

Native Outdoor Classroom



October 1, 2013

Native Outdoor Classroom and Theater at Namaqua

is a place to preserve history and native habitats, create a connection and appreciation for the natural world, enhance learning in the arts and sciences, and develop educational opportunities with hands-on, real world experiences.



Why an outdoor classroom?

With the high costs of field trips in order to bring students to natural areas for enhanced learning, why not create one in our own backyard?

As growing evidence continues to show the benefits of connecting children back to nature, schools across the nation are beginning to find ways to implement nature programs into schools. Research has shown the mental, emotional, and physical health benefits from a continuous connection to nature. Having some form of a nature-based curriculum in schools creates a positive influence on students overall health and learning experience.

~Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv

The students at Namaqua will benefit greatly from the outdoor classroom. They will develop environmental stewardship skills by tending to the needs of the plants as well as developing hands-on science skills such as observation, inquiry, problem-solving and drawing conclusions.

Students will also be able to make connections to our local lands by researching and learning about the native habitats, native species and native cultures that are very special and unique to our area. Providing students with this opportunity to connect with our natural history that surrounds us gives them a meaningful connection of “place” and a sense of “home.” Research has shown that connecting our students to nature has a powerfully positive effect on their emotional health. Students develop stronger social skills, are able to cope with emotions more effectively and have better cognitive skills when stimulated by experiential learning processes in the outdoors.

Brief Sketch of the Outdoor Classroom

Here is the first sketch of the outdoor classroom by Thomas Diesing, a former student of Namaqua and current student at CSU. A more detailed rendering to come!



Community Partnering



We have created an exciting partnership with High Plains Environmental Center (HPEC) for the outdoor classroom project. HPEC's motto is: *Restoring nature where we live, work and play.* Through this partnership, the walls of our outdoor classroom will be created by native trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials that help restore nature where our students "live, work and play." HPEC has helped us research and develop our plant list along with Emily Weakland of *Betterland Herbs*, who designed the outdoor classroom. To learn more about the *High Plains Environmental Center* and their commitment to eco-literacy and sustainability, visit: www.suborbitat.org.

Thompson Education Foundation

Cultivating Educational Opportunities in the Thompson School District



Thompson Education Foundation

The Thompson Education Foundation (TEF) is a non-profit organization that assists schools in our district with educational opportunities. We are partnering with TEF to apply for small grants to assist us in our goal to complete the outdoor classroom. In addition, we have setup an account for you and/or your business to make tax-deductible donations to help fund our outdoor classroom. Our budget is \$20,000 and we are hoping to raise \$10,000 in tax-deductible donations and fundraising.

If you and/or your business would like to donate, click below and in the *Special Instructions or Comments* type: *Namaqua Outdoor Classroom*.

[DONATE NOW!](#)

Outdoor Classroom Committee

If you are interested in joining the Outdoor Classroom Committee, please join us at our first monthly meeting on **Tuesday, October 8th at 9:15AM** in the cottage at Namaqua. For more information on ways you can help or if you have questions, please contact Michele Mandeville, Project Coordinator at: 720-270-3145 or mbmandeville@comcast.net. Thank you!