

# SPACE TYPES & REQUIREMENTS



## Outdoor Learning

School Type:



### Functional Area Descriptions

Outdoor learning, bringing the outdoors in and the indoors out, making connections, all of these things are discussion points in 21<sup>st</sup> Century education. The options are endless and will vary based on location, site, and climate. Some examples include outdoor classrooms, outdoor amphitheatres or performance spaces, plazas, gathering and socializing spaces, gardens for cultivation and demonstration, walking, jogging, running paths, and nature areas. The purpose of these spaces is to connect and engage the learners with the natural environment, further their health and social skills, and increase awareness of natural resources.

Outdoor learning areas should be provided to the greatest extent possible. Every neighborhood should have access to an outdoor classroom. The design of this space will be coordinated with the local school, taking into account ongoing programs, local topography, and other site specific opportunities. Outdoor classrooms may be at grade, or could potentially take advantage of vegetated areas of the roof. Convenient connections to outdoor learning spaces should be made from the neighborhoods and the commons. All exterior spaces should have good sight lines and be easy to supervise.

Outdoor learning and gathering areas should provide some seating and areas for shade. Some possible solutions for seating could be built-in benches, picnic tables, or raised planting beds. Shade structures should be freestanding and should be considered as site amenities, rather than part of the primary facility. Provide a combination of green space and hardscape.

Gardens provide great learning opportunities for students. The origin of food, the care of plants, the lifecycle of growing things, and many other connections can be made with the curriculum. If a garden area is provided it should be located in an area conducive to the cultivation of plants. Connections with other outdoor learning areas will reinforce multiple educational opportunities. A storage area should be provided near the garden area for the secure storage of tools and materials.

Other outdoor site features should be considered. Site features such as sundials, themed walkways, nature paths, bioswales, and other elements that make connections to the natural environment should be incorporated to complement the sustainable design features of the building and educational opportunities for the students.

NOTE: Images shown are intended to provide real-world examples and spark design creativity.



▶ Amphitheater: Marysville Getchell High School, Marysville, Washington  
▶ Photo courtesy of Architects of Achievement



▶ Walking paths: Marysville Getchell High School, Marysville, Washington  
▶ Photo courtesy of Architects of Achievement

**1 Amphitheater**

An amphitheater is an outdoor performance space. This site feature could function on its own, or possibly be integrated with an indoor stage as double sided seating. Preferably, the seating area takes advantage of a natural slope. Often, the tiers are constructed as a combination of concrete and grass strips, wood or stone could also be provided. The amphitheater should complement the natural features of the site and all amenities provided should be durable and weather resistant. Consider the maintenance of this area during design.

**2 Commons**

Create at least one partially covered, climate appropriate outdoor space that has pedestrian connection from at least one place within common shared spaces to an exterior environment (ex. plaza, playground, water feature, facility learning experience).

**3 Neighborhood**

Create at least one partially covered, climate appropriate outdoor space that has pedestrian connection from at least one place within the general learning setting to an exterior environment (ex. plaza, playground, water feature, facility learning experience).

**4 Drop-off and Pick-up Areas**

Provide drop-off and pick-up areas surrounding any school building, regardless of grade level. There should be clearly identifiable bus and student drop-off and pick-up areas. These areas should be clearly defined and separated for ease of traffic and pedestrian congestion.

**5 Gathering Space**

Provide a large exterior space that includes open, maintained green space in combination with secondary hardscape (ex. sidewalks).

**6 Community/School Garden**

Prepare an expandable, fenced area for cultivation and harvest by students and/or community members.

**7 Walking/Jogging/Running Path**

Provide flexible perimeter path that offers opportunities for outdoor movement. Consider providing parkour equipment for enhanced physical development.

**8 AT/FP (Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection)**

Scale security and safety measures appropriate for children.



▶ *Neighborhood: Marysville Getchell High School, Marysville, Washington*  
 ▶ *Photo courtesy of Architects of Achievement*



▶ *Outdoor Classroom and Wetland; Retention Pond*  
 ▶ *Photo courtesy of Woolpert, Inc*



▶ *Public Service Park*  
 ▶ *Photo courtesy of Woolpert, Inc*

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