

Place-Based Education Pedagogy

Place-based education, sometimes called place-based learning, experiential education, community-based education, and service learning, is an educational philosophy.

Liberty Rural Learning Cooperative's (LRLC) Applied Rural Arts program offers educators access to creative place-based content that is classroom-ready and prepared with today's rural students and classrooms in mind.

Place-based education differs from conventional text and classroom-based education in that it understands students' local community as one of the primary resources for learning.

Place-based education promotes learning that stems from the local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art that is from the students' own place: immediate schoolyard, neighborhood, town, community, farms, fields etc. A transformation of impactful education begins with the effort to learn how events and processes close to home relate to regional, national, and global forces and events, leading to a new understanding of ecological stewardship and community. Place-based education should be interdisciplinary, thematic, hands-on, intergenerational and project-based. This approach connects content and skills to the enhancement of community life, strengthening people's sense of community and land, and is therefore more meaningful to students.

DEVELOP YOUR OWN CREATIVE PLACE-BASED CURRICULUM:

Teachers determine the plan for learning in and about place

Where else to discover authentic questions about how the world works but in the places where we live? The forests, streams, fields, streets and neighborhoods provide the setting for students to explore the BIG IDEAS of literature, social and natural sciences, math, art and the meaning of civic engagement. It is hard to do worthwhile things in the abstract. For students to accomplish worthwhile, meaningful work, they need to do it *with and for* other people. When students participate in uncovering new information and find an opportunity to share information with and for an authentic audience, they find personal reasons for learning. Authentic assessment can be defined when students ask questions and design answers in the context of community to demonstrate mastery of content, process and meaningful results.

Take a big idea, frame an essential question, consider what evidence will show this new learning and then determine a pathway to that understanding. Teachers identify what students need to *learn* and *do* and then plan “backwards” to get to that new learning as they engage students in their communities.

Tools and Strategies for teaching Place-based education

Teaching from a frogs-eye-view instead of a birds-eye-view

ASSET MAPPING is a way to assess and mobilize what your community has in order to focus on your communities' assets, not on those found outside of it. To create place-based educational opportunities its best to incorporate resources in your community and engage them into experiential learning. Community asset mapping is relationship driven and seeks to build linkages among local people, institutions and organizations. Find the diverse perspectives and

skill sets available, while understanding the physical, social and economic landscape and then catalog the resources available.

Places to start to find your communities unique resources:

- Identify local businesses, organizations, non-profits, parks, schools, churches, libraries, museums, recreation facilities, hospitals and clinics etc.
 - Conservation office
 - USDA
 - State University extension offices
 - Community Resource Centers
- Services/ talents / skills / resources found in the community right now
 - Self-employed people: artists, mechanics, contractors, carpenters, electricians, farmers etc.
 - Senior Citizen communities (retired experts)
- Newspapers / Community directories
- Ask your students:
 - what do they see as the local assets vs. challenges
 - who do they know (individuals or entities) in the community that they find interesting

Place-based education can be conducted through a variety of methods in a range of disciplines. For example, a Biology class can be based on place; the content is linked to the local environment, such as water issues, agriculture, flora and fauna, land-use etc. As the students gain understanding of wider ecological, biological, and cultural processes, they are able to link the course content to the physical place they call home. In addition, the course can include a service component that allows students to “give back” to their community and apply their knowledge. This project can be supported by a local organization involved in habitat restoration, conservation, etc.

This model has potential for wide applications. All disciplines have the potential of engaging this model to help students strengthen the link between community and education.

LRLC examples of creative place-based education:

- Rural Musciology – lesson plan available [here](#)
- Prairie Writers Workshop – lesson plan available [here](#)
- Prairie Seas Project: Farming Fluxus
 - Students will create a social-ecological contemporary museum exhibit focused on ecology, farming and hemp production in rural Colorado.
- Artist-in-residencies
 - We have worked with local artists to create art projects for the community that are based on landscape and place.
 - Sculptural welding – using local junk steel students created a place themed sculpture for the park.
 - Sustainable building – using local materials (sand, clay and straw) students built a decorative wind-break and archway for the park.
 - Murals – students painted a series of place themed murals for the park.

RESOURCES:

- [Rural Education Archived](#) September 29, 2006, at the [Wayback Machine](#)
 - Gruenewald, 2002; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith, 2002; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000
 - Woodhouse and Knapp (2000)
 - <http://blogs.nwic.edu/teachinglearning/2010/04/24/place-based-education-pedagogy/>
 - *Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* (ISBN 978-0913098547), David Sobel
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