



Wild Ones River City Chapter Cultivating our Schoolyards as Habitat to Grow Scholars Who Will Become Stewards

17 May 2021

Children need nature.

Children are increasingly disconnected from the places where they live and learn. “We cannot protect something we do not love, we cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not see. Or hear. Or sense.” ~ Richard Louv
Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.
Macfarlane, R., & Morris, J. (2018). *The lost words: A spell book*. Toronto: Anansi International.

School Grounds Offer Hope

White, R. (2006, Fall/ Winter). Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development & the Earth's Future, *Taproot Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2.
[Young Children's Relationship with Nature: Its Importance to Children's Development and the Earth's Future](#)

Place-based Education (PBE)

PBE is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum while emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences. This approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates heightened commitment to serving as active contributing citizens. (Sobel, 2013)

Sobel, D. (2013). *Place-based education: Connecting classrooms and communities* (2nd ed.). Great Barrington, MA: Orion.)

Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

The Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) was launched in 2007 to develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the Great Lakes and their ecosystems through hands-on experiences that increase student achievement and help young Michigan residents become lifelong stewards of the environment.

[Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative | The Power of Place-Based Learning](#)
[The Benefits of Place-Based Stewardship Education](#)

Our local hub is through [Grand Valley State University College of Education – Groundswell](#)

Grand Rapids Environmental Education Network

[Grand Rapids Environmental Education Network](#) (GREEN) is a partnership among the Grand Rapids Public Schools, The Wege Foundation, and local providers of environmental education. We believe all students should have equitable and regular access to environmental education and nature-based learning. Our goal is to ensure all young people are environmentally literate, connected to the natural world, and prepared to protect Michigan's natural resources.

Our local partners are The Outdoor Discovery Center, The Blandford Nature Center, The Kent County Department of Public Works Recycling Center, The John Ball Zoo, The Grand Rapids Public Museum, The Grand Rapids Public Schools, Groundswell and the Grand Valley State University College of Education, The Grand Valley Metro Council Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW), Our Community's Children, The Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, and the West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC).

Education Founded in Place - A Guidebook for Implementation

[Growing Elementary Education with Curriculum Founded in Place](#)

The guidebook has been designed as a scaffold of seven core concepts to work grade level content connections into elementary school standards that align learning through place. These core concepts are: encouraging student sense of place, reviving nature study and phenology, mapmaking, water fluency, using learning that occurs across curriculum with content standards as the guide, allowing for an emphasis on inquiry led investigations, and acknowledging that teachers are the “key” to success in place-based learning.

Sense of Place

“Sense of place is the sixth sense, an internal compass and map made by memory and spatial perception together” ~ Rebecca Solnit

Phenology

Phenology- the science of recording natural regularly occurring events.

Phenologists - scientists interested in learning about, and documenting the timing of, specific biological events in relation to seasonal shifts.

[USA National Phenology Network | USA National Phenology Network](#)

[Personal Phenology Pages](#) - document the phenology of your yard through the year.

Leslie, C. W., & Roth, C. E. (2003). Keeping a nature journal. Pownal, VT: Storey.

Leslie, C. W., Tallmadge, J., & Wessels, T. (2019). Into the field: A guide to locally focused teaching. Great Barrington: Orion Magazine.

Mapmaking

[Mapmaking with Children – David Sobel](#)

Sobel, D. (1998) Mapmaking with children: Sense of place education for the elementary years. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Water Fluency

Water is everywhere, and everywhere is local.” (Haas, 2006)

Hass, R. (2006). On Watershed Education. In M.K. Stone & Z. Barlow (Eds.), *Ecological literacy: Educating our children for a sustainable world*. (pp. 107 - 110). San Francisco, CA: Sierra Book Clubs.

LGROW - The Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds

There are many sub watersheds within the Lower Grand River Watershed. You can find your watershed using the [Find My Watershed](#) tool.

Green Teaching

What components of the schoolyard make it suitable for teaching lessons outdoors?

Is there a garden available for teaching?

[Citizen Science](#) - There is an informative toolkit from the [California Academy of Sciences](#)

[Monarch Waystations](#) - [Monarch Watch](#)

[National Wildlife Federation Schoolyard Habitats](#) - [Certify Your Schoolyard Habitat](#) and [NWF Existing Lesson Plans and Webinars](#).

Is there access to a local park?

Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department - [Parks Directory](#)

Ten-minute Walk Initiative - [10 Minute Walk](#)

Have trees been planted on campus to increase the canopy in the city?

[Friends of Grand Rapids Parks: Home](#)

Is there access to water? Can drains be observed?

In an effort to assess each schoolyard for the prospect of watershed education the images were derived from Adopt-a-Drain website developed by the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW). Adopt-a-drain aims to identify all of the storm drains in the Grand River watershed and encourage citizens to monitor their care. Each schoolyard map shows the location of nearby drains and their adoption status from this website. [Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds Adopt a Drain](#)

Is there a space available to gather a class for an outdoor lesson?

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative supports cities as they work to change and improve citywide systems so that all children have opportunities to play, learn and grow with nature in their daily lives. Here is an article about the efforts in Grand Rapids - [Children and Nature Network. Helping Children Thrive - Outside | C&NN](#)

Here is a video about the importance of equitable access to the outdoors. [Equitable Access to Nature: A Systems Change Approach](#).

Teach Local Over Global

Topics like climate change, plastic pollution of the oceans are among the large-scale tragedies of which they are innately aware. These crises are both far away from home and so large in their extent that they seem insurmountable in terms of problems that can be solved or even relatable. Burdening students with the weight of the Earth's problems at an early age may actually turn them away from the outdoors all together.

Ecophobia - "A fear of ecological problems and the natural world. Fear of oil spills, rainforest destruction, whale hunting, acid rain, the ozone hole, and Lyme disease. Fear of just being outside. We can cure the malaise of ecophobia with ecophilia ~ supporting children's biological tendency to bond with the natural world. If we prematurely ask children to deal with problems beyond their understanding and control. Then I think we cut them off from the possible source of their strength." ~David Sobel

Sobel, D. (2019). Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education. Great Barrington, MA: Orion Magazine.

Stewardship & Civic Engagement

The ability to connect local learning to direct action and stewardship aligned with the efforts of community partners is how place-based education creates meaningful experiences.

The link to the video about this project can be found here [Orchard View Elementary 2017](#)

And if you want to see many more examples visit [Student-led Stewardship - Groundswell](#).

"The new idea here is that we're not preparing students for tomorrow, we're preparing them to solve the problems of today" (Sobel, 2013).

"Place-based education aims to connect students to learning that occurs outside of the four traditional walls of a classroom, while simultaneously placing value on raising students that are active contributing citizens learning from both the natural and human-made aspects of their communities" (Anderson, 2017).

Anderson, S. K. (2017). Bringing school to life: Place-based education across the curriculum. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

"If children are allowed to learn how to care about a place and to care for it, they are more likely to consider living there and helping solve its problems. A pride of place will also give them necessary skills to live well in any community. Place-based learning, wherever that place is, teaches a sense of community and gives students a model for living well anywhere" (Bishop, 2004, p.69).

Bishop, S. (2004). The power of place. *The English Journal*, 93(6), 65-69.

“If teachers can provide students with meaningful and personal experiences outdoors, they can shape a generation that both loves the environment and has the confidence and know-how to save it” (Silverman & Corneau, 2017, p.271).

Silverman, J., & Corneau, N. (2017) From nature deficit to outdoor exploration: Curriculum for sustainability in Vermont’s public schools. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 17(3), 258-273.

“Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature.”

~ Richard Louv

“If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the Earth before we ask them to save it.” ~ David Sobel

“Teach the children. We don't matter so much, but the children do. Show them daisies and the pale hepatica. Teach them the taste of sassafras and wintergreen. The lives of the blue sailors, mallow, sunbursts, the moccasin flowers. And the frisky ones – inkberry, lamb's-quarters, blueberries. And the aromatic ones – rosemary, oregano. Give them peppermint to put in their pockets as they go to school. Give them the fields and the woods and the possibility of the world salvaged from the lords of profit. Stand them in the stream, head them upstream, rejoice as they learn to love this space they live in, its sticks and leaves and then the silent, beautiful blossoms. Attention is the beginning of devotion.” ~ Mary Oliver

Oliver, M. (2019). *Upstream selected essays*. Penguin Books.

Curate experiences that tie books to nature and then follow up with a field guide!

Messner, K., & Neal, C. S. (2011). *Over and under the snow*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

Sheldon, I. (1997). *Animal tracks of the Great Lakes*. Auburn, WA: Lone Pine.

“If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in.” ~Rachel Carson

**You are that person for a child you know.
Thank you!**



Grow Wise
LEARNING