

Play & Learn Outdoors

able
canopies
& outdoor projects

Issue 2.5
December 2021

Fun Ideas to Expand a Safe Learning Environment for Your School

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WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER EDITION OF PLAY & LEARN OUTDOORS

It feels like so much has happened since the last edition of P&LO and somehow we're already heading for the end of the year.

This month's newsletter is a bumper issue jam-packed with all the inspiration you need for fundraising and taking lessons outside.

When you get a chance, take a break, sit back, relax with your

favorite drink and have a flick through. Hopefully you'll be able to take some ideas back to the classroom.

If you enjoy reading P&LO, why not leave a copy in your staff room for your colleagues to enjoy too? If they would like to receive their own copies, drop us an email:

marketing@ablecanopies.co.uk and we'll add them to the list.

Enjoy the crisp winter weather with your pupils by taking lessons outside and utilising nature to add variety to your lesson plans. We'll be back in the spring for more ideas and inspiration.

Best Wishes

Tracy Meakins

Managing Director

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Download Our Product Brochure

...it's Full of Canopies & Shelters For Your School

Download our latest product brochure to view our full range of canopies, shelters, shade sails and accessories to enhance your school's outside space and enable outdoor play and learning to go ahead all through the year.

Visit: www.ablecanopies.co.uk/brochures.html



FIVE OUTDOOR CRAFT IDEAS TO TRY THIS WINTER



Craft ideas can be a great way to get children moving and learning outside

It's getting colder outside and feeling quite wintery, yet you will still want to keep the children you teach active outside. Craft ideas can be a great way to get children moving and learning outside and if you have a covered canopy area, you can easily set up crafting stations.

Here we have five great ideas for winter crafting. If you're feeling ambitious you could set up all 5 at different tables and have the children move round each station and try each one!

1. Hedgehog Scrap Pictures

This one is a lovely classic. Produce a hedgehog template that children can trace onto a piece of card. Then create a collage for the spines. This could be made out of pre-cut card leaf shapes, craft leaves. Or, to encourage plenty of exercise and interacting with nature, ask the children to collect leaves from the school playing field.

As additional enrichment, you could learn about hibernation and leaf identification at the same time!

2. Pine Cone Ornaments

This one can really enable the children to be creative. Grab a pine cone, plenty of PVA glue and allow the children to express their inner creativity. Provide a variety of decorative items such as sequins, pom poms, coloured shapes etc.

A piece of string can be tied to the top and they can either be used to decorate the class tree and celebrate how different, yet special everyone is. Or let the children take them home as a gift for their family.

3. Paper Chains

Paper chains are best when worked on as a team. A simple craft activity, which can be set up quite easily but can be done in small groups working together to encourage teamwork.

4. Create Hibernating Places

As a more active craft activity, encourage the children to safely explore fallen wood sticks and leaves and to work together to create homes for hibernating animals. This is another great

opportunity to get the children moving outdoors during cold weather.

Even if you only have a small area under your canopy, you could put out trays with leaves and sticks to create bug houses.

5. Christmas Cards

A classic craft for this season but Christmas cards are so much fun to make and the children will really enjoy this activity. Try focusing on a specific skill, such as paper cutting.

Perhaps the children can make a pop-up Christmas card, such as a tree. Provide an example and instructions. You could then ask the children to write out instructions for making a card and incorporate the activity with their English work.

Conclusion

Being outside, even in the cold weather can be so beneficial to children's health and well-being and can really enhance their learning at school. Here are 5 great craft ideas to get your children creatively working together this winter.

REDUCING WASTE IN SCHOOLS



It is coming to our attention more and more the need to reduce waste and recycle. Many of us do this on a personal level at home however, it's not always big in the workplace, including in schools.

As individuals are becoming more passionate about recycling, reusing, and recycling, they are sharing their knowledge and passion with their colleagues including those that work in schools. So, if you're looking for ways you can save waste at your school and pass tips onto your colleagues, you're in luck, keep reading to discover a selection of top tips...

Recycling in the Staff Room

For complete beginners, the staff room is the easiest place to start. You can set up a communal area within your staff room or kitchen where fellow teachers can easily access the recycling bins provided. Placing the recycling bins in a convenient location will encourage them to recycle more and help them to realise that recycling at work entails minimal effort.

Be sure to have separate bins for each category i.e. plastic, cans, paper and glass. Also, depending on your waste collection company, you may be able to have one for food waste too.

Earn Cash for Your School with Trash

A fantastic initiative run by Terracycle, allows you to set up recycling points within your school where you can recycle plastics that are not normally taken by your kerbside collection and earn cash for your school.

To enable you to recycle as many items as possible and earn even more cash for your school, you can put the word out to parents and

local residents informing them of the items you can accept. This will make your impact on recycling greater and benefit your school even more.

Terracycle enables you to earn points with the recycling you collect, the points can then be redeemed as cash (for schools and charitable organisations only). Visit www.terracycle.com to find out more.

Don't Buy New – Reuse and Recycle Instead

Before buying supplies for your school, be sure to plan ahead to discover if you can use materials that you would usually throw away or recycle. For example, cardboard boxes can be used for your pupil's class projects, or once cut up, they can be used to paint and draw on. The same goes for empty yogurt pots and similar tubs and bottles, you can also use these for crafty projects with your pupils.

Don't be afraid to ask for supplies

If you have a project coming up, don't be afraid to ask your pupil's parents to start collecting the items needed.

If you require larger items such as a new table outside under your school canopy, ask parents if they or any of their family or friends work on construction sites. The wooden cable reels upcycle perfectly as tables. You can also ask for donations of unwanted pallets if you have a handy man or parent with some spare time and skills, consider asking them to volunteer to build a table for you.

Join local recycling Facebook groups, you'd be surprised what people give away for free. Also, try contacting local companies and ask

them to keep you in mind for donations of materials that would otherwise be thrown in the skip.

Some fantastic materials that you can save from landfill and give a new lease of life to include:

Large wooden cable reels – turn these into tables

Large tyres – use as planters, seats, swings and on PE assault courses

Pallets – build all sorts including tables, chairs, planters and mud kitchens

Cardboard boxes – for all kinds of crafts and to paint on

Reusing your own waste materials and asking for donations of items can save your schools heaps of cash.

We're Planting Trees

Able Canopies have been keen on recycling for many years now and doing so has helped us to earn our ISO 14001 certification for environmental management. In addition to this, from October 2021 we started planting trees for every canopy order placed by a school to help lower carbon footprint and to help natural habitats and wildlife to flourish.

That therefore means if you order a canopy from Able Canopies, you will be contributing to looking after our environment even more.

You can find out more about our tree planting scheme on page 6.

Conclusion

So, recycling, reusing and up-cycling enables you to earn cash, spend less and help save the planet – you'd be mad not to take part.

FIVE POSITIVES OF OUTSIDE LEARNING FOR CHILDREN



In recent years, more children have been keeping themselves indoors and not learning about the environment that is literally on their doorstep. Even in schools, a lot of learning still takes place in classrooms. Yet children should be encouraged to interact with nature and learn more outside.

There are several benefits to outside learning that can help children become more rounded individuals and can provide more opportunities as they grow up. So what are the five benefits of more outside learning for children?

Healthier Minds And Bodies

Children who play and learn outside are more likely to have positive mental well-being. They're also less likely to suffer from obesity or other health problems. Therefore, children can be more healthy and be absent from school for less.

Higher Levels Of Retention

Children who are learning outside can sometimes experience higher levels of learning retention. Whether they're learning about the natural world around them or have a massive maths lesson on the field, they can learn with less knowledge loss outside.

Increased Confidence

Learning outside often means children are using skills, tools and resources that they're not accustomed to. While they are bound to make mistakes, by trying more they can improve their skill set and this can improve their confidence levels.

Better Communication Skills

Whether they're building something under the school canopy or playing in the forest school, children who

are learning outside will often have to work with others. This requires them to communicate more with their classmates to complete tasks. This is a very important skill that they need for all subjects and in life.

It's Fun

Children can have lots of fun when they're playing and learning outside. This is an important part of learning and a great way to encourage them to have a positive experience at school.

Conclusion

Learning outside is a great way to build your student's skills and experience at school. Above are five positives from learning outside and are all great reasons to move some lessons to the school playground, school canopy or even the forest school.

WE'RE GOING GREEN ONE TREE AT A TIME



At Able Canopies, we're regularly striving to become a greener company that contributes to saving the planet by creating eco-friendly policies for our staff to follow. Our continued commitment to environmental awareness has secured us the renowned ISO 14001 certification for many years, which is something we are particularly proud of.

We were pleased to discover that in 2021, we off-set our carbon footprint by 29.316 tonnes. However, in order to build on our 'green goals', we plan to implement more initiatives at Able Canopies HQ to off-set our carbon footprint further. We are also aware that many schools will be looking to do the same, as well as teaching their pupils the importance of lowering our planets carbon footprint and helping natural habitats and wildlife to flourish. That's why we've come up with an idea that can help us both meet our goals, all you have to do is choose us as your canopy or shelter supplier.

So, in order to help us both achieve this, since October 2021, we started planting trees for every canopy order we receive for a school environment. We will also plant trees for every recommendation we receive that results in the booking of a site survey, and subsequent order.



The organisation we have chosen to sponsor is Tree Appeal; an environmental organisation that

plants trees to create wildlife habitats, combat climate change and make a greener world. They plant their trees in schools, woodland and nature reserves across the UK and Ireland.

What You'll Receive

For every order placed for a school environment that contains at least one canopy, we'll plant two trees; one in the UK and a 'twinned' tree in Africa.

Once your canopy has been installed, we will send you an aftersales pack which includes your canopy guarantee (if applicable), maintenance schedule and a certificate with your unique tree planting codes. The codes can be entered on the Tree Appeal website so you can find out where your tree has been planted. The certificate is particularly handy as you can keep it for your environmental records.



Free Eco-Friendly Activity Pack

We have also created a free Eco-Friendly Activity Pack which you can integrate into your lesson plans. This free pack contains four different activities along with information and a selection of interesting facts about recycling, pollination and trees.

Visit www.ablecanopies.co.uk/trees to download your free guide.

Let's Get Started

By choosing Able Canopies as your canopy and shelter supplier, you will be making an eco-conscience choice and that will have a positive impact on our environment. If you are in need of a canopy in your outside area whether it's to cover an outdoor dining area, the entrance to your building, a playground or create an outdoor classroom, our canopies will provide the long-lasting weather protection required.

Call us on **0800 389 9072**, email us at sales@ablecanopies.co.uk or contact us online to request a free site survey.

Would you Like Trees Planted on Your Land?

If you are a school or own a woodland or nature reserve, you can contact the Tree Appeal to apply for free trees. Please note, Able Canopies cannot supply trees directly to your school or organisation, we make donations to the Tree Appeal and they plant the trees in the grounds of their successful applicants. To find out more visit www.ablecanopies.co.uk/trees



FIVE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES THAT CAN HELP CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT NATURE

There are a lot of changes in nature that are going to come about this term, so it's the perfect time for children to get involved in outdoor activities. When completing tasks outside, children often have a better recollection of the time, build more positive memories and improve their mental health.

This time of year is also perfect for learning about nature. Whether that is about the local wildlife, the life cycle of plants or the weather, here are some fun activities for your children to do at school.

Build a Bird Table

The winter can be particularly challenging for birds. They might struggle to find food and sometimes rely on bird tables and birdbaths for the essentials. You can help by getting children to build, decorate and then place bird tables outside. Children can also watch the visitors from under the school canopy.

Leaf Collages

Teach children about the changes that happen with plants by getting them to create leaf collages. They can create pictures of trees, owls, houses and more with the leaves that



they can collect from all around the school. These can also be placed on display.

Hedgehog Houses

Teach children about hedgehogs and hibernation by building hedgehog houses that they can nest in during the winter months. This small activity can be part of a wider learning activity and one that children can be proud of.

Weather Stations

Get children to build weather stations that can help them monitor the weather in your local area. This can include the rainfall, wind direction, and other measurements that you can get children to record. This is a great activity and there are several

ways that you can get children to build these weather stations.

Treasure Hunts

Hunting for conkers, acorns, leaves and other natural items on the ground is a great way to build awareness of the world around them. Children can collect in groups from the school grounds, or you can go out on a small field trip to find the items.

Conclusion

Autumn is a season for change and a great learning opportunity. Children can learn more about nature and their world by building, collecting and exploring with you. There are five great activities that you can use above to help them learn. Which one will you use?

WATCH US INSTALL A 12M X 13M TIMBER CANOPY IN JUST TWO MINUTES



Yes, you read that correctly, you can watch a full installation video of us installing a canopy in just 2 minutes thanks to time lapse technology.

...When it comes to investing in a canopy for your school, college or university, you need to be reassured that your money will be well spent on a structure that is of the highest quality and installed by a professional team.

With Able Canopies, you will get exactly that.

We have an almost never-ending list of customer comments that praise our products, staff and processes however, if you've never had one of our canopies installed before, how are you to

know what our installations are really like? Can you take our customers word for it? Of course you can, but just in case our lovely customer comments don't convince you, we have taken the opportunity to record a recent installation we carried out in Somerset, so you can see for yourself.

Frome College, which is a comprehensive school that caters for students from the ages of 13 to 18 years old, required a permanent canopy to replace their temporary gazebo which they used for a range of different purposes. After completing a full site survey, it was apparent that the Tarnhow Dome Free Standing Timber Canopy was the perfect solution

which met all their design and weather protection requirements.

We installed their new multi-purpose timber canopy in August 2021 over 7 days with an impressive span of 12 metres and a total length of 13 metres. That's a whopping 156 square metres of their outside area covered from the weather all year round for outdoor lessons, alfresco dining, outside events or anything else they choose.

Visit our blog to watch the full installation of their school canopy:
www.ablecanopies.co.uk/blog/
and in the search bar type 'Frome'

HOW TO KEEP YOUR SCHOOL CANOPY CLEAN

During the autumn and winter months, your school canopy is more likely to become dirty and need some maintenance. Regular maintenance and cleaning are vital for the longevity of your school canopy and with a good schedule, you can reduce repair costs that can be incurred.

1. Clean Off Leaves From The Top

One of the first things that you should be doing is to keep leaves off the top of the school canopy. Autumn leaf falls can add weight to the top of the canopy that can put it under more strain and while the weight of the leaves themselves is unlikely to cause much of a problem, it is a combination of these and other items that can cause problems.

Leaves being cleaned off should be done on a fairly regular basis. This is to ensure that they don't collect in such a number that they prevent the run-off of other items like water, ice and snow.

In addition to leaves, ensure that you're removing all sticks, seeds and other items from plants. You might also find that moss starts to grow on your canopy, this should be removed too. And if there are any toys that are up there, best to remove those too.

2. Ensure Any Gutters Are Cleaned

In addition to removing debris from the top of the canopy, you

should remove any debris from the guttering that you have, if any, on the canopy. Excess debris in the guttering can cause the water to get stuck and then come out in unplanned places. This can cause damage to your canopy, create an unpleasant area around your canopy or damage a nearby building.

Gutter cleaning should be done once or twice a year and your school maintenance team should be able to complete it with ease.

3. Clear Snow Off The Top

When it comes to snow, this should be removed as soon as possible from canopies. Snow is very heavy and the pressure it can put onto the support struts can be immense. Snow also has a habit of falling off a canopy and if someone is underneath it

can be dangerous for them.

If there has been snow during the night, the school canopy should be clear before children arrive. Until it is clear, you might want to consider re-routing entrances away from these areas to allow your school maintenance team to clear the snow.

Conclusion

These three easy tips will ensure your school canopy is kept in good condition over the autumn and winter months. This protects your canopy from damage and ensures that you don't have to pay any hefty repair fees on them.



HOW TO MAKE QUICK CHANGES TO FUNDRAISING PLANS IN WET WEATHER

Fundraising is a vital part of running your school. However, there are times when you might need to make some quick changes to your fundraising plans. There are several reasons for this including:

- Staff member absences
- The weather is too bad for a fundraising event
- Supplies haven't arrived

So, what are the options when it comes to these problems to ensure that you can host your fundraising event at some point? Here are some options that you can run through.

Move the Fundraising Event Inside

If you can't have the fundraising event under a school canopy or outside because of the weather, then perhaps you can have the fundraising event inside. A sponsored run around the field can be changed to a sponsored run around the sports hall. Or perhaps you can have some of the stalls from an event fair inside.

Moving inside might require you to limit the event to be smaller as well. However, it can often mean that you can keep the event at the same time. This can prevent those who aren't close to the school but were coming from being annoyed about the change of plans.

Change The Date

Another option is to change the date of the fundraising event. If you've got enough time then this can cause little disruption. And this is a good idea if you've not got people coming into the school, so this could be a good option for those who are organising sponsored events like reading, running, etc.

However, if you've got a fair on and you're expecting local businesses to attend as well as others in the community, moving the date can be a more challenging prospect. So you have to consider the options.

Split The Fundraising

If you've not got enough supplies or there is only enough capacity with the changes you can make to do a limited amount of the event, then you could try splitting the event. For instance, a few year groups could do their event one day and others could do the event on another day.

Splitting the event can be a harder option to manage and can cause confusion. However, it can often cause less disruption, especially if you've got an emergency plan in place and



have pre-warned those who might be attending.

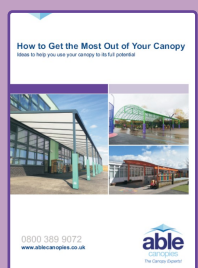
Conclusion

Fundraising is an important activity. Whether you're saving for a new computer suite, set of books for your library or a school canopy, then having a backup to ensure that your fundraising event can happen regardless of problems is a great idea. What emergency plans do you have?

FREE DOWNLOAD

Download your free copy of the How to Get the Most Out of Your Canopy Guide for ideas to make the most of your canopy within an educational setting.

www.ablecanopies.co.uk/canopyguide.html



HOW A SCHOOL CANOPY CAN PROTECT OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT



School budgets are not exhaustive and often it is about maintaining your equipment as long as possible to prevent having to pay out more to replace it. Outdoor learning equipment and play items that are often left outside are the items that are at most risk of damage.

However, a school canopy is a great way to often protect these items from damage. Here's how.

1. Protects From Bad Weather

Whether it is snow or hard rain, having equipment hidden and stored under a canopy can be a good way to protect large items that can't go into the classroom or the limited other storage areas.

Constant access to the wet can often make these items very dirty and can lead to mould issues when left outside. This will

increase the need for you or a member of your team to clean the equipment.

2. Protects From Wind

School canopies are an excellent way to protect items from the wind. Under canopies, the speed of the wind can be reduced and this will prevent some equipment from falling over. A small fall can break certain equipment, especially if it is plastic and has undergone stress recently.

You can also secure items left outside with rope or lie them down when finished. But if they're in use and there is a strong wind, a school canopy might reduce the chance of the item falling down.

3. Reduce Damage Due To UV Rays

The sun can cause significant damage to the look of the equipment. Constant exposure

to UV from the sun can dull the colours of your plastic and metal equipment. In addition, in certain conditions, the UV rays can damage the materials and make them more brittle and easier to break.

A school canopy can reduce the exposure of the equipment to this kind of damage.

Conclusion

When it comes to the outdoor equipment used at your school, finding good storage is a must. A school canopy is a great way to protect some items that are too large for other storage options. And with good storage, you can reduce the need to replace some of the school equipment regularly as well as improve the aesthetic look of your education setting by keeping school equipment looking fresh and newer for longer.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Don't miss out, make a note of these dates in your diary pronto!

There seems to be an awareness day or week for most things these days and it's easy to miss the ones that might be useful for schools and provide the opportunity for a different teaching and learning experience.

We have collected some of the upcoming dates here from the big and obvious through to the smaller and less well known, there is plenty going on this time of year.



JANUARY 2022

16th

Global Word Search Day



17th

Martin Luther King Day

18th

Winnie the Pooh Day



25th

Robert Burns Night



28th

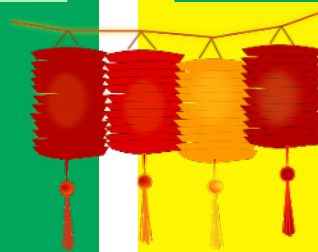
International LEGO Day



FEBRUARY 2022

1st

Chinese New Year



8th

Safer Internet Day



13th

World Radio Day



14th

Valentines Day

21st Feb - 6th Mar

Fairtrade Fortnight



FUNDRAISING

With the end of the year approaching and the new year on its way, we are sharing a couple of fundraising ideas. Visit our blog for a wide selection of ideas to get your creative juices flowing:
www.ablecanopies.co.uk/blog/

Ask for Donations

January is the perfect time to ask for donations for your upcoming spring fayres. Parents will be more than happy to have a clear out to make way for their children's new gifts. They may also have unwanted gifts that they would like to donate too.

It may seem a little early but you can keep them aside and asking in advance, at the right time will help with the preparation and will bring in more donations, resulting in a more successful fundraising event.

Give Up

No, I don't mean give up fundraising; give something up *for* fundraising. Whilst it may be best to keep large crowds at bay for now, you can raise funds from a distance - do you have a colleague who is known for having a love for something such as chocolate? Ask them if they'll consider giving it up for a month to raise funds. You can keep sponsors updated in your newsletter and ask for donations to be left at the main office for minimal contact.

FUNDING

We're always on the lookout for new funding sources, so when we spot one we'll always share it with you because we understand how hard funding is to come by. When we came across the Wesleyan Foundation who provides grants of up to £10,000, we just knew we had to share the details with you.

For Schools, Pre-Schools and voluntary organisations, receiving funding for your latest projects can be tough and with the on-going pandemic, raising funds yourself has been made impossible at times, we feel you. That's why we have a fantastic funding page on our website that lists a whole host of grants, a free funding guide that you can download online and we'll also share new funding sources as we find them – just like we are now. Visit www.ablecanopies.co.uk/funding.html for full access

The Wesleyan Foundation

While it's 'new' to us, the Wesleyan Foundation has been around since 2017. They offer grants from £2,000 to £10,000 for schools and voluntary organisations across the UK. This year however, grants are being offered in central and northern England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to organisations looking to resolve issues caused by the on-going pandemic. They are favouring outdoor projects or projects designed to improve mental health or personal and social development, so if you're looking to fund an outdoor canopy to address COVID-19 issues, make sure you apply soon.

Find out more: www.wesleyanfoundation.co.uk



Here's a selection of the canopies we have installed since the last edition of P&LO





Able Canopies: The Canopy Experts



Canopies &
Covered
Walkways

Cycle &
Waiting
Shelters

Shade Sails
& Tensile
Structures

Awnings &
Playground
Accessories

External
Works:
Surfacing,
Fencing etc.

Able Canopies are the canopy experts. We provide safe and stylish weather protection that transforms outside spaces.

- Every year we complete hundreds of successful school canopy installations across the UK
- These canopies provide schools with effective shelter & areas for outdoor learning and dining
- We also work with universities and the retail, leisure & hospitality sectors to effectively transform outside space
- Our team of canopy experts work with schools, architects & contractors to ensure on time, on budget, project completion
- To ensure consistent high quality we control the design, manufacture & installation process of our canopies

"The men have done a excellent job and cleaned up after themselves each day. left the site clean and tidy."

- Urmston Grammar Academy,
Manchester

If you would like a canopy, shelter or shade sail quotation, contact us today:

Call: 0800 389 9072 | **Email:** sales@ablecanopies.co.uk

