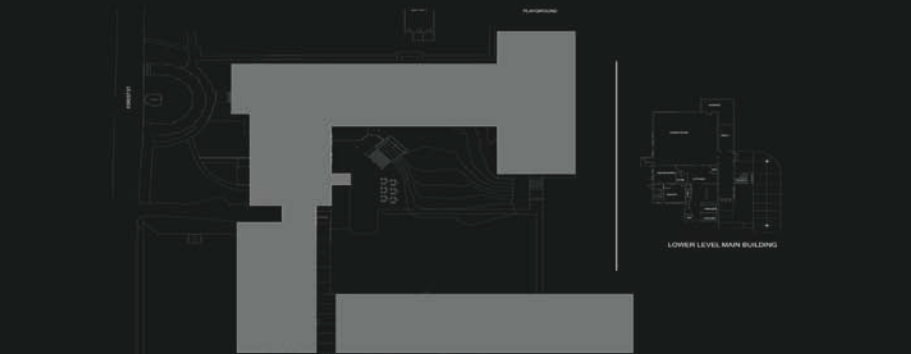


Tupelo Schools

Standard
2010

Rankin Elementary Outdoor Class (Tupelo)

The Outdoor Learning Center



When this project was started, original thoughts were to make it more than just an outdoor classroom. So we set out to make it an outdoor learning module to help teach the kids. The Outdoor Learning Center is exactly that. I did research before starting the project to find out where the 3rd through 5th grade curriculum begins to overlap. I found that math (specifically multiplication), the water cycle, maps of the U.S., and rocks and minerals are repeatedly taught in these grade levels.

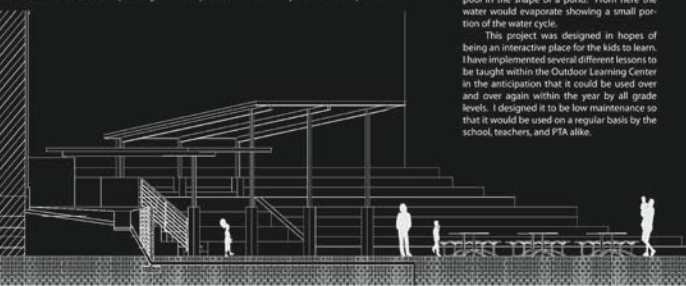
I took these learning aspects and developed them within the design of the Outdoor Learning Center. As the kids arrive to the Outdoor Learning Center for class, they take a seat in the amphitheater. Immediately they look down and see the math array that the teacher could use for adding, subtracting, or multiplication. The teacher would use the array by covering the squares or having the students stand on the arrays, or the students could even color the arrays with chalk. Depending on how the arrays were covered or colored, the students would then be added, subtracted, or multiplied. This makes for a good outdoor math experiment.

Then over on the left side of the Outdoor Learning Center in a more private teaching area where be different learning materials incorporated into the design of the wall. Within the wall there would be a Mississippi map divided into the different regions, and a U.S. map with all of the states located and named. I envision these maps being cut out of plate steel so that they could be incorporated as

a magnet board. There would be custom magnets made for different teaching lessons. The third wall would be specifically designed to teach rocks and minerals. It would be embedded with a light-up poster of different rocks and minerals without the names filled so that when a rock is lit up the students have to tell all the information they know about that rock or mineral. This has the potential to teach the students in a more interactive way.

The last thing that was implemented within the design of the Outdoor Learning Center is the water cycle. The roof structure is angled, and it drains into a catch basin. Then the water in the catch basin travels to a small pool in the shape of a pond. From here the water would evaporate showing a small portion of the water cycle.

This project was designed in hopes of being an interactive place for the kids to learn. I have implemented several different lessons to be taught within the Outdoor Learning Center in the anticipation that it could be used over and over again within the year by all grade levels. I designed it to be low maintenance so that it would be used on a regular basis by the school, teachers, and PTA alike.



The PTA at Rankin Elementary School in Tupelo, Mississippi, requested EDI's help with the design of an outdoor classroom space. One of our student workers, Stephen Clairmont, led the effort to provide a preliminary design and cost estimate to the PTA and the school district.

The outdoor classroom includes a covered seating area, making it a good place for class discussions and presentations. To increase the classroom's value to the school, we added permanent features that address math, geography, ecology, and other subjects.