

Flint Currents

Flint Currents is a publication of Discovering PLACE (Place-based Learning and Community Experiences), a regional hub of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative facilitated by University Outreach at the University of Michigan-Flint

Fall 2013

Inside This Issue:

Participatory Design	1
Schoolyard Enhanced Learning.....	1
Beecher Science Project	3
Online PBE Video-Series	3
Upcoming Events	4
Statewide PBE Conference	4
Outdoor Learning Examples.....	5
PBE Technology	6

Discovering P.L.A.C.E

Contact Us

Discovering PLACE
432 N. Saginaw St.,
Ste. 1001
Flint, MI 48502

Project Staff

Jacob Blumner

Hub Leader
blumner@umflint.edu
(810) 424-5486

Leyla Sanker

Program Manager
lsanker@umflint.edu
(810) 424-5477

M'Lis Bartlett

Advisor
mlis@umich.edu

Sara McDonnell

Communications Assistant
smcdonne@umflint.edu

On the Web

blogs.umflint.edu/glsi

Landscape architect uses participatory methods to design outdoor classroom

by Nic Custer

M'lis Bartlett knew that if she wanted to create an outdoor learning space students would actually use, she should just ask them what they would want to see.

So she began working with a ninth grade science class in February 2013 discussing environmental justice issues and ways to address them. Through a process of participatory design, they chose and began re-designing an under-utilized concrete space at the Beecher School District's Ninth Grade Academy.

She spent ten weeks in the summer constructing an outdoor classroom space next to the school's Moses Lacy Field House.

Bartlett asked the students to make models of the existing site and what their dream space would look like. Teachers also



M'Lis Bartlett (center) listens to students present their design to fellow classmates.

provided feedback. Students wanted the outdoor learning space to be used for eating lunch or hanging out before sport events.

(Continued on page 2)

Schoolyard Enhanced Learning with Herb and Matthew Broda



Herb Broda (second from right) leads reflection after outdoor assignment

Discovering Place hosted a great workshop on September 28 at the Neff Center featuring

Herb Broda from Ashland University and Matthew Broda from the College of Wooster. Herb literally wrote the books on outdoor learning, *Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning: Using the Outdoors as an Instructional Tool, K-8* and *Moving the Classroom Outdoors: Schoolyard-Enhanced Learning in Action*. Both books are available for use through the Discovering PLACE lending library. The workshop was a great time had by all as we learned new teaching approaches for various subjects.

Mr. Broda is a passionate advocate for outdoor learning and provided a wealth of resources available for educators (including parents) to take learning outside into the schoolyard. Taking learning outside
(Continued on page 2)

“Outdoor learning results in children who are happier, healthier, and smarter” - Herb Broda



OFFICE OF
UNIVERSITY OUTREACH



Schoolyard Enhanced Learning (continued from page 1)

of the classroom can prove to be a daunting task faced by educators as

children become over-scheduled and over-sanitized. Much of this research is validated and available through the Children and Nature Network www.childrenandnature.org whose mission is to connect all children and their families to nature.

Mr. Broda encouraged us to start small with outdoor learning – it can be something as simple as getting outside to observe what is in the schoolyard if only for five minutes. Over time the experience outside can grow beyond 10 minutes or to the length of an entire lesson. A few examples of what can be done outside of the classroom are included later in the newsletter.

Matthew, who happens to be Herb's son, led us into a myriad of technological applications that enhance outdoor learning. iPods are a simple and fairly inexpensive tool that can be used to guide classroom learning. It is also important to note that not every student needs their own



Matthew Broda (center)

device which aids in keeping costs down. Many apps were featured in the workshop and two of them - Puppet Pals and Journey North are featured more in depth.

For more information on schoolyard-enhanced learning, visit Herb Broda's website at www.movingtheclassroomoutdoors.com.

Landscape architect uses participatory methods (continued from page 1)



Beecher 9GA student assembles bench at new outdoor classroom

The class voted on each other's ideas and then volunteers from University of Michigan's Landscape Architecture program compiled those ideas into a final design.

The concrete was torn up in June and volunteers began recycling chunks of it for paver stones and inside s-shaped benches made from recycled urban Ash trees that were cut down because of Emerald Ash Borer infestation. Permeable red gravel, colorful flowers, a water catchment barrel and an ADA accessible ramp were added to

the site. There will be a free-standing awning installed for shade this fall. Four trees will also be planted on the space and Bartlett said an intern will work with teachers to effectively use the outdoor space and to design and plant a vegetable garden. The project was funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and a University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship grant.

A lot of teenage space is criminalized in places like Flint or Beecher, Bartlett said. She said that Beecher students discussed how there were not many safe spaces in their community to hang out and so this was an opportunity to create one right on their school campus.

Groups of students and other volunteers helped Bartlett

build the space over the summer. She said that Carrera, a mentoring program in the Beecher schools, paid young people through a career development summer program to work with her on the project for five weeks. The students volunteered for two additional weeks for free because they enjoyed working on the project. She said that out of the ten weeks, there were only four days where she did not have volunteers offering to help.

Bartlett is currently finishing her doctoral degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Michigan. Her thesis examines the impact of participatory design and its effect on children.

She has been working with teenagers on outdoor projects for more than twenty years, she said.

Bartlett spent 8 years in New York City as executive director of Friends of the High School of Environmental Studies, an environmental education not-for-profit, housed in a public school. There she worked to use environmental issues in the classroom as learning tools. Specifically, the organization focused on curriculum development and internship programs.

She has worked in Detroit with the Eastern Michigan Environmental Action Council on a greener schools program, doing participatory outdoor work similar to what she has done in Beecher.

Last spring, she worked with two teachers from Flint Southwestern High School to redesign a courtyard with a class of physically disabled students. The students built models of what they wanted and a University of Michigan Landscape Architecture student helped her to compile the final plan. She said one student just wanted a wide enough path to turn their wheelchair around on. An ADA accessible ramp has been installed and planting on a garden has begun.

Beecher Science Teacher gives students hope



Patty Hillaker (second from left) with fellow teacher and two students

by Nic Custer

It didn't matter to Patty Hillaker that her science students went to an alternative high school, she wanted to give them hope and the best education possible.

Hillaker, an UM-Flint alumni, was inspired by the place-based education and grant writing training she received through the Discovering PLACE hub of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative to develop her own project for Beecher's Riley Adult/Alternative Education Center. She called her program, Project E.A.R.T.H., which stands for environmental awareness reaching teen homes.

Over several years, Hillaker was able to bring a series of projects and experiences to her students that taught them about their larger connections to the natural world.

This project consisted of planting raised gardens, an urban bird study, salmon in the classroom, bottle cap murals, school clean ups, clothing and book drives, and year-round recycling of batteries, paper, ink cartridges, glass and bottle caps.

In addition, Hillaker's students did an audit of the school's energy consumption and asked what they could do to cut energy costs.

"Place-based education really got me thinking about all these projects, what can I do to get out of the classroom and really learn," Hillaker said.

Students planted 12 raised flower gardens outside the school as part of their outdoor learning center. They also planted in total 45 trees over two years, donated from the Genesee County Conservation District.

Hillaker's class set up an urban bird study by using information about local bird species and asking students to go to different spots around the school and take 15 minutes to catalog all of the birds that appeared.

A butterfly garden, hummingbird garden and another themed-garden with perennial plants were set up around the school grounds to attract more birds and wildlife.

Working with equipment donations and support from the Flint River Valley Steelheaders and Trout Unlimited (Charles A. Fellows chapter), she was able to grow salmon from eggs in the classroom for two years. Students saw the entire life cycle of the fish, heard lectures from guest speakers and released the fish into the local watershed at the end of the school year.

She said her students began collecting pounds of bottle caps and by the end of each year, they had enough to do a 2' x 4' mural around the school. They created bottle cap murals of a bumblebee and a dragonfly.

It was important for Hillaker to build a legacy with her work that the students could appreciate forever, she said. So when they visit in the future with their grandchildren they could say they were a part of something bigger than themselves.

Because of Hillaker's work, Riley Adult/Alternative was awarded the Evergreen status, which is the Michigan Green Schools highest ranking and means that the school did 20 or more activities covering all of the four principle criteria: reduce/ reuse/ recycle, environmental protection, energy and miscellaneous.

Hillaker was nominated by a colleague and won the 2012 Teacher of the Year award from the Michigan Alternative Education Organization.

She was also given an ING Unsung Heroes award, which provided \$2,000 toward a project that is innovative, creative and exemplifies excellence in education. She used it toward Project E.A.R.T.H.

Hillaker is currently serving as the interim supervisor of adult and alternative education for Beecher Community School District.

Place-based education online learning series

Want to find out more about place-based education?

Visit our Discovering PLACE website to view the PBE video series and other related resources, produced by University Outreach at the University of Michigan-Flint.

The series includes:

- Principles of Place-Based Education
- Building School-Community Partnerships
- PBE and Sustainable Communities
- Designing Place-Based Education Projects
- Authentic Assessment of Student Achievement
- Working Outdoors with Students
- Connecting PBE to Curriculum Standards

Go to www.bit.ly/OlyQ32 to watch the videos or learn how to earn SCECHs (formerly SB-CEUs) for completing the series.



Discovering PLACE News

Upcoming Events, Please Save the Dates

October 26, 2013

Michigan Environmental Education Curriculum Support (MEECS)

MEECS Training Modules: Energy/Ecosystems & Biodiversity

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

UM-Flint Neff Center for Place-based Education
Beecher Middle/High School, 6255 Neff Rd., Flint, MI

Registration is Free, but Required.

Email lsanker@umflint.edu to register.

Audience: Any K-12 teachers from Beecher, Flint & Westwood Heights Community School Districts (You may invite other teachers not participating in your project to these trainings.)

Purpose: Michigan Environmental Education Curriculum Support training modules were developed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Michigan Department of Education. These modules focus on curriculum for Energy (Grades 7-9) and Ecosystems & Biodiversity (Grades 4-6). However, this curriculum can be scaled up or down to meet the needs of higher and lower grade levels.

Each participant will receive both the Energy and the Ecosystems & Biodiversity unit notebooks for each subject area that features 7-9 lesson plans and a classroom kit. (Valued at \$150)

November 7-9, 2013

Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative Place-Based Conference

Grand Rapids

November 14, 2013

Discovering Place Professional Development Session

Neff Center

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

December 12, 2013

Leadership Roundtable with Discovering Place Teachers and UM-Flint Faculty

UM-Flint

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Register Now for GLSI's November Conference

Want a better grasp of the various place-based education methods or maybe a little inspiration for your own project? Register to attend the 3rd Annual Great Lakes Place-Based Education Conference Nov. 7-9, 2013 at the Eberhard Center in Grand Rapids, MI. The Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) organizes the conference.

The keynote speakers will be Ms. Jordan Howard, who has worked with youth to provide them with the tools they need to create change in their communities; and Dr. Shelley Billig, who developed K-12 standards and quality indicators for service learning and has published or edited 13 books and more than 50 articles on service learning and educational innovation.

The three-day conference will include a day of local field trips on Thursday, Nov. 7. Groundswell, a Grand Rapids GLSI hub and conference co-host organization, will lead tours of different relevant projects in the city for conference participants. Tours include a green city exploration, Great Lakes and water resource tour and an education and nature preserve tour.

The Great Lakes PBE conference is recommended for K-12 educators and administrators who want to "forge strong partnerships with the community," and foundations,



Register NOW!
greatlakes
place-based education
conference

Grand Rapids, MI

This year's conference will be co-hosted by the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative and Groundswell, a regional GLSI hub at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



organizations and community leaders with an interest in PBE, environmental stewardship, service learning, youth or community development.

There is a call for presenters in a traditional 45-minute presentation, 45-minute panel discussion, a 5-minute TED talk-style presentation or a poster.

The conference is sponsored in part by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust.

To register, sign up for a presentation or to learn more about the conference or the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, go to www.glstewardship.org.

Outdoor Learning – Try it on for size!

Below are some simple ideas to begin taking your class outside into the schoolyard for learning. These ideas are very low-to-no-cost and are meant to support curriculum you are already covering in class! These mini place-based education exercises introduce students to another learning environment that builds connections for them between what happens outside of the classroom and with in-class exercises.

At the September 28 workshop, Herb Broda shared exercises and tips with us that we hope you can use with your class.

Where Do I Begin?

- Designate a place/location for your students to meet every time you venture outside (the big tree, by the bench, etc)
- If no formal outdoor classroom exists, create inexpensive mats for sitting upon out of 2-gallon Ziploc bags filled with fabric scraps and/or paper. These low-cost cushions work great to keep clothing clean and dry when outdoor learning is taking place.

Example 1: “See What I Found” Poem, Herb Broda

Supplies: Pencils, Poem Template (see below)

Exercise: Have students spend 5 minutes exploring their surroundings (with boundaries, of course!) and find an interesting subject to write about.

Skills: Observation, writing, creative thinking

“See What I Found” Poem Template / Example

First line:	(“See what I found?”)	<i>See what I found?</i>
Second line:	(Name of object)	<i>A bunch of broccoli seed pods</i>
Third line:	(Adjectives and/or descriptive phrase)	<i>Full of life waiting for spring</i>
Fourth line:	(Tell where you found it)	<i>Resting in the Beecher garden</i>
Fifth line:	(Make a comment or question about it)	<i>I wonder how many will grow next year?</i>

Example 2: Chalk Map / Lessons

Supplies: Sidewalk Chalk, Paved surface

Exercise: After in class discussion, work with students on drawing a state map on a nearby paved surface (sidewalk, basketball court, etc). Another example is to practice spelling words or math problems with sidewalk chalk outside.

Skills: Geography, math, observation, teamwork



Source: Crayola.com

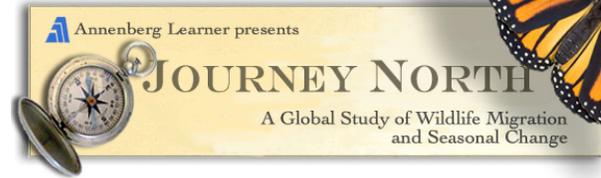


Source: mackematics.blogspot.com

Cool Technology that supports Place-Based Learning

Puppet Pals

Make simple animated movies with the tap of your finger (literally). Puppet Pals allows users to insert photographs they have taken into the background of their puppet show and create characters to tell the story. Users are also able to record their voice to narrate the story. The app is free and is recommended for grades K-10.



Journey North

Journey North is a citizen science application that users can access to report wildlife sightings, take pictures, and view maps to track migrations and seasons. The website based version is currently being used by Mrs. Collins at Beecher Ninth Grade Academy for the tulip garden project – learn more by visiting www.learner.org/jnorth.

We want to hear from you!

Send place-based education stories, tips for connecting students with their communities, or success stories to be included in Flint Currents, the newsletter of Discovering PLACE to Sara McDonnell at smcdonne@umflint.edu

Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI)

Protecting the Great Lakes through hands-on learning in the community

The GLSI was established and is funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, with additional support from the Wege Foundation. Other funders include Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Community Foundation for Muskegon County, Fremont Area Community Foundation, and Frey Foundation.

The goal of the GLSI is to develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the Great Lakes. The GLSI funds nine regional hubs that provide leadership, expertise, materials, and financial resources to support the collaborative, community-based work of K-12 teachers, their students, and local organizations.



Connect with Discovering PLACE!



Follow us on facebook by “Liking” University Outreach at the University of Michigan-Flint (www.facebook.com/universityoutreach)

Bookmark the Discovering PLACE webpage at www.umflint.edu/outreach/discovering-place for online access to newsletter articles, teacher and partner information and helpful links.