

8 Surprising Places Educators Can Reach Students

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Thanks to developments in online and mobile learning, today's classroom can be anywhere students are anytime they need it. That means school buses, libraries, community centers, churches, and anywhere else students visit are all fair game for learning. And even without the help of online or mobile learning, there's an increased demand for educational experiences in creative settings that offer students unique opportunities for learning. We've discovered several interesting, and even surprising, places that educators are working to reach students, from shopping malls to museums.

1. **Buses and automobiles:**

For some students, the ride to school can be 30 minutes or longer. And in one [Arizona](#) district, kids ride the bus for an hour and a half each way. The administrator for that school district has put Wi-Fi on buses so that students are able to learn using mobile devices during these three hours of potential learning time. And, thanks to mobile developments like [location-based learning](#), students on the go can be introduced to content that is linked to their physical location, whether they're on a commute home or a field trip across town.

2. **Malls:**

It's a fact: kids still love to go to the mall. Malls are a fun place to get together with friends, and now, they're also a place for learning. At the EdNET conference last year, [Maryland](#) educator Georgia L. Keaton proposed that there be online learning labs in malls. After all, that's where kids and teachers like to go anyway. Just imagine: stopping in for a bit of learning while you're picking up a new pair of jeans.

3. **Churches:**

For many communities, churches aren't simply a place of worship, they're a place to gather in the community and a home base for outreach. That's why in recent years many churches have opened up their Wi-Fi and put in coffee bars and comfortable seating, inviting the community in. [School tech experts](#) have pointed out that this offers a great opportunity for learning. Students and educators can use churches as gathering places to become community centers for studying and learning.

4. **Museums:**

It's not at all difficult to imagine museums as learning labs. Students often visit them for field trips, and they typically have extensive learning resources for schoolkids. That's why it's ingenious to use them as learning labs as well, and in fact, there's already a program to put learning labs in museums and libraries throughout the US. The Institute of Museum and Library Services has plans to create up to 30 different learning labs designed to offer collaborative learning with traditional and digital media. These [spaces](#), like the [Oregon](#) Museum of Science and Industry and the New York Hall of Science, will feature creative learning resources, offering workshops, technology, and learning resources students may not otherwise have access to.

5. **Libraries:**

Through the same program that's creating learning labs in museums, we'll also see extensive learning labs in libraries. Again, learning labs in libraries are certainly not a stretch of the imagination. After all, most students are already familiar with using libraries for research and studying. But these learning labs take things to the next level, like the Fayetteville Free Library's Fab Lab makerspace that features resources for programming and creating with 3D printers.

6. **Outdoor research sites:**

Learning doesn't have to happen exclusively indoors. Projects like the [Lord & Burnham Greenhouse](#) learning lab and the [Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Lab](#) take learning outside, allowing students to learn about nature and the outdoors while they're actually in nature and the outdoors. Projects include tagging trees for preservation, studying erosion, and collaborating on bird banding research.

7. **Local government centers:**

Pay your taxes, get married, or get a ticket dismissed; that's what you'd expect to do at a local government center. But with some distance learning programs, you can study at a government center, too. In addition to schools, libraries, museums, and other more traditional sites, some programs have designated local government centers as a location for learning as well, making them a community resource for education.

8. **Colleges and universities:**

It's not groundbreaking news for colleges to offer learning labs for their own students, but many have begun to open their doors to K-12 students as well. The schools allow students to come in and use the vast university resources, and often, participate in special projects and research. These collaborations are great not just for the young K-12 students, but college-level education as well.