

# green schoolyards

FOR HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES



## CASE STUDY:

### Out Teach (formerly REAL School Gardens)

## MISSION:

Out Teach, formerly REAL School Gardens, provides professional development for elementary school teachers. Out Teach prepares teachers to use school gardens, outdoor classrooms, and green schoolyards to improve instruction through three-dimensional project-based learning, and outdoor experiential inquiry-based education. Professional learning with Out Teach improves hands-on science and STEM education through instructional coaching and digital education resources and improves 21st Century skills.

## GOAL:

The goal of Out Teach is to unlock student performance with the power of outdoor experiential learning.



## OVERVIEW

**Out Teach** (formerly REAL School Gardens) was created to equip teachers everywhere to harness the power of experiential learning in an outdoor environment. In addition to recently adopting a new name, the organization created a new tag line, “Go outside expectations,” as a way to more clearly illustrate their primary commitment to teacher professional development, because teacher effectiveness is one of the key drivers of student success. The organization’s web site says, “When teachers grow, students thrive.” Begun initially in the state of Texas in 2003 and funded by the Rainwater Charitable Foundation, it has grown significantly and now has plans to serve students and their teachers in 15 cities in five regions by 2023.

## THE WORK

Out Teach works with districts, principals, and community partners to help teachers master experiential learning in an outdoor environment to get students more engaged and excited about science, math, and literacy lessons. By combining field-tested, professional learning with exciting outdoor spaces, Out Teach empowers teachers to get outside—beyond the classroom—to create unforgettable learning experiences and measurable results.

Out Teach provides job-embedded coaching to transform teacher practice with field-tested outdoor experiential lessons that improve outcomes for students and help achieve learning standards. Each lesson is aligned with local and national standards, as well each district’s scope and sequence

and teacher effectiveness frameworks. For additional support, Out Teach also offers an online Coaching Center to provide ongoing standards-aligned training videos, coach feedback, and a community of teachers.

The organization offers on-site teacher professional development so that any school can immediately start using their existing outdoor spaces to improve experiential instruction. Low-income schools in the organization’s current and growth locations can also apply to Out Teach for help creating rich outdoor environments with the features that boost teacher effectiveness and student engagement. Some can add a few key features to enhance their existing gardens, and others will be eligible to receive a full new Outdoor Learning Lab.



## FUNDING

Out Teach receives funding and support from corporations, foundations, schools, districts, and individuals. The corporate partnership program in particular has been highly successful, and Chief Executive Officer Jeanne McCarty thinks this is due to Out Teach providing a turn-key way for companies to make a tangible long-term impact in their communities. To give teachers new Outdoor Learning Labs (Out Teach Learning Labs) partners fund the design, planning, and construction of the space. They may then invite more than 150 employees to join teachers, students, and community members to pitch in and construct an elaborate outdoor classroom full of experiential teaching features during a one fun day of community service called the “Big Dig.”

## WHO IS SERVED

By providing professional learning to teachers in low-income schools, Out Teach improves teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction, creating an exponential impact on students for years to come.



## LESSONS LEARNED

By improving teacher effectiveness with professional coaching and training teachers to use the outdoors to get students more engaged in experiential learning, classtime is more productive and enjoyable for teachers and students alike. Since students in low-income schools often don't receive experiential learning opportunities, the program helps teachers to close achievement gaps.

Measurement and metrics are a critical in education, and Out Teach measures outputs and outcomes regularly with teacher self-evaluations as well as third-party observations. These studies showed a gap in gains between teachers who received extensive coaching and those who only attended a group session. To close the gap, the organization created its online Coaching Center to provide additional support to all teachers at partner schools.



See [www.out-teach.org](http://www.out-teach.org) for additional information.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Here are some results from a survey of more than 1,300 participating teachers last year:

- > 94% of teachers report that their students are more engaged.
- > 95% of teachers reported that the trainings made them better prepared to help their students succeed academically.
- > 96% reported increased effectiveness across seven measures of skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- > The organization currently serves 115 schools, 4,000 teachers, and 80,000 students. Out Teach has grown from a single location to a regional model that now includes Texas, the Mid-Atlantic, the Carolinas, and the Southeast, with plans to grow to 15 cities in five regions by 2023 and a goal of serving 15,000 teachers and 200,000 students annually.



Other partners involved in this program: the Jenesis Group, the Rainwater Charitable Foundation, Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation, Target, Hilton, Kaiser-Permanente, Wells Fargo, Mercedes-Benz Financial Services, and many, many more.



*When teachers are trained to lead experiential lessons outdoors, they get students more engaged and excited to learn. Teachers rave about the difference hands-on outdoor lessons make for their classes. Students understand key concepts more quickly and more deeply, creating those ‘Ah Ha!’ moments that teachers live for.*

—Jeanne McCarty,  
CEO, Out Teach