

NATURE-INSPIRED CLASSROOMS

This resource aligns
with Principle 6:

Honor Nature

[Purpose]

Incorporate elements of nature, even in indoor spaces, to promote a sense of calm and focus.

The Power of Nature: Stress vs. Productivity

Let's get real: We're stuck inside for hours every day. And while the "great indoors" might feel cozy, research says our brains are hard-wired for the great outdoors. That's the heart of biophilic design—a fancy term that means bringing nature into spaces where humans live, work, and learn.

Biophilic design taps into our primal connection to nature, boosting mental health, reducing stress, and improving focus. Think plants, natural light, and earthy tones. But this isn't just Pinterest® inspiration—it's science-backed. Studies show:

- ◆ Exposure to nature can lower the stress hormone cortisol by about 20 percent (Hunter et al. 2019).
- ◆ Classrooms with views of greenery improve student attention by about 13 percent (Li and Sullivan 2016).



Decorate Strategically: Design a Green Oasis

HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT

1. Set up nature corners.

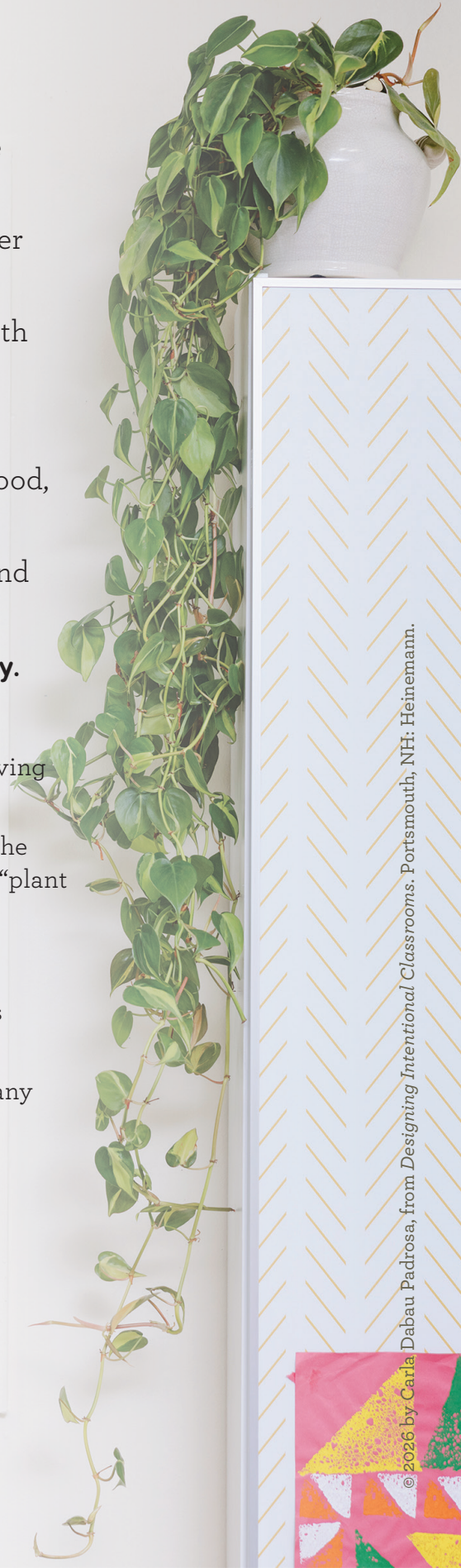
- * Choose two corners or sections of the room to place three plants.
- * Add cozy elements like woven baskets, a natural-fiber rug, and a few potted plants on the windowsill.
- * Frame the displays with artificial leaf borders or with natural brown fabric.

2. Bring the outdoors in.

- * Include simple, natural items such as stones, driftwood, or pressed flowers on shelves or desks.
- * Encourage students to contribute with items they find during nature walks.

3. Create a care plan. Empower students with responsibility.

- * Plant care tracker
 - * Assign roles like watering, checking sunlight, and removing dead leaves.
 - * Each plant gets a name, and students log care tasks on the tracker. Encourage collaboration by pairing students in “plant care buddies” to build teamwork skills.
- * Weekly growth check-ins
 - * Combine science with responsibility by having students measure plant growth weekly.
 - * Use a chart to record measurements, observations, and any challenges (e.g., leaves turning yellow).



Offer Natural Materials for Learning, Art, and Play

PRACTICAL LIFE AND SENSORY EXPLORATION

- Wooden beads and lacing strings — 4 sets
- Small trays for sorting activities — 10–15 trays (secondhand and avoid plastic trays)
- Wooden bowls and small baskets for organizing materials — 10–12 each
- Grains (rice, beans, etc.) for sensory bins — 5 packs per type
- Sand, shells, and natural materials for sensory and art activities
- Water droppers and small measuring cups for water play

NATURE AND SCIENCE EXPLORATION

- Magnifying glasses — 8–10
- Wooden and metal measuring tools (rulers, scales, etc.) — 6–10 each
- Specimen collection boxes for nature findings — 10–12
- Seed kits and planting pots for indoor gardening — 20–30 small pots
- Small nature books focused on local flora and fauna — 10–12 books (preferably from the bookstore in town to help small businesses)



Takeaway

Nature isn't just pretty—it's powerful. Whether you're growing a succulent, dimming fluorescent lights, or creating airy, light-filled spaces, you're doing more than decorating. You're creating an environment where stress melts away, brains light up, and humans—whether tiny kindergarteners or sixth graders—thrive. Want to change lives? Start with the space.

References

- Hunter, M. R., B. W. Gillespie, and S. Y.-P. Chen. 2019. "Urban Nature Experiences Reduce Stress in the Context of Daily Life Based on Salivary Biomarkers." *Frontiers in Psychology* 10: 722.
- Li, D., and W. C. Sullivan. 2016. "Impact of Views to School Landscapes on Recovery from Stress and Mental Fatigue." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 148: 149–58.