

Falmouth Public Schools

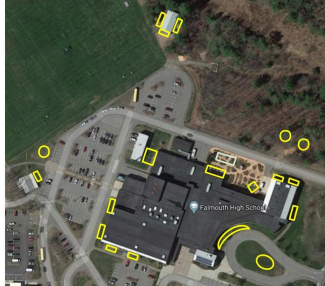
Falmouth, Maine

Public School District Level Example of Integrated Outdoor Learning

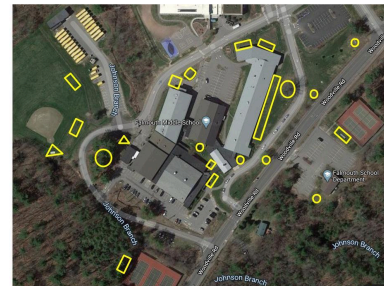
School District Website: <https://www.falmouthschools.org>



Public School District
2,200 Students
3 Schools
K - 12th Grade
250 staff



Fg. 1: Falmouth High School Site Map



Fg. 2: Falmouth Middle School Site Map

What existing outdoor learning programs do Falmouth Public Schools operate? *Fg. 3 Parent Volunteers*

Falmouth Public Schools has an [established farm to school program](#) that was founded to promote sustainability, food justice, and health education. The farm to school program has a multi-pronged approach towards their mission: procurement of local food, on-site outdoor garden spaces, and agriculture education that is integrated into each school's curriculum. In 2016 the school hired a full-time garden manager who assists teachers in leading project-based activities across all subjects and grade levels. Annually, the garden manager hosts close to 100 classroom visits.



In addition to the farm-to-school program, Falmouth Public Schools has established wellness and nature goals for their campus grounds. In 2010, all three schools in the district were moved onto one campus, making it easier to integrate this programming across all grade levels. Through grassroots support and fundraising, the district has enhanced their outdoor spaces to include the learning garden, a system of nature trails, a wetland pond, and natural play structures.

- Learn more about the Falmouth Farm-to-School Program by clicking [HERE](#)

How did your school district decide to bring education outside this year?

Teachers, with the support of district administrators, have been the main drivers for outdoor learning in relation to COVID-19 recovery at Falmouth Public Schools. Justin, the farm manager, inspired faculty to research this concept, and they had initial inspiration and support from the [Maine Outdoor Education Program](#). The Falmouth Public Schools Superintendent Geoff Bruno was supportive of this planning process from the beginning and encouraged faculty to work together to create a plan for outdoor learning.

Ten-to-twelve staff members, lead by Justin and Cathlyn, met frequently and formed an Eco-team dedicated to researching outdoor learning infrastructure, assessing potential sites on their campus, and developing scheduling procedures for outdoor classroom use. The Eco-team developed an outdoor learning goal focused on giving all classes the resources and materials they would need to easily move their classes outdoors with flexibility and ease.

- Learn more about Eco-Team Staff Meetings: [Weekly Meeting Notes](#)
- Eco-Team Campus Site Analysis: [Initial Site Analysis](#), [Falmouth HS](#), [Falmouth ES](#), [Falmouth MS](#)

Falmouth Public Schools allocated \$100,000 from CARES Federal Relief funds to prepare outdoor classroom spaces. The Falmouth School District was able to dedicate these funds in part because their buildings are fairly new and already equipped with HVAC and heating systems. In addition, with all three of their schools on one campus,

some parts of facilities management and operations are more streamlined.

How did you prepare staff to take classes outdoors? *Fg. 4: Falmouth Jump Outdoor Bags*

By the start of the 2020-2021 school year, Falmouth will have 30 different outdoor learning sites prepared on their campus. Each site has been assigned a number and description and placed into a shared spreadsheet. Faculty will use the Google Calendar app, a tool the district has used previously, to reserve an outdoor classroom site. This method will reduce the potential for overlap of teachers using outdoor space and allow administration to track where classes are at what time of the school day. Members of the Eco-team trained all staff members on outdoor classroom safety policies including cell phone use for emergencies and communication with the nursing staff.

- View FPS's [Outdoor Classroom Reservation Spreadsheet](#)
- View FPS's Training Slide Decks: [FHS](#), [FMS](#), [FES](#)
- View FPS's [Teacher Tips for Outdoor Classroom Behavior Management](#)
- View FPS's [Permission Form for Outdoor Learning](#)

The ECO-team has prepared "Jump Outdoors Bags" for each teacher including all of the needed materials so teachers can easily get outside and go to any available location on campus. Each bag includes supplies for both teachers and students. For teachers, the bags have prepared medical supplies, teaching equipment, and an ALPS three-legged stool. Students have a clipboard, dry erase markers, art supplies, and more.

- View FPS's FES [Jump Outdoor Bags Materials & Pricing](#) & [Budget](#)



What was involved in the infrastructure implementation process? *Fg. 5: Strawbale Delivery*

Many different approaches to infrastructure are being used depending on each site's unique factors. The staff's biggest hurdle was finding and placing tents that meet local fire department safety regulations. In some locations, they are using repurposed sails as shade canopies. In other places, they have been able to install shade fabric to cedar posts. For seating they have used existing tables, logs, and straw bales. Straw bales are a huge hit with students and teachers and are across the campus in pods of 10 - 12, ready for cohorts to use.

- View FPS's [Sails Company Contacts](#) & [Tent Canopy Purchase Request](#)

The ECO-team organized community volunteers to help with distributing materials and setting up infrastructure. These work days were a big part of the success of this program so far.

- View ECO-team Community Outreach Newsletters: [Letter 1](#), [Letter 2](#)

What is next for Falmouth in the outdoor learning process? *Fg. 6: Student Volunteer*

After school starts, construction and planning will continue to add to the existing outdoor classroom sites. Staff will continue to rally community support for construction and fundraising. Over 80 sites have been identified for outdoor classroom use (not including sports facilities), and staff will continue to invest in the infrastructure needed to turn these into learning environments. Additionally, the school is planning to extend into the colder months by investing in additional greenhouse space and appropriate clothing so all students can be comfortable outdoors. They are planning to expand their greenhouses as part of the long-term farm-to-school programming.



Resources

Falmouth Reopening Schools Plan:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Er83n6zyhiHie5wvRKLmchJ9sJ-1MeuQBtIvucmrosM/edit?usp=sharing>

Outdoor Classroom Site Planning:

- [Brainstorming images](#)

- Site Maps of Outdoor Classroom Possibilities: [FES - elementary sites](#), [FMS - middle school sites](#), [FHS - high school sites](#)
- Slide Decks with Outdoor Classroom Design Considerations: [FES - elementary school](#), [FMS - middle school](#), [FHS - high school](#)

Outdoor Classroom Curriculum & Instruction:

- [Suggestions for Hearing Accommodations](#)
- [Helpful Tips for Using Outdoor Learning Spaces](#) - Elementary Grade Levels



Fig. 7: Students in class outdoors



Fig. 8: Shade canopy in forested area



Fig. 9: Shade canopy