

Outdoor Classroom Management

Trainer Outline

Section Theme

Outdoor classroom management is critical to a successful school garden program. Many workshop participants will have had positive experiences teaching outdoors with kids, and others may also be familiar with the frustrations of a “chaotic” garden experience. In this brainstorming activity, workshop participants can tackle this challenge by sharing their best strategies for helping students stay safe, engaged, and excited to learn in the garden.

This workshop section serves as an icebreaker for the group; an opportunity to learn an engaging garden exploration activity to use with kids; and a chance to model and discuss strategies for outdoor classroom management.

Logistics

Time: 40 minutes

Location: Garden

Workshop goals addressed:

- Learn methods for effective outdoor classroom management.
- Understand the power of school gardens in promoting academic achievement, healthy lifestyles, environmental stewardship, and community and social development.
- Network with other, local people involved in creating and sustaining school gardens.

Handouts:

- “Six of One, Half Dozen of the Other” activity from *The Growing Classroom*
- Tips for Managing Kids in a Garden Setting
- Sample Station Rotation Schedule for an Outdoor Classroom (optional)

Gardens for Learning pages:

- Outdoor Classroom Management, 79 – 80

Materials:

- One egg carton per group of three, marked on bottom as described in handout
- Chart stand, chart paper, and markers

Six of One, Half Dozen of the Other

(Modeling a Small Group Activity)

Handouts: "Six of One, Half Dozen of the Other"

Gather participants in a circle (make sure that you are looking into the sun so they can look at you easily) and explain that you are going to share with them a garden exploration and team building activity that they can replicate with students.

Explain the "Six of One" activity, emphasizing the importance of keeping the words on the bottom of their egg cartons a secret from the other groups. Go over physical boundaries for their exploration and tell them a rule of thumb for what can or cannot be picked (e.g., "If you see more than ten of something, it's okay to pick.") Demonstrate a call back, such as a coyote call that will signal them to return to the circle in about 5-10 minutes.

Ask participants to get into teams of three, encouraging them to group up with people they did not know prior to this workshop. Distribute an egg carton to each team and send participants out on their explorations.

- After 5-10 minutes, or once you see that most groups have full egg cartons, use your call back to gather everyone back together.
- ***Now ask each team to pair up with another team to guess the categories written on the bottom of their egg cartons.***
- As a whole group, discuss the possibilities for this activity with kids of different ages, e.g., sensory awareness, observational skills, vocabulary building.

After the activity and discussion has ended, have teams return "treasures" to places they found them and stack cartons.

Outdoor Classroom Management

(Discussion, Share-out)

Gather back together in one large group. Ask participants to imagine working with a group of children in this space or in a garden at their schools. Ask who has experience teaching students outdoors. What comes to mind as far as management of the group? What are some good strategies for making the outdoors a meaningful, safe and engaging learning environment? Mention that you modeled a few key strategies while leading "Six of One."

Give the group a few minutes to discuss these questions and as they share their experiences, note their suggestions on the chart paper. Look together at the "Tips and Ideas about Managing Kids in a Garden Setting" handout and add any suggestions not mentioned in the brainstorm. Turn to pages 79 – 80 in *Gardens for Learning* on "Outdoor Classroom Management." Cover the highlighted points once again if the previous discussion still needs reinforcement or filling in.