

Why is place important for outdoor learning?

The term *place* in socio-ecological systems refers to both geographical locations as well as communities' lived experiences in and with the natural environment. Our understanding of place is shaped by family and cultural histories, knowledges and practices, and consists of interdependent and powered relationships across local and global scales. Place, put simply, is where and how culture and the environment are co-constructed. As an educator, it is important to be aware of the multiple histories of a place, and to recognize that you, learners, and their families and communities may have very different histories and relationships to that place. This is critical to educating and designing learning opportunities *in and with places*. Outdoor education must center diverse cultures, knowledges, and lived experiences. Racialized communities (Indigenous, Black, and People of Color) have always had rich and deep relationships with outdoor places centered on their cultures, knowledges, and lived experiences. However, outdoor education that centers white culture often assumes that *places* are culturally neutral, which erases and invisibilizes racialized communities' experiences and ways of knowing. Outdoor learning provides opportunities to think about place across multiple scales of time (see the Socio-Ecological Histories of Places framework), and how those scales of time shape lands, waters, species, kinds, their behaviors, and relationships between and among these elements in place. This framework explores how to design *learning* with outdoor places, not how to design a *physical place* for outdoor learning, such as a school garden or outdoor classroom. See "Co-designing Places for Outdoor Learning Facilitation Guide" for detailed activities and background information to support designing a physical outdoor place to learn.

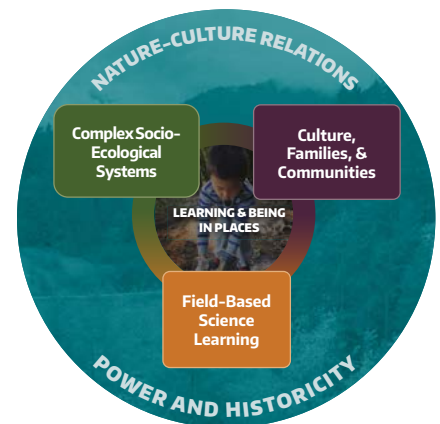
What is designing learning in and with outdoor places?

Designing with place, sometimes referred to as "place design" or "place mapping", is the process of preparing for field-based instruction. Central to designing for outdoor instruction is to take a walk or spend time in a place prior to outdoor learning. This provides an opportunity for the educator to identify features of lands and waters that they are unfamiliar with, identifying and becoming familiar with a phenomenon to observe, and how it is connected to the seasons. This preparation allows the educator to do some research prior to taking learners outdoors. Becoming familiar with a place's features helps to create compelling place-based learning opportunities, and to be prepared to respond to changing dynamics during learning. Outdoor places are constantly changing with the seasons and even throughout the day, from human and more-than-human activities and the weather, among others. Observing the place will help educators consider logistical planning such as what path to take. This helps ensure equitable instruction for all dis/abilities. Designing *with place* provides a chance to identify features that will interest learners, generate noticings and wonderings, seasonal and even daily markers to regularly observe, and plan in advance on how to guide learning in that specific place. See Appendix C for a detailed guide of routine practices and scaffolding questions for designing learning with outdoor places.

Why is designing in and with outdoor places important for learning?

Socio-ecological phenomena are everywhere! In field-based science learning, *place* does not exclusively mean large green spaces and annual vegetable gardens. Field-based learning *in place* can also happen in a neighborhood park, an alleyway, a forest, or the strip of grass between the curb and the sidewalk. No matter the place, educating and learning in outdoor places is inherently different from the indoor classroom, and requires different ways of designing instruction. This is where designing with outdoor places is a crucial step for preparing to support generative opportunities to observe, learn, and explore outside. For example, an important place design technique is developing attentional scaffolds, which are observational prompts for learners such as temporal toggling (what do you think this place will look like in 100 years?), spatial toggling (zoom in and out, look up and down), perspective taking, noticing relationships, seasons, features of the land, and open-ended questions. Designing with place includes identifying phenomena learners can observe and how, what types of investigations learners could conduct to better understand those phenomena, who might be a good resource to consult and why, and what wonderings learners might have. Learning about and holding many dimensions of place—such as histories of place, nature-culture relations, and socio-ecological systems—provide context and meaning for learners’ question-asking, observing, and data collection.

Designing learning in and with outdoor places



How to use this framework

Learner Sense-Making: Designing with outdoor places helps structure generative learner sensemaking and engagement. Asking learners to reflect on places that are important to them, and making connections with surrounding places like schoolyards, neighborhoods, and parks, facilitates connections between the outdoor learning environment and home. Learners may already be familiar with the place –this is a great opportunity to learn from their knowledges of place. Also think about how you can encourage learners to see and know familiar places through new lenses—either through different temporal or spatial lenses, through different perspectives, or through different relationships.

Co-Design and Assessment: Use this framework to guide your co-planning and learning in outdoor places design with other educators, families, and CBOs. Develop partnerships with outdoor, gardening, cultural, environmental, and science organizations to co-design learning. When learners and families are sharing ideas, experiences, knowledges, and practices, how are you incorporating those into instruction? What resources might a CBO have to support your instruction, or co-teach with you? How do you research and learn about the intersecting histories of place? Use this framework to help you think about the types of assessment of learning, understanding, and practice that any given outdoor place affords.

Educator Reflection: Reflect on your own practice related to how you explore places, lands, and waters. Do you make time to explore the surrounding schoolyard, neighborhood, or local park, or do you pass through in a hurry? How are you facilitating learning experiences that connect to place - both local and global? What are your preconceived notions of what outdoor places should look like, and how might that be shaping your lesson—does it expand upon or limit the learning you are hoping to design? How are you incorporating family and learner experiences? How are you taking into account your own relationships to this place? How are your own power and historicity affecting your relationships with this place? How are your own power and historicity affecting your relationships with this place?

Collaborative Practice: Collaborate with learners, families, other educators, and community based organizations (CBOs) in designing outdoor learning. Invite families to come on walks in the outdoor place where learning will occur, to share their experiences, observations and wonderings. Design learning together and merge a variety of perspectives. Work with other educators to share ideas about their design process in and with outdoor places.

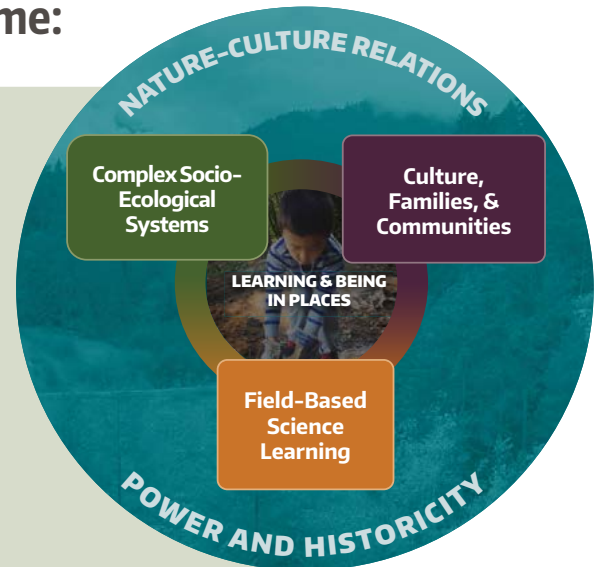
Planning and Implementation: Spend time walking or exploring local places, lands, and waters: around your learning center, in your neighborhood, or in a local park. Plan a route, an alternative route, and the final destination. Consider the range of abilities and identities of the learners and plan accordingly so the outdoor learning places are accessible and inclusive. Think about and be familiar with your learning goals for science and other subjects that are relevant in this place. Develop questions you might ask learners, and anticipate their questions. Think about different transition times, such as walking to and from place, as opportunities for intellectual work -- prepare prompts and questions for learners to discuss with a partner while walking and share these with families and community partners to refer to during the lesson. Allow space for social and emotional learning as learners connect with place, more-than-humans, their peers and community. If you are using a worksheet or tool, bring it with you and complete it as you take your preparation walk. This will give you a sense of how long writing and drawing take, and provide a model for you to use during instruction. Each of these steps is important to add for your place designing routines. See Appendix C for more ideas.

Connections to expert thinking:

How and why one designs learning with outdoor places may depend on their field of study or profession. For example, in any given place, a gardener, geologist, or entomologist may design learning in a variety of ways. A gardener may study and learn from neighbors about surrounding water systems, history of human-built infrastructure, sunlight patterns, and soil quality prior to constructing a garden. A geologist may use topographical and geologic maps to understand layers of rock, sedimentation, and waterways before recommending a bridge. An entomologist may take a walk where learning will take place, and do perspective-taking of host plants and how they are affected and supported by the stages of an insect's life cycle prior to launching a field study. When designing learning in outdoor places, it is important to have a multiplicity of techniques to support sense-making. This not only leads to ethical deliberations and decision-making about socio-ecological systems, but provides a pathway for identity-building in science.

Connections to the Learning in Places Rhizome:

Complex Socio-Ecological Systems: Use this framework to guide your co-planning and learning in outdoor places design with other educators, families, and CBOs. Develop partnerships with outdoor, gardening, cultural, environmental, and science organizations to co-design learning. When learners and families are sharing ideas, experiences, knowledges, and practices, how are you incorporating those into instruction? What resources might a CBO have to support your instruction, or co-teach with you? How do you research and learn about the intersecting histories of place? Use this framework to help you think about the types of assessment of learning, understanding, and practice that any given outdoor place affords.



Culture, Families, and Communities: Place is both a geographical location and a cultural identity. There is evidence that when people reason about humans as part of the natural world, sensemaking and decision-making are more complex. Therefore, when designing learning in outdoor places, consider how you will connect that place with the histories of places, learners' identities, cultural practices, and community values, so that learning engagements are relevant to them as well as to others.

Field-Based Science Learning: Research has shown that the places in which people learn can shape sense-making about socio-ecological phenomena in authentic and tangible ways. For instance, emerging research demonstrates that there is cultural variation in what learners observe when they are in the field - such as local neighborhoods or parks. When designing learning with place, plan how you will scaffold attention across multiple spatial scales, such as what is above, around, below; connections between local and global places; as well as temporal scales, such as the multiple intersecting histories that shape a place to support ethical deliberation and decision-making about socio-ecological systems.

Power and Historicity: Socio-ecological relations with place are political, contested, and intimately linked with ways of knowing and being in the world. Supporting students in perspective-taking and reasoning through contradictory histories of place are equity practices that allow for multiple and diverse stories to be told, honored, and incorporated in place designing. For example, when learning in or about places, lands, and waters, there is almost always a failure to acknowledge land was forceably taken from Indigenous people, and a failure to acknowledge slavery and the exploitation of migrant and immigrant workers, that are all deeply entwined with agriculture and land ownership in the United States. This renders the intersections of place, social, and ecological systems invisible and thus ensures that students do not have access to powered and historical analyses of these intersections. Instead, designing place-centered learning experiences that make these histories visible is a critical step in supporting meaningful learning experiences, and ethical deliberations and decisions.

Nature-Culture Relations: The way each person interacts with the natural world, or place, is inherently connected to their cultures, histories, experiences, and decision-making. This can also be seen in how we learn and educate in outdoor places. As an educator, do you see yourself as "apart from" or "a part of" the natural world? Do you know what perspectives your learners have about outdoor places? How might those views inform how you design learning with and in outdoor places? Use perspective taking as one way to design learning in and with outdoor places, along with what can be learned from this place.

Appendices

The following appendices provide examples and other supports to help educators use and then deepen their use of the Designing Learning in and with Outdoor Places Framework over time. Appendix A is a vignette that showcases one example of how a teacher used this framework. Appendix B contains some example data to highlight how families, community-based organizations, and teachers participated in place designing. Appendix C is a set of educator prompts and questions to make visible and incorporate learners' nature-culture relations by connecting to family and community knowledges and practices. Appendix D is a self-assessment on what practices or concepts you already engage in, and where changes can be made.

APPENDIX A

Vignette: Ms. Bryant

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION:

Mr. Tomas is an educator for an environmental education community-based organization (CBO) that partners with a local elementary school. A few weeks ago, Ms. Bautista contacted Mr. Tomas about helping her plan a Wondering Walk for her 3rd grade class. They agree to do some learning design outdoors to prepare for the upcoming Wondering Walk, and meet at the park adjacent to the school. As they walk, Mr. Tomas and Ms. Bautista use their notebooks to jot down details and interesting phenomena and features of the land that they see. Mr. Tomas suggests some prompts that Mrs. Bautista can use to help focus the learners' attention. "When I zoom in on this branch, I see lots of insect eggs on the undersides of the leaves. And when I zoom out, I see what looks like an eagle's nest toward the top of that tree. Let's remember this specific spot as a place to pause during the walk." Ms. Bautista kneels down and looks closely at the soil. "I see many piles of worm castings on this rich soil here, but the path next to it is hard and compacted soil. I could prompt the learners to take the perspective of a worm, or a ground beetle, and think about their relationship to this place." As they continue their walk, they notice a large muddy area that could cause some difficulty for learners with mobility dis/abilities, and look for an alternative path. They make note of a stream and factor in extra time for the learners to take a look and explore. When they reach the meadow, they can see the city in the distance to the south. To the east, they see foothills and evidence of logging. "The meadow is such a great spot to think back to the Histories of Places walk the class took last week. We can see examples of Geologic Time, Plant, Animal, & Soil Time, and Nation-State Time. I wonder what the local tribes' relationships are to this place -- that's something we can research before the walk," Mr. Tomas says. Ms. Bautista walks around the meadow and jots down some notes about how groups of learners can rotate to see some plants that are blooming, a large boulder with moss, and evidence of moles digging holes. "When I take a group of learners to a new place, I always ask them what their families do in a place like this. It is a great way to get to know more about learners' knowledges and practices. I also ask, 'How does this place make you feel?' These prompts help students to connect to the place, and also help me learn more about their families and communities." As they walk back, they time how long it takes to return to the school.

LAUNCHING INSTRUCTION:

At the beginning of the walk, Ms. Bautista launches the lesson and describes the path the class will take. The learners will observe in pairs, using different perspectives. Their final destination will be the meadow. There are three family members who are joining the class for the walk, and Ms. Bautista gives them each a backpocket guide with questions and prompts that she discussed with Mr. Tomas, some phenomena to look for, a general schedule with flexible time frames, and a hand-drawn map of their path. The learners are put into groups of six along with an adult. As the class begins their walk, Ms. Bautista asks, "While we are walking, talk to each other about what season you think we are in, and why you think that. Look around for evidence. We will stop in a few minutes to do some closer observations." When they reach the tree with the eagle's nest, Ms. Bautista

asks students to take a few minutes and try different forms of observation, such as zooming in and out on something of interest, and to take the perspective of an eagle or a worm. At first, the learners are loud and excited. Ms. Bautista moves to different groups to listen to the learners' share their thoughts. She notices some students are drawing, while some have sat down and put their face closer to the soil to get a worm's perspective. Suddenly a learner says, "I think I hear an eagle!" As the class quiets down, they hear the distinctive eagle call, and watch as two eagles alight in some branches. Since this is an exciting and unexpected event, she lets the group stay longer and makes a note to spend a little less time in the meadow. The class passes by the stream and many learners are excited and want to stop to observe. Ms. Bautista checks her watch and notices they are behind schedule, so they can't stop this time. When they reach the meadow, she asks the students to look at the horizon and tell her what they see, and how it connects to the Histories of Places they talked about a week ago. She then prompts them to think about what season it is, and to explore the meadow. When the groups have had a chance to explore, she gathers the class in a circle and asks learners to share what they have observed so far. Then, she asks them to write in their notebook how this place makes them feel. She checks her watch and notices they need to leave now to make it back to the school in time and share reflections, and lets the learners know they don't have time to make any stops. She asks them to discuss, "What relationships did you observe in the meadow? On the path? How are you and our class a part of these relationships?" When they reach the school, they gather together before entering the building to reflect on their learning outdoors. Ms. Bautista and the learners share their reflections in a large group to bring the learning back together one more time. Ms. Bautista takes some notes on her backpocket guide to reflect on when she designs learning for their next lesson.

CONNECTING TO FAMILY AND COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

When they return to class, Ms. Bautista shares an activity she would like the learners to do with their families. She asks that each family take a walk to the meadow and share their thoughts and wonderings. One of the questions is, "What does your family do in this place?" She also explains that it's ok to take a walk wherever the family would like to, if they can't make it to the meadow. When the learners return the activity sheet after their family walk, she will add the families' observations to the class's. Lastly, she shares that Mr. Tomas and the CBO he works for will host some educational programming about native plants at the meadow over the weekend, and invites everyone to attend. She will be there as well to learn more about some of the questions the learners were asking on their walk today.

REFLECTING ON INSTRUCTION

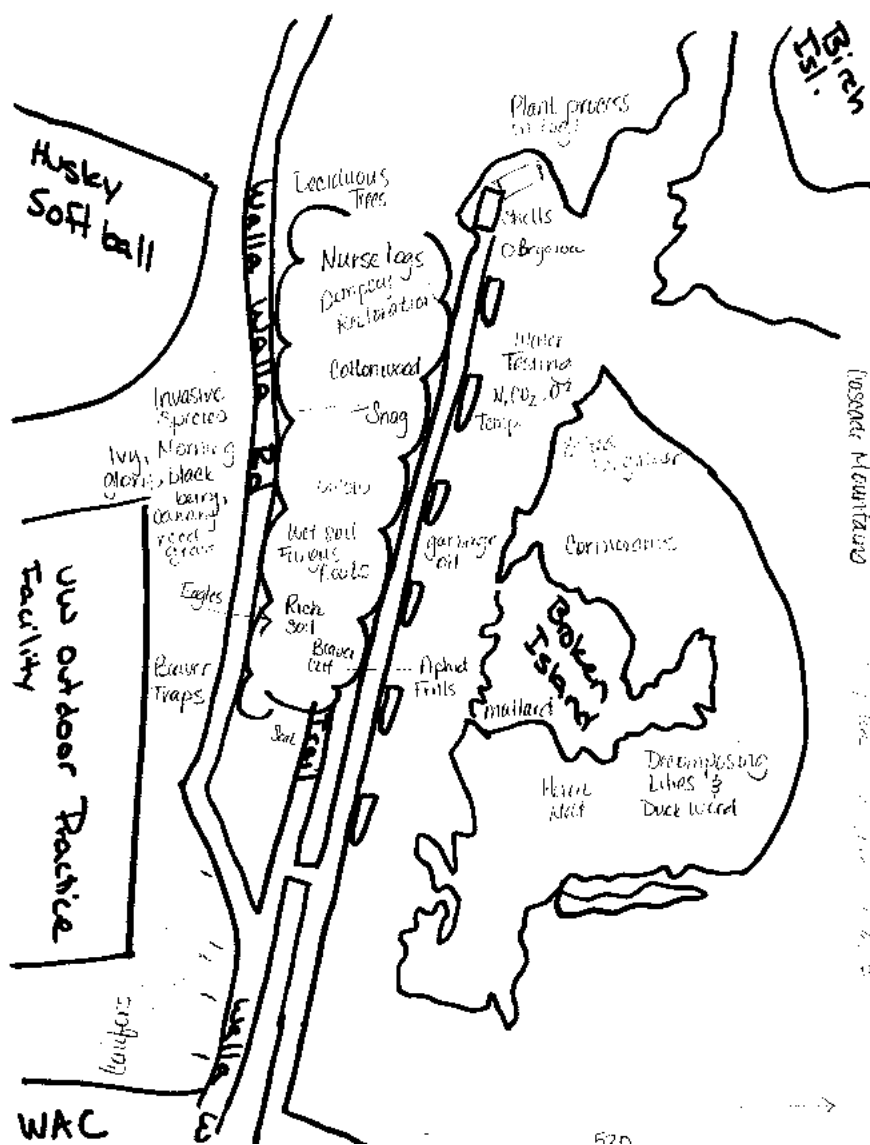
After the walk, Ms. Bautista reflects on how the designing learning with outdoor places process informed and prepared her, the families, and the learners for their Wondering Walk. She liked having many different prompts that she developed with Mr. Tomas. However, she realizes that before the next Wondering Walk, she should have some families join Mr. Tomas and herself for the walk where they will plan & design the next lesson. Inviting the families to help plan could help her shift her engagement practices with families from a transactional relationship towards a collaborative and transformational relationship. Having families share their knowledges and practices while designing the walk will provide a much richer learning experience that better supports learners' cultural identities as well (see Family and Community Engagement Framework). She also made a note that they did not have time to visit the stream because they spent extra time observing the eagles. She thinks about making the stream a stop in the next Wondering Walk. But, perhaps visiting the stream could be a final destination instead of the meadow, otherwise everyone will feel rushed. She decides to bring this question to the next walk where they will design the lesson as an opportunity to explore.

APPENDIX B

The following images are examples of designing learning in and with outdoor places done by a classroom teacher, a family, and an environmental educator from a community-based organization (CBO). These are just some of the many ways that can be used to design and plan for learning. When designing together, the same tool should be used by teachers, families, and CBOs so that wonderings and observations support the broader contexts of that place.

Example A

In this example, a classroom teacher used a hand-drawn aerial view map, during their first planning walk to begin “place mapping” the outdoor place where the class would learn. Their guiding questions were “What can we see in this place? What core phenomena are evident in this place?” as a way to gather baseline information and become more familiar with the place in that season.

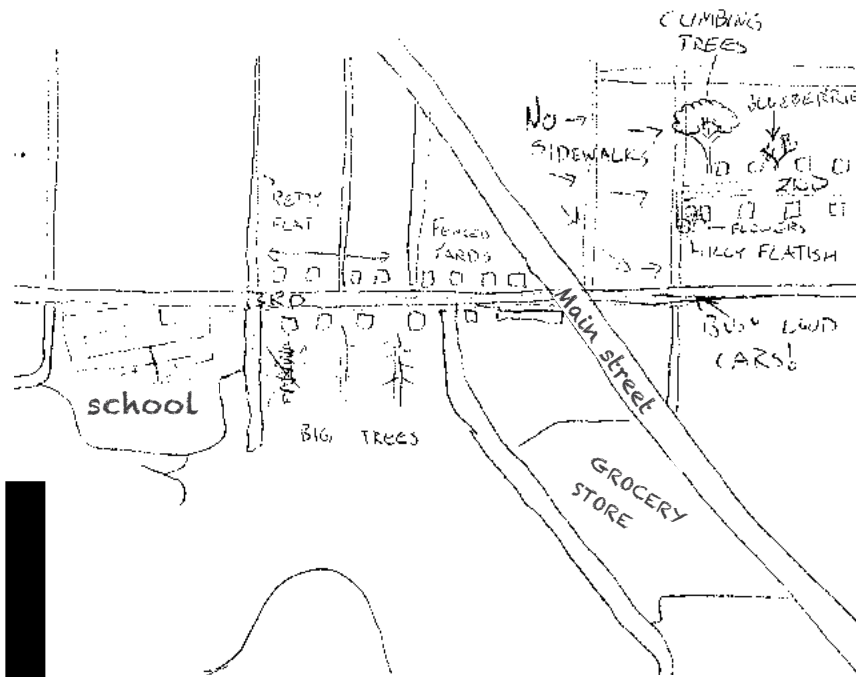


They take notes about phenomena (“wet soil, Fungus, Roots”), possible data collection (“Water testing N, CO₂, O₂, Temp”), Histories of Place (“Dempsey Restoration”), and evidence of species’ habitat and activity (“Heron Nest, Beaver Cut”). This detailed documentation is an excellent reference for the teacher as they design their lesson in that place, and as a tool for future planning walks to add to as the seasons change.

Example B

Teachers, families, and a community-based organization at a school took walks in the neighborhood around the school in order to provide broader context to the school grounds. This hand-drawn, aerial map was made by a father and daughter. Their prompts were to draw a map and answer questions such as: Neighborhood, Zooming Out: What is in the surrounding neighborhood? (“Houses, [Grocery Store], No Sidewalks, Busy Loud Cars!”) What are the features of the land that you notice? (“Hilly, Pretty Flat, Big Trees”) What are kids attuned to in this place? (“Blueberries, Flowers, Climbing Trees”).

Another set of prompts were questions with written answers: School Grounds, Zooming In: What are features of the land you notice? (“We notice the big open fields. Topiary tunnel along the creek. And more hilly.”) Who is here? (“Families playing kickball. We joined them!”) What natural phenomena do you notice? (“Blackberries taking over.”) These observations and wonderings shared with the classroom teacher provided necessary perspectives about how the school grounds are seen, used outside of school time, and experienced by families and students; and how that informs the learning that will occur in that outdoor place.



3. School Grounds (zooming in)

• What existing garden/outdoor learning places did you see on the school grounds? (refer to the “Identifying Outdoor Learning Place Types” worksheet for examples of different types of outdoor learning environments)
WE NOTICED THE ACTIVE RAISED BEDS.

• What outdoor learning features/elements do you see?

• What are features of the land that you notice?
• Hills and valleys, forest, water, large trees, grasslands, other

WE NOTICED THE BIG OPEN FIELDS, TOPIARY TUNNEL ALONG THE CREEK, AND MORE HILLY.

• Who is here? Plants, animals, people...

FAMILIES PLAYING KICKBALL. WE JOINED THEM! MY DAUGHTER RECOGNIZED A GIRL FROM HER SCHOOL WITH THEM.

• What natural phenomena do you notice?

BLACKBERRIES TAKING OVER.

• What are kids attuned to in this place? What questions are being asked?

THE PLAYGROUND, THE OTHER PEOPLE PLAYING, NO ARBY.

zooming in

Example C

Another type of tool for designing learning with the outdoors is a chart to organize written observations, questions, and feelings across places. Here, an informal educator from an environmental community-based organization (CBO) took a walk with teachers and families and filled out the chart while visiting three potential outdoor places for learning adjacent to the building. Informal educators and CBOs offer valuable expertise and experiences that can add depth, and cultural and scientific knowledge that may resonate with and be relevant to students. Examples include: Features of the land that support learning ("Daylilies for weaving & other crafts"), Why are places like this important to my family? ("My grandmother used botanical healing herbs"), and Ideas that might apply to our school ("Companion plants based on soil acidity and light").

	Pollinator Bed	Trellis and Courtyard Garden	Horticultural Garden
I notice: I wonder: It reminds me of:	Not as many insects as when it was hot when they sleep? Herb garden harvest	lots of variegated plants at varied heights for shade picking grape leaves	Places for people to learn from examples Historical campus College Chinese garden
Features of the land that support learning	Traditional Learning Healing herbs that we can id	Daylilies for weaving & other crafts	Labeling & soil information few gardeners & landscaper
How does this place make me feel?	Lots of wild-looking kinds of plants mean they are treating the land's illness	Smells different Old barns wood covered in kudzu grey twisty shrubs	like I need some tea cakes
Why are places like this important to my family?	my grandmother used botanical healing herbs	Pruning & trimming back the overgrowth & cedar in pipes	Selling plant starts at market Formal Events
Ideas that might apply to our school:	we could make extracts or tinctures to try	Can introduced plants take over places for people	Companion plants based on soil & light quality

APPENDIX C:

Both learners and educators benefit from scaffolding questions during planning and field-based learning. There are many things to keep in mind when planning for and learning in outdoor places. Ask yourself these questions as you design learning; they provide different lenses for educators to make sure they are applying in their lesson design. These questions could be added to a backpocket guide, which is a quick reference tool (such as a folded sheet of paper) that can be easily accessed while both designing learning, and as field-based learning is taking place.

At the end of Appendix C are detailed Routine Practices for designing learning in and with outdoor places, that educators should use prior to each lesson.

Scaffolding Questions & Prompts for Educators: During designing learning in place	Scaffolding Questions & Prompts for Educators: During field-based learning
What are the social histories in this place? Who used to live here? Who lives here now?	What relationships between learners do I notice?
Why are places like this important to my learners' families? To my family?	Are students of all abilities engaged and exploring in this place? What shifts in this lesson, or place, might need to be made if not?
What powered dynamics are present in this place? What power do humans have in this place? What power do more-than-humans have in this place?	What are learners attuned to in this place?
What questions do I have in this place? What am I wondering? What might my learners wonder about in this place?	What "should we" questions are emerging?
Will learners have enough time to observe, share, and document in this place, on this walk?	What ways of knowing...being...doing...are learners sharing and/or showing?
What features of the land support learning?	What questions are being asked?
How does this place make me feel?	My learners are showing me something.... new/unexpected/ connected to other areas of learning
Where and how will I prompt intellectual work during walking and/or waiting times?	Reflect on how I am responding to learners' behaviors. Am I over-policing, or over-managing, learners' bodies/voices/behaviors -- particularly Black and brown learners? Am I adapting my instructional style to outdoor places, rather than indoors/the classroom?
What pathways do I notice? Who might have made them?	What are learners wondering?
How does this place change with the seasons? How do different communities identify seasons in this place?	What am I noticing about this place to include for the next lesson?
What stories are coming to mind as I walk and observe?	What relationships between learners and place do I notice?

Scaffolding Questions and Prompts for Learners (supporting field-based learning)
I notice...I wonder...It reminds me of...
Why are places like this important to your family?
What are the features of the land that you notice? (hills, fields, grass, swale, river, mountain, desert, shoreline)
What relationships do you observe? How are they interacting?
Who is here? (plants, animals, people, stream, insects)
What natural phenomena do you notice?
How does this place make you feel?
What kinds of human-made places do you notice?
What kinds of more-than-human-made places do you notice?
Take the perspective of a cedar tree...a snail...moss...a stream...a hawk...a squirrel...soil. What do you see? Who are you in relationship with? What does this place mean to you?
Look at different levels: on the ground, below ground, at eye level, up high
What will this place look like in 100 years? In 50? In 5? Next year? Next month? Next season?
What season are we in? How do you know?
Zoom in...zoom out...look closely...look far away...
What do you hear...smell...touch...see...taste...sense...notice...
What do you think is happening here? (point to something of interest). How do you know?
What do you wonder about?
Do you feel a part of ... or apart from ... this place? Why?
If you are still...silent...close your eyes....hold out your hands...what do you notice?

Routine practices for designing learning in and with outdoor places.

Use the following educator practices for designing learning with outdoor places. These practices will become more instinctive the more they are used. It may take time at first, but each one provides an important aspect of thorough preparation.

- Before any outdoor lesson, **walk the land where learning will take place**. Take time during the initial walk to observe without feeling rushed. For every subsequent lesson, plan to visit that place for a short time prior to each lesson and make note of any changes since the last visit. Familiarize yourself with the place that you are in by using your senses; attuning to the seasons, weather, and light; noticing more-than-humans and kinds and their activities; and becoming aware of things that you might unconsciously “look past”, such as an old stump or a street light and how they fit into the place.
- **Bring something with which to take notes, sketch, or take pictures to help plan instruction**. The original idea that you may have had at the beginning of the walk may shift as you notice different phenomena, or think about the histories of place. Be open to revising a developed lesson and materials as you observe and gather different ideas together
- **Place mapping** is an important tool for designing learning with place. Your map does not have to be perfect or precise. Make note of your observations, record your thinking and insights, mark phenomena of interest, notate more-than-humans and human activity that you see (or see evidence of), sketch places of interest and take photos to document what you’ve seen. Use the same map and add to it over the course of the seasonal storyline, and during different seasons—what changes and how? Who is present, or not? Record the weather. Make a place map with families and community based organizations and compare your findings to develop instruction. Use online mapping tools, satellite images, or maps from different times and perspectives to add different spatial contexts.

- **Take perspective-taking walks** to frame your thinking from a different point of view. What is a slug's perspective, a rock, or that of a salmonberry bush? What space and time scales can you tie into the lesson?
- **Stop and notice your own observation practice, and how you might encourage learners as they develop their observation skills.** Take a moment and check in with yourself—how am I feeling in this place?—as a reminder to yourself about how you will support your students' outdoor learning. For example, are you feeling excited? If so, keep in mind that learners might feel similarly too, and may express that in different ways that may be perceived as misbehavior when in fact it is not. Think about how you might guide learning in that moment without resorting to controlling learners' bodies (see the Supporting Outdoor Learning framework). What stories and memories emerge for you in this place? Do you have practices in and family knowledge of this place, or do experiences from other places resonate here? Each of these questions that you ask yourself as an educator should be considered for learners and their families as well.

Histories of Place

- Designing outdoor learning in places includes taking time to learn about the histories of place. Having this context will help illuminate what socio-ecological histories are normalized in this place, and give you insight into what expansive histories should be included and emphasized during outdoor learning. Understanding histories of place is another way to connect family knowledges and practices that can be made explicit in this place. Plan in advance and take a place design walk with families or a community-based organization partner. Walking together can help conversations and planning to occur that may not happen while sitting at a table in the indoor classroom. What values, aesthetics, and powered/historicized dynamics shape this place?

Planning

- When you are designing for learning in place, think about what affordances are in this place. Certain phenomena may be readily available to observe. Consider how this phenomena has changed, is changing, and will change with the seasons. Think about how you can scaffold attention towards these phenomena. Will you need certain tools, or to prepare something in advance? Are there several examples of similar phenomena, so small groups of learners can spread out across in place?
- Strike a balance in your pedagogy between structure and improvisation, so that exciting learning moments can emerge without being stifled by a strict schedule.
- Design a launch for the lesson, and time to reflect at the end. See the "Supporting Outdoor Learning" Framework for detailed guidance.
- In the same vein, consider what constraints are in this place. Will learners need to take turns to observe something? If so, how can you structure the learning engagement to ensure that everyone gets a good look--maybe "stations" could help focus attention in different areas as learners rotate through each one. If the place you will be visiting is near a playground, think together in advance with the learners about the difference between recess and learning outdoors -- learners can learn to adjust their focus. As you plan, think about what supports you can establish inside, such as creating a small group in the classroom before going outdoors instead of grouping up in place. Are there certain preparations that you may need to make in advance? What might be ready for harvesting, and how will we determine who can harvest, and how much? Are we considering more-than-human others?

A note on safety

You might worry if it is safe to take a class outside to learn. You might choose not to take your class outside for this very reason. Ask yourself—what is the particular fear or worry? How can I plan in place to feel ready? What information are my fears based on, what kinds of assumptions am I making? What support might I need from others to feel more prepared? See the Supporting Outdoor Education framework for more techniques.

- Planning in advance with families, other educators, and community partners can help provide support systems for learning outside. Carrying a first aid kit is a simple way to address concern about injuries. Make a plan with the group of learners about staying within sight and earshot of others.
- You might think a place is unsafe because of a perceived threat of crime. For example, you may not want to go to a certain park because there is an area where people who are homeless live, and think it is dangerous to go there. Consider your assumptions, and don't discount an area that makes you uncomfortable. Reflect on your possible bias, talk with families and community partners about their thoughts and planning, or look for alternate routes to the same location. At the same time, it is important to trust your gut on what is best for your learners.

APPENDIX D:

Use the following self-assessment to reflect on the planning practices you currently use related to the Designing Learning in and with Outdoor Places Framework, and to identify those practices that you want to begin to use. Return to this self-assessment periodically to continue to reflect on your educational and design practices as a way to deepen them.

Which of the following do you incorporate into your teaching practice?

Yes!	Some!	Not yet!	Dimension of Practice
			I consider and am aware of the multiple histories of a place.
			I design opportunities and provide scaffolds for learners to engage in sense making across spatial and temporal scales.
			I design opportunities and provide scaffolds for learners to consider how phenomena have changed and will change with the seasons.
			I routinely reflect on my own practice of observation, and how I might encourage learners to develop their skill of observation.
			I am aware that Black and Brown learners are significantly more likely to have their behaviors policed in the field, and I actively disrupt this systemic, powered, and racialized assumption in my own practice.
			I visit and walk where learning will take place prior to each lesson to make note of any changes since the last class.
			I plan in advance and take place design walks with families and/or community based partners. We document observations and wonderings and consider what values, aesthetics and powered/historicized dynamics shape this place.
			I identify additional supports that are needed for outdoor field-based science investigations.
			I use place mapping or other documentation to make note of phenomena, landscape, seasonal changes, and logistics for learning in outdoor places.
			I learn about the Indigenous peoples in the area in which I live, their sovereignty, and ensure their presence by including their expertise and stories, when I design learning in outdoor places. I work to develop and maintain relationships with local tribes to be an accountable educator.
			I learn about my students' and families' relationship to this place , and their expertise, and embed that learning into the lessons that I design in outdoor places.
			I reflect on my own relationship with the outdoors, including my family and cultural experiences, assumptions, and values.
			I value and incorporate diverse perspectives, both human and more-than-human, - ways of knowing and being - in outdoor learning activities.
			I develop guides or plans for instruction to use during field-based learning, such as backpocket guides, outlines, or other; that include educator prompts around science learning, nature-culture relations, histories of place, and so on.
			I design learning that meets the range of abilities and identities of the learners and plan accordingly so the outdoor learning places are accessible and inclusive.
			I consider the opportunities and constraints for learning in this place, and develop several lesson options to prepare for the unexpected.
			I collaborate with community based organizations to support my pedagogical practice in the field.

Reflection continued next page...

Reflection questions:

Now that you've taken the self-assessment, take a minute to reflect on what you do well and set some new goals for yourself.

What practices do you already do well, and how do you know?

What are 3 practices you could try to include in your instruction this year?



.....

Suggested Citation

Learning in Places Collaborative. (2022). *Framework: Designing Learning in and with Places*. Bothell, Seattle, WA & Evanston, IL: Learning in Places.