilizing outdoor spaces for academic learning and incorporating environmental education into school curricula can help reduce these risks and inequalities. COVID-19 has made it more relevant than ever to bring learning outdoors during school reentry to help lower stress, while engaging students in a setting that reduces the risk of transmission—similar to when students were brought outside to protect them against tuberculosis and the Spanish flu at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The most effective outdoor learning is student-centered, culturally relevant and responsive, multidisciplinary, and supports physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health and wellbeing. This guidance document provides administrators, teachers, educators, and families with practical tools, resources, and practices to safely conduct learning outdoors.

There are several specific areas where outdoor and environmental education programs can help schools, students, teachers, and families. The following areas are expanded upon in these guidelines:

- Using School Grounds for Outdoor Learning
- Supporting Teachers in Outdoor Learning
- Supporting At-Home Outdoor Learning

There are many approaches to outdoor and environmental learning and education, including experiential, environmental, nature-based, and place-based education. School districts are encouraged to incorporate as many of these approaches as feasible.

**NEW MEXICO**  
Public Education Department  
Reentry Support Guidance: [Go to: Public Management](#) | [publicdata.nm.gov](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: [Cecilia Pineda](#) | [cpineda@doe.nm.gov](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, OR OTHER PARTNERS, AND OTHER APPROPRIATE SUPPLIES.

**DEFINITIONS**  
**Outdoor learning, or outdoor education,** refers to a broad, interdisciplinary set of activities that include discovery, experimentation, learning about and connecting to the outdoors and natural world, and engaging in environmental and recreational activities in an outdoor setting.

**Environmental education** is an interdisciplinary educational process that helps people learn more about individual and community connections to natural systems, fostering environmental literacy and civic engagement.

**An outdoor classroom** is an external shelter or space within the school grounds which creates a practical area for outdoor learning.

**INCORPORATING OUTDOOR SPACES FOR SCHOOL LEARNING** requires careful consideration of these concerns:

- CDC, district, and state guidelines for students being outdoors and the use of outdoor materials or equipment.
- Bathroom access
- Accommodations for students with special needs:
  - Lunch service
  - WiFi access
  - Scheduling for common areas
  - Weather
  - Allergic conditions
  - Ease of materials movement

**SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN OUTDOOR LEARNING**  
Adapting to outdoor learning requires supporting teachers in understanding how to utilize these spaces to enhance academic learning and support social emotional learning. Outdoor and environmental education programs in communities can be leveraged to provide support for instruction in outdoor spaces and additional learning opportunities that are aligned with academic standards.

**TEACHERS CAN:**

- Leverage the expertise of outdoor and environmental educators to provide engaging professional learning and increase their comfort and capacity in using outdoor classrooms and other learning spaces at or near the school (such as school gardens, greenhouses, and nearby green spaces) for meaningful instruction.
- Partner with program providers to design programs that are aligned with academic standards and gain access to existing lessons and other environmental education resources to use with classes to get students engaged with the natural world.
- Engage community-based educators to work with classroom teachers to support outdoor learning at school.

**RESOURCES**

- **Outdoor Learning in New Mexico:** A compilation of resources, reports, and professional learning to support administrators, teachers, parents, and families, including how to connect with community-based organizations.
- **Building Student Resilience: Utilizing the Outdoor and Environmental Learning During and Post COVID-19:** A virtual summit held in July 2020, hosted by Environmental Education of New Mexico, Cultivating the Future of Environmental Education, and the National Environmental Education Association for outdoor and environmental learning at home, in community, and at school.
- **No 8th Annual Association for Environmental Education COVID-19 Resources, Tips, and Support:** Including outdoor activities for all grade levels (early childhood through higher education), virtual field trips, and professional development.
- **Nature Awareness Association and Environmental Education: Guidance for Resilient Schools:** National COVID-19 Outdoor Learning Initiative: Outdoor classroom infrastructure, professional development, case studies, and practice.
- **NM MESA, STEM and Environmental Education:** Activities for New Mexico developed for at-home learning.
- **National Academies of Science, Teaching Science and Engineering during a Crisis.**
- **Council of State Science Supervisors: Resources for Family Science Learning.**
- **Learning in Places: Outdoor learning for grades K-3:** New Mexico Public Education Department, Professional Learning.



**outdoorlearningnm.org**

**EE NM** Outdoor Learning in New Mexico during COVID-19  
Resources and Support for the 2020-2021 School Year

Welcome  
This site is hosted by Environmental Education of New Mexico which supports a movement centered on people and landscapes working towards equitable daily access to the outdoors and environmental learning for all New Mexico kids.

**Learn more**

**Introduction to Outdoor Learning**  
Introduction to Outdoor Learning at Home, in Communities, and at Schools. Explore the values and benefits along with research-based evidence to support outdoor and environmental learning. Webinars, tips, and other resources.

**For Parents/Guardians & Families**  
Resources and support for parents/guardians, families, communities and students for at-home outdoor learning. Educational activities, tips for spending time outdoors, and connect with local community-based organizations.

**For Teachers & Administrators**  
Resources and support for School Administrators, Teachers, Educators, and Staff. Guidance for creating outdoor classrooms and learning spaces, professional learning for outdoor and environmental education, and standards-aligned outdoor activities.

Ongoing Community Conversations

Bipartisan support of Senate Memorial 1 (Sen. Correa Hemphill)

State of Outdoor and Environmental Learning

**LEADERSHIP**

- A collective of school/district and community leadership & support for sustaining outdoor classrooms.

**PHYSICAL ELEMENTS**

- Figuring out the physical components (seating, places to move around, water, shade, etc.) of the spaces and how it will benefit the space and kids using it.

**DESIGN PROCESS**

- Getting input from ALL involved parties in assessing current spaces, and imagining, designing, and planning the new spaces.

**INCORPORATING NEEDS OF DIFFERENT LEARNERS**

- Stimulating the senses, and different ways of interacting with the space, to support personal connection and growth.

**OUTDOOR CLASSROOM ELEMENTS**  
Environmental Education of NM  
5/13/21 Community Gathering on Outdoor Classrooms

**Every Kid, Every Day, Every Way**

A multi-year shared vision and strategy to provide daily equitable access to the outdoors and environmental learning for all New Mexico kids

**EE NM**  
Cultivating the Future of Environmental Education  
Environmental Education of New Mexico

Over 280,000 New Mexican students are served annually by 400+ outdoor programs through 160 organizations

**280,000+ Students Annually**



# Statewide Outdoor Classrooms

## *Design, Build, Learn*

### What are the Components?

**DESIGN:** Outdoor learning spaces can take many forms and can be tailored to fit the needs of each individual school and community. It is critical to include students, teachers, administrators, school staff, parents/guardians, and community members in the design of these spaces. Design should include plans for maintenance.

**BUILD:** Outdoor classrooms are a very low-cost solution (\$2,000-10,000 per school) to improving the quality of education in our state. New Mexico teachers have identified two main priorities in building outdoor classrooms: shade (through native plantings or shade sails) and seating.

**LEARN:** Teachers and staff need to be supported with training, and standards-aligned activities, and Outdoor Learning Coordinator assistance to incorporate evidence-based outdoor learning into their instruction.





# Statewide Outdoor Classrooms

## *Design, Build, Learn*

## How?

An **Outdoor Classroom** at every New Mexico Public School. Cost: one-time expenditure of \$7 million (877 schools at an average cost of \$8,000/school)

**Outdoor Learning Coordinators** spread throughout the state can greatly aid in the design, implementation, and use of outdoor classrooms. Cost: \$5 million annually (98 coordinators at \$50,000/coordinator to be housed at nonprofits, RECs, districts, etc. and Outdoor Learning Specialist at NMPED)

An **Outdoor Learning Micro-credentialing Program**: Use outdoor learning as a pilot for micro-credentialing, NM PED works with EENM on establishing content (e.g., standards-aligned outdoor learning, social and emotional learning in the outdoors, culturally responsive outdoor learning, risk management in the outdoors). Cost: \$200,000

