



Co-designing Places for Outdoor Learning Facilitation Guide

Design Engagement 6: Site Design

Activity Purpose

Now that your group has selected a site, it is time to start dreaming forward and imagining future possibilities! Your group will do this by starting to design for a new or enhanced outdoor learning site. Every site will have unique opportunities and challenges that your design will need to address, including the natural land formation and existing structures. The design you create should be site-specific and enhance the learning opportunities that are already present in that location. This is a time for expansive design thinking. No idea is too big or too small!

Who should we share our site design with?

Intentionally identify which stakeholders and community members should provide feedback and suggestions on the site design. Are there people who should be involved who we haven't thought of and/or aren't usually asked to participate?

- students and their families
- school staff (custodians, teachers, principal, district staff, para-educators)
- Community-Based Organizations
- residents of the surrounding site
- people who visit or use the school grounds before or after school
- staff and families from on-site after-school programs

Activity Overview

This is a two-part activity.

» Part 1: Design the new or enhanced outdoor learning site.

Using maps of the existing outdoor learning area, design the dream outdoor learning site. Use markers, crayons, pens, pencils, scissors, glue, and any other materials that will help with the creative design process. Consider printing off images from other outdoor learning places and having them available for collaging. There are many ways to capture design ideas. The design activity outlines a few of these processes. The goal of this activity is to find a way to communicate to people what your design ideas are through photos, 3D models, or drawings.

» Part 2: Share this design with your community and receive feedback and suggestions.

After creating a representation of the design, identify stakeholders and present the ideas to your community for review. Receive feedback and suggestions from your community and revise the design as necessary. This step is crucial. It is important to gather a wide range of feedback and suggestions, which will help ensure that the outdoor learning site is responsive and reflective of the community at large.



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.

Nature-Culture Relations:

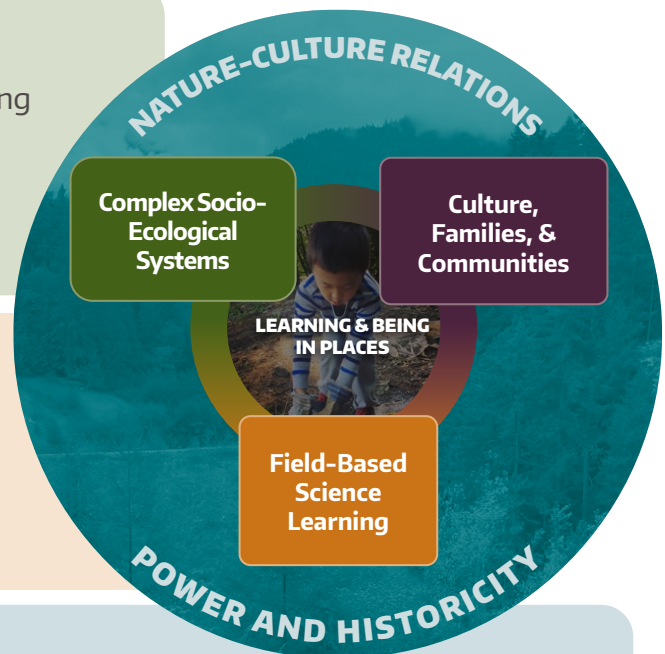
- » How is our outdoor learning place culturally relevant to the surrounding communities?
- » How does the design make space for families and community members to share their expertise?

Complex Socio-Ecological Systems:

- » How does the design support student sense-making and decision-making?
- » How are the features of the outdoor learning place providing opportunities to observe and engage with complex socio-ecological systems?

Field-Based Science Learning:

- » How are you designing the outdoor classroom as a place for learning?
- » How does the design support engagement in science and engineering practices?



Power and Historicity:

- » Who is your site designed for?
- » Who will have access to the site?
- » How has city planning, policies around land use, and Power and Historicity played a role in shaping the space that you are designing?

Nature-Culture Relations:

- » How is the outdoor learning site facilitating reciprocal relations, among humans and more-than-humans?
- » How does the outdoor learning place recognize the more-than-human world?



CONNECT TO OTHER LEARNING ENGAGEMENTS

- Classroom LE 9 Bundle: Sharing Insights and Explanations

LEARNING IN PLACES FRAMEWORKS TO CONSIDER

- Communicating & Organizing for Socio-Ecological Change

Part 1: Design the new or enhanced outdoor learning site

MATERIALS

- » various design materials (see options below)
- » sticky pad notes
- » large paper

TIME: 1 HOUR 30 MINUTES



There are multiple design scenarios that are possible. Below is a description of what various design sessions could look like:

- Gather old magazines, photos or maps and create a collage of the outdoor learning site. The team can draw, write or sketch additional design ideas on the collage.
- As a group go outside and interact with the selected site. This could involve watching how children interact with this space. Invite the team to take different perspectives. Where would water move on this site? How would wind move through this site? What would a bird do on this site? Where would a bee go on this site? Take pictures and note what people are doing in this space. Write down the ideas that are being shared.
- If your design is trying to solve a landscaping problem (like stormwater runoff or erosion) create a “makerspace” with materials where teams can begin to create solutions. Bring in extra material like sticks, rocks, buckets, water, or burlap. The design teams can create solutions on the site using these materials. Be sure to explain how the design solves the problem.
- Bring supplies to make a 3-dimensional model of the site design. This could include clay, pipe-cleaners, cardboard, ect.
- For illustrations of potential design elements see the resources listed in Appendix E.



Part 1: Design the new or enhanced outdoor learning site

Facilitation notes:

- Depending on your design session, you may be creating one design as a whole group, having small groups create multiple design options, or even having individuals illustrate their own ideas. If people are creating a design independently, provide enough time to display all the ideas. Then, hold a “gallery walk”, where everyone can leave design suggestions on each design. Identify the big ideas that were generated.
- Encourage an environment of collaboration. Let the team know this is not a competition, the goal is to share and build off each other's ideas.
- These sessions can also be facilitated through stations. Each team can create a design together and then rotate through stations of other teams' designs. One person from the group can stay at their original station as a 'host' to answer questions about the design. The rest of the group rotates around the room and builds on other designs.
- As the team is designing the new site be sure they are considering these prompts:
 - » What are the natural land formations and phenomena that provide opportunities and challenges for outdoor learning site design?
 - » What are the existing structures and features that provide opportunities and challenges for outdoor learning site design? What condition are they in?
 - » What does the site afford for learning already?



Part 2: Share this design with your community

MATERIALS

- » representation of the design from Part 1
- » sticky pad notes, stickers, ect for community to provide feedback

TIME: 1 HOUR



Once the team has created a representation of the design options, present the ideas to your community for review. Identify stakeholders for targeted feedback. Be sure to share to the broader community as well, and provide time for community-wide feedback and design ideas. There are multiple processes to share the design:

- Create a poster of the different designs and invite your community to vote with stickers on their favorite design. Create a box where people can leave other suggestions. Attend a family night or other school event and share the design ideas there. Put the poster in the staff lounge to gather teacher feedback, or ask to present at the next school staff meeting.
- Contact community-based organizations and gather feedback from staff and community members. Ask to attend a community event or meeting and set up a station to share the design ideas.
- Create a simple website that shares the design ideas and co-design process. Put a notice in the school newsletter and hang fliers around the school to let people know to visit the website. Create an email account for people to send in their design suggestions.
- Other ways to receive feedback: email out a survey, call people, create an online forum or host a zoom meeting
- Consider sharing out the design ideas in multiple ways. You will get different types of feedback depending on your strategy.

Facilitation notes:

- In addition to sharing your design idea, share and reflect on the process of co-designing: What has your team learned? How have your ideas changed over time? What were aspects of co-design that were important?
- Keep track of how many people you have received feedback from. Was it a representative sample? Have you heard feedback from families, school staff, kids and community-based organizations? Who do you still need to receive feedback from?
- Do not shorten or skip this process. There are many considerations when designing an outdoor learning site and people interact with places in diverse ways. It is important to gather a wide range of feedback and suggestions.