



Co-designing Places for Outdoor Learning Facilitation Guide

Design Engagement 8: Sustainability, Decision Making and Governance

Activity Purpose

Congratulations! The outdoor learning place has been installed or enhanced and will become an active learning space. The co-design group will now make one of the most important pivots from design to programming and maintenance sustainability. One key area of creating a sustainable program is identifying how decisions will be made, and what roles and responsibilities are needed. This final activity has the team beginning to build a foundation for ongoing decision making and sustainability in the outdoor learning place.

In the co-design process that you just completed, the group made many large and small decisions. By using the Rhizome, the group was able to continually address topics like power and historicity and nature-culture relations. As you move forward into learning, teaching, and managing the space, continue to use the Rhizome to keep power and historicity, nature culture relations, field-based science and other considerations present in the decisions and actions that are made.

As a co-design team, the group ideally has someone who will also be educating and using the outdoor learning place with students, families and communities. If no one from the co-design team will carry over, now is the time to identify and meet with the people who will. Transitions are inevitable in school outdoor learning and garden programs, and can often determine if a program can be sustained over many years. Documenting decisions and the co-design process will help pass along knowledge and history of the project and may help integrate new members in meaningful ways, as they join in the journey of teaching, learning, and managing the outdoor learning space.

Sustainability

One of the biggest challenges for garden and outdoor learning programs is their long-term success over many years. Decision making and governance are critical pieces for ongoing sustainability of outdoor learning place

Sustainability of the outdoor learning place has been woven throughout the entire co-design process. Co-designing with families, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and teachers ensures design decisions reflect how the space will be used. Place-design walks encourage designing with the unique affordances and challenges of particular sites. Designing for year-round field-based science learning opportunities promotes ongoing engagement in the place, by a wide variety of members. Identifying phases for the outdoor learning site helps design with funding and maintenance constraints in mind. All of these things support the long-term success of the outdoor learning place.

What are additional components for your outdoor learning space that are needed to promote its sustainability? Discuss this with the co-design group.

Activity Overview

This is a two-part activity.

» **Part 1: Summarize and document the co-design process:**

Documentation can be one way to pass along knowledge and history of the place. Having a well documented project can be one way to support transitions and to continually integrate new members in meaningful ways. Gather artifacts, notes and other documents from the co-design process. Documentation should include:

- Vision/Values
- Histories of Places research and sharing
- Maps of the site
- The final design idea, with identified phases
- Feedback from community members
- Photos of the site before and after installation
- List of partners
- Any other valued knowledge

» **Part 2: Identifying next steps for the co-design team:**

In a highly accessible format (such as a shared online document, powerpoint, or shared notebook), share the documentation from Part 1 with all stakeholders. As a team identify how decisions will be made, communicated and documented. In addition, identify how the various roles and responsibilities will be documented and shared. This ongoing documentation is necessary to support sustainability of your site. Combine these components with Part 1. These should include:

- Record of ongoing decisions (Activity 8.A)
- Lists of roles and responsibilities (Activity 8.B)



Dearborn Park
Outdoor Classroom Values

- Creativity
- connection to nature
- connection to community
- science learning
- support diverse learners

Designing for the next phase:

Designing and building an outdoor learning place is an exciting and big task, and it usually wraps up once the outdoor learning place is complete. The next phase is to create systems and structures that will help to keep the outdoor learning place maintained, along with organizing students, families and educators to help with this process. Annual food-for-human gardens often require more organizing and logistics, so you may need additional tools. Some systems that may help provide structures are:

- Record of ongoing maintenance
- Tool inventory
- Scheduling when classrooms use the outdoor learning place
- Volunteer organization

These tools are not part of this co-design facilitation tool, but there are many existing school gardening/outdoor education models that exist and are available to the public online, in printed curriculum, or at Community-Based Organizations. For some, the most challenging part of making the outdoor learning place a success is not the design and build of it, but rather sustaining the outdoor learning place over time as people come and go.

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 Communities:

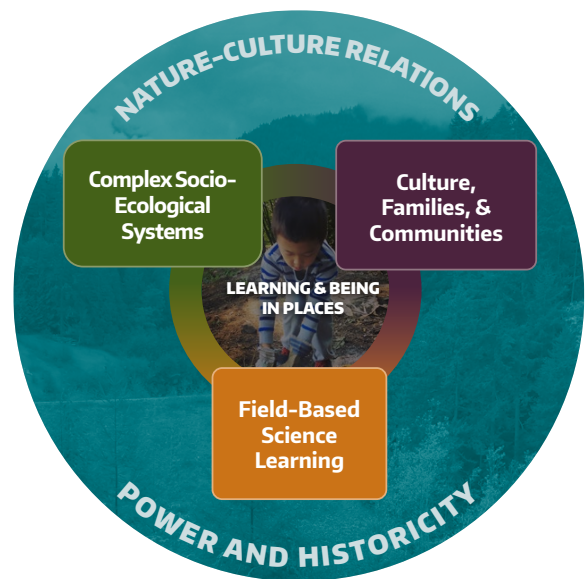
- » What is the role of the co-design team moving forward? Will anyone from the co-design team be involved in routine education, maintenance or other outdoor experiences?
- » How will families, community groups and organizational partners who were not part of the co-design process become involved and interact with this place?

Complex Socio-Ecological Systems:

- » How will learners continue to be supported in thinking about Histories of Places when they are interacting with the outdoor learning place?
- » Now that the outdoor learning place is installed, is it a fostering healthy ecosystem? What kinds of ongoing human and more-than-human relationships are needed to support this place?

Field-Based Science Learning:

- » The outdoor learning place can enrich many areas of learning, including science. How will interdisciplinary learning be facilitated?



Power and Historicity:

- » Who is this site for? Do they feel welcome? How do you know?
- » Who should have the power to make decisions in this place? Is there a single coordinator or a system of coordination that is held by multiple people? How will power be distributed?

Nature-Culture Relations:

- » The deeper the outdoor learning place is woven into the larger fabric of the school, the higher the likelihood is of a sustained relationship to place. A school outdoor learning place can promote “a part of” nature-culture relationships. How does the outdoor learning place intersect with and connect to the school community?



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CONNECT TO OTHER LEARNING ENGAGEMENTS

- Classrom LE 10 bundle: Taking action on our “Should We” questions with family and community

LEARNING IN PLACES FRAMEWORKS TO CONSIDER

- Ethical Deliberation and Decision-Making in Socio-Ecological Systems Framework

Part 1: Decision Making

Use Activity Sheet 8.A to document ongoing decisions. Identifying who and how decisions will be made is a critical component in ensuring equitable and sustainable decision making.

ACTIVITY SHEET 8.A

Who is making this decision?						
What decision are we trying to make? Or what problem are we trying to solve?						
Option 1:			Option 2:			
Why do we need to decide?	What values are we using? How does this decision account for the vision of the outdoor learning site?	How does the place you are in impact your decision?	How does the natural world impact this decision? How is the natural world impacted by this decision?	What options did we consider? Why was this the best decision to make?	Who else is impacted by the decision? How are they impacted?	How does the decision impact us in the future?
Who has the power to make this change / decision? Why?						
How will we communicate this decision? Who do we need to communicate this decision to?						
What is our final decision? Refer back to Option 1 & 2, or write a new option.						
What is our next decision?						

Who should have the power to make decisions in the outdoor learning place?

Will decision be made by consensus? or majority vote? or by appointed leaders?

Who will be responsible for upkeeping the documentation and communicating these decisions?

Decisions are likely to change over time with the dynamic nature of outdoor places. What will your process be for revisiting decisions? How will you keep track of the decisions?

Types of decisions you may need to consider:

- **Scheduling:** when will people use the space? How will multiple classes learn and make decisions in the same place?
- **Communication:** How will decisions/actions be communicated? (between classrooms, between after-school/during-school classes, between teachers-families, between school-wider community?)
- **Planning:** How are we documenting planting and/or maintenance? Do we need a tool inventory?
- **Governance:** Do we need a site coordinator? Is there a plan in place for when the outdoor learning site leadership changes?
- **Fundraising:** Do we need to fundraise? Should we apply for grants? Who will manage the budget?
- **Volunteers:** How are volunteers integrated into the outdoor learning place? (Sign-up sheets, expectations, onboarding, etc.)

Part 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Identify the ongoing roles and responsibilities that are necessary to reach the vision and goals of the outdoor learning place. A clear list of roles and responsibilities can make it easier for volunteers to coordinate and communicate. Ensure a diversity of people can contribute by identifying a wide variety of roles and ways to get involved. Make space for people to re-define or combine roles so they can identify meaningful ways to contribute. Also, it is necessary to plan for transitions as inevitably people will move on. These roles can be filled by students, families, community members, school staff, non-profit educators and/or contractors.

POSSIBLE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **Teaching in the garden:** This could include older students, families, teachers, informal educators or community volunteers. This role includes teaching classes, supporting outdoor learning, gathering lesson supplies and communication. This role may include learning that happens in formal classrooms, after-school programs or informal family meet-ups.
- **Maintenance:** This role is centered around planning and supporting maintenance. This could include record keeping of a maintenance calendar, organizing work parties, planting plants, keeping track of inventory, ordering supplies, etc.
- **Organizing Volunteers:** This role could include recruiting, training, scheduling and retaining volunteers.
- **Funding:** This role could include managing the budget, purchasing supplies, identifying fundraising opportunities, tracking and organizing donations.
- **Research and Documentation:** This role could include the ongoing research and documentation of the outdoor learning site. This may include document changes to the site, taking photos, researching issues with plants (pests/diseases), listing location of plantings, researching the history of the site and recording stories related to the place.
- **Communication (internal):** Communication could include creating newsletters, updating bulletin boards, sending emails. They would be responsible for sharing out the history, vision and documentation of the garden; as well as contacting and inviting families, teachers, Community-Based Organizations to be involved with the school learning garden.
- **Networking (external):** The role would focus on forming partnerships with other schools with outdoor learning sites, Community-Based Organizations and/or neighbors to identify opportunities for collective land management practices and share best practices. This could include joining or leading a school garden network.
- **Policy:** This role would focus on adherence to school or district level policy around outdoor learning places. This role would also advocate for policy changes when needed.
- **Overall coordination:** This role helps with connections and ensuring that the different parts function together. This could be a single point person or a system of coordination that is held by multiple stakeholders. This role could be paired with other roles such as communication, policy, etc.

ACTIVITY SHEET 8.A

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What decision are we trying to make? Or what problem are we trying to solve?						
Option 1:			Option 2:			
Why do we need to decide?	What values are we using? How does this decision account for the vision of the outdoor learning site?	How does the place you are in impact your decision?	How does the natural world impact this decision? How is the natural world impacted by this decision?	What options did we consider? Why was this the best decision to make?	Who else is impacted by the decision? How are they impacted?	How does the decision impact us in the future?
Who has the power to make this change / decision? Why?						
How will we communicate this decision? Who do we need to communicate this decision to?						
What is our final decision? <i>Refer back to Option 1 & 2, or write a new option.</i>						
What is our next decision?						

ACTIVITY SHEET 8.A EXAMPLE

Who is making this decision?

We are a small group that includes 2 teachers and 1 family member.

What decision are we trying to make? Or what problem are we trying to solve?

Each classroom is purchasing their own garden supplies. We need to decide if we want to purchase supplies together.

Option 1:

We could purchase supplies together by creating a google doc that lists all of our supplies and how to source them. We could send out an email to all the teachers, families and CBOs asking for a supply list.

Option 2:

Each classroom can continue purchasing their own garden supplies.

<p>Why do we need to decide?</p> <p><i>When each classroom buys their own supplies some classes have a lot of supplies, other classes don't have as many. There might be supplies that overlap that we could share.</i></p>	<p>What values are we using? How does this decision account for the vision of the outdoor learning site?</p> <p><i>We value collaboration and our vision is for year-round field-based science for all learners and their families.</i></p>	<p>How does the place you are in impact your decision?</p> <p><i>We have 8 raised bed gardens at school, 1 pollinator patch but do not have a shared tool shed. We have five classes that use the garden weekly for science and one afterschool club.</i></p>	<p>How does the natural world impact this decision? How is the natural world impacted by this decision?</p> <p><i>We aren't sure how the natural world is impacted by this decision.</i></p>	<p>What options did we consider? Why was this the best decision to make?</p> <p><i>We considered having each class continue to purchase their own supplies and we considered buying supplies together.</i></p>	<p>Who else is impacted by the decision? How are they impacted?</p> <p><i>There is an afterschool club that uses the garden twice a week, we need to make sure they have access to these supplies, or if they should buy their own supplies.</i></p>	<p>How does the decision impact us in the future?</p> <p><i>By buying supplies together we are saving money and resources. This could help in the purchase of a shed in the future.</i></p>
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Who has the power to make this change? Why?

The teachers have the power to make this change, because they are the ones that organize the purchasing of supplies currently. We wonder what decision making role students and families could have in the future.

How will we communicate this decision? Who do we need to communicate this decision to?

We need to communicate to all of the teachers at the next staff meeting. We should put a blurb in the newsletter that lets the school community know and we should call the afterschool club to discuss with them.

What is our final decision?

The teachers will purchase supplies together, using a google doc to organize. These supplies will be shared with the afterschool club.

What is our next decision?

- *How can students and families be more involved in decision making in the garden?*
- *Who will purchase the supplies?*
- *How will they be shared amongst 5 classes?*

ACTIVITY SHEET 8.B ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

	Role	Responsibility	Name	Date Started	Transition Plan?
EXAMPLE	Teaching	Maria will co-teach with Mrs. J in the garden on Wednesday mornings	Maria Johnson	Sept 15	Maria has committed to one year
	Research and Documentation	a team of four 6th grade students are recording a podcast about the garden and forested area by school for a social studies project	four 6th grade students	October 15-November 15	this is a one time project, no transition plan
	Maintainence	Ray will lead a spring and fall work party in collaboration with Mr. W's fifth grade class. Ray will also keep track of inventory and ordering supplies.	Raymond Anderson	Sept 25	Raymond has committed to two years