



Co-designing Places for Outdoor Learning Facilitation Guide

Design Engagement 3: Place Mapping

Activity Purpose

All forms of gardening and land management include some aspect of human and more-than-human involvement, working in tandem. There are also natural patterns and phenomena that occur in the larger environment and ecosystem that inform land management. This activity will use place mapping as a tool to identify features of the place that support learning. These features include natural patterns and phenomena (plant and animal behavior, wind, sun, slopes, ect) and constructed hardscapes (like a sidewalk) or other physical structures (such as garden beds or compost systems). Mapping different features of the land promotes the design of places that enhance learning opportunities that are already present.

A school is also part of a much larger context of the surrounding neighborhood, watershed, and region. By walking the surrounding neighborhood as well as the school grounds, the map will help connect and illustrate the relationship between things across space.



Activity Overview

This is a three-part activity:

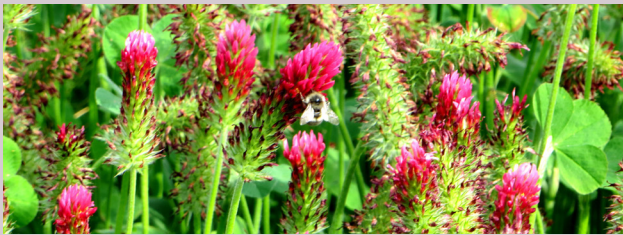
- » **Part 1:** Print (or draw) a map of the school property and the neighborhood around the school
 - Refer to Appendix C for instructions on how to create a “birds eye” (overhead) view Google map of your site.
- » **Part 2:** Walk the land around your school with the design team. Start the walk in the surrounding neighborhood and work your way in towards the school grounds. Use activity sheet 3 to record features of the land that you notice.
 - If time is a constraint, consider having small groups map different areas around the neighborhood and share back.
- » **Part 3:** After walking the land around the school grounds, return inside to discuss the experience. Use a large map to collect everyone’s noticings. This conversation will support in exploring how different places help us to learn different things.

Identifying Outdoor Learning Place Types and Elements

Outdoor learning places take many forms. Below are various types of learning sites you might find on school grounds or in the surrounding neighborhood. Included are the common features of these types of gardens. If existing learning site are identified, assess these sites with the activity in Appendix D "Redesigning with Existing Outdoor Learning Sites."



Annual/perennial fruit and vegetable garden: gardens designed and cultivated by humans to produce food and may include: raised garden beds, defined walkways, and/or compost systems.



Pollinator Garden: cultivating plants and habitats that support native pollinator species, such as native bees, pollinator insects, birds, bats, and others.



Restoration Garden/Site: areas that are being restored to their native ecological origin, such as restoring a wetlands or forest area. This may include invasive plant species that are in the process of being removed and/or native ground cover, shrubs or trees.



Rain Garden: an engineered land formation with plants that can thrive in dry and wet conditions. Used to reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.



Wildlife Garden: gardens cultivated to provide habitat such as shelter, food, and water for wildlife such as animals, birds, reptiles and insects. This may include bird or bat houses, downed trees or ponds.



Native Plant Garden: areas where plants native to the region are cultivated for habitat and human use. These are sometimes called Ethnobotanical Gardens.



Permaculture Garden (Permagarden): gardens where plants, resources, and human activity are designed to interact synergistically and efficiently, for the most production with the least labor and resources. This may include fruit tree guilds, herb spirals or Hugelkultur beds.



Therapeutic Garden: gardens that are designed to meet physical, social and spiritual needs. This may include accessible planters, and/or quiet private sitting areas.

Using the Rhizome in the Co-design Process:

The following Rhizome prompts provide ways to routinely consider the core commitments towards creating more equitable outdoor learning places. The Rhizome foregrounds analyses of **power and historicity** and **nature-culture relations** as they intersect with the other parts of the Rhizome: **complex socio-ecological systems**; **field-based science**; and **culture, families & communities**. Use these questions as a way for the co-design group to keep all pieces of the Rhizome present during co-design.

Culture, Families and Community:

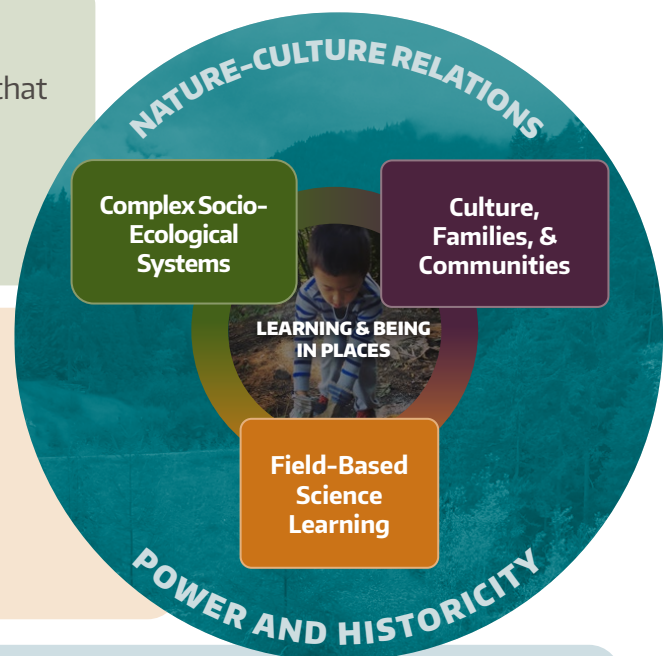
- » What features of the land are important to my family?
- » Why are places like this important to my family?

Complex Socio-Ecological Systems:

- » What were land features or natural phenomena that you noticed or were curious about on the walk? How might those features be connected?
- » Did you notice similarities and differences across places?

Field-Based Science Learning:

- » What elements did you see that you think would encourage science learning?
- » Which area that you visited was the most engaging? What types of things might kids do or learn in these places?



Power and Historicity:

- » What powered dynamics in land management are present in this place?

Nature-Culture Relations:

- » Where do we notice humans interacting with nature?
- » How are humans cultivating land in different ways?



CONNECT TO OTHER LEARNING ENGAGEMENTS

- Family LE 1.A Sharing Places Neighborhood Walk
- Family LE 2.B Wondering Walk
- Family LE 3.B Taking a Focused Walk Together: Relationships

LEARNING IN PLACES FRAMEWORKS TO CONSIDER

- Complex Socio-Ecological Reasoning
- Nature-Culture Relations
- Relationships in Socio-Ecological Systems

Part 1-3: Place Mapping

MATERIALS

- » map of school yard and surrounding neighborhood (drawn or printed)
- » pencils
- » clipboards (not required, but helpful when drawing)
- » large map or paper for whole group debrief

TIME: 60 MINUTES



ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Draw your School Yard and Surrounding Neighborhood Below:

During your walk draw use symbols, colors, drawings and words to record interesting things you see on your walk. These might include **natural kinds** (rocks, soil, wind/air, water, sunlight), **places** (lands, waters, the built environment -- houses, roads, stormdrains) and **species** (animals, plants, people, fungi...). For example you might see:

- A puddle in a field
 - A big grassy hill with small flowers
 - A garden next to a side walk
 - Leaves on top of a basketball court
 - A squirrel in a tree
 - A neighbor harvesting blackberries
- There are many other things you can observe!

On the back of this paper write down any questions that are being asked.

Part one: Draw or print a map of the school yard and the neighborhood around the school. Refer to appendix C for instructions on how to create a “birds eye” view Google map of your site.

Part two: Walk the land around your school with the design team. Start the walk in the surrounding neighborhood and work your way in towards the school grounds. Visit any existing gardens or outdoor learning places. Record interesting things you see on your walk. Consider these prompts:

- What is in the surrounding neighborhood? (green space, gardens, parks, houses, businesses, industry, roads, ect)
- What are the features of the land that you notice? (Hills and valley, forest, water, large trees, prairie, other)
- Who is here? (plants, animals, people..)
- Where do you notice water? How is it moving?
- What wind patterns do you notice? Sun or shade patterns?

Part three: After walking the land around the school grounds, return inside to discuss the experience. This conversation will support in exploring how different places help us to learn different things. The Rhizome prompts on page 2 can be used to help focus this discussion.

- Use a large version (either printed or drawn) of the birds-eye view map to gather and synthesize information from everyone who participated. Use stickers, markers or stamps to mark on the large map the locations of different noticings. You will use these noticings during DE 4.

Draw your School Yard and Surrounding Neighborhood Below:

During your walk observe what is around you. Record your observations of interesting things by using symbols, colors, drawings and words. These might include **natural kinds** (rocks, soil, wind/air, water, sunlight), **places** (lands, waters, the built environment -- houses, roads, stormdrains) and **species** (animals (including people), plants, fungi...). For example, you might see:

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