Students at Lake Butler Elementary School will be able to take what they are learning in the classroom to a new level with the addition of an outdoor classroom. The outdoor classroom was made possible through a grant from the Plum Creek Foundation. Teachers at Lake Butler wanted a designated area outside to help them use the outdoors to teach reading, math, science, and art.

Over 900 students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade utilize this space. Support from Plum Creek enabled community members to construct a pavilion. The outdoor classroom has expanded to include display areas, a butterfly garden and new trees. Future plans included building a pond, greenhouse, and picnic tables.

Lake Butler Elementary School continues to grow its Project Learning Tree program by pilot testing the new national PLT GreenSchools program initiative. This program has teachers and students investigate environmental issues at their school and then utilizing this information to create green healthy school environments. One project developed from this effort is a new school recycling program.

Lake Butler Elementary School is one of eleven schools with the PLT School Designation. At all designated schools educators are dedicated to a hands-on exploratory approach to help youth gain an awareness and knowledge of natural and built environments.

To sponsor a PLT school in your community contact Nancy Peterson, State Coordinator, at njp@ufl.edu or (352) 846-0848. Project Learning Tree is directed by the School of Forest Resources and Conservation at the University of Florida. For more information visit the Florida PLT Web site at http://sfrc.ufl.edu/plt.