

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 the University of Michigan-Flint

December 2011

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*Articles contributed by
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Discovering P.L.A.C.E

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Celebration speaker:

Outdoor experiences spur 'diversity of the mind'

Matthew Washington grew up in New York City, surrounded by concrete, buildings and buses. But he's equally at home in the outdoors, thanks to childhood summers spent in the mountains of Pennsylvania.

The Dec. 14 celebration dinner is a rare opportunity to hear from Washington, the Executive Director of the Friends of the High School for Environmental Studies in New York.

Washington will share insights on diversity in the environmental field. Diversity, he says, is a concept layered with meaning, encompassing race, gender and more.

"If I say I'm a black person, some people associate themselves as being African-American or Caribbean-American or something else entirely," said Washington. Instead of focusing solely on racial diversity, Washington emphasizes "diversity of the mind," or the need for a range of experiences.

"Cultural diversity and the experience of knowledge and information - these experiences are the things that really enrich our lives," he said. "If you take a young person - maybe they grew up in the woods and lived in a tent all their lives - if you take and show them a big city, they might just fall in love with it. It might add a level of diversity in the mind of a young person who never knew what a city was."

Similarly, introducing urban youth to nature allows students the opportunity to get comfortable, contributes to a sense of self-satisfaction, and opens up opportunities for healthy recreation and new career paths.

"Growing up in an urban environment, but knowing I can handle myself in a nature environment, I think that's really important," said Washington. "It gives young people an opportunity to like something, or not. Many students are low-income and concerned regarding their future, or making money in general. It helps to give them exposure to particular career paths."

In his work with the school - which he also attended as a student - Washington has witnessed the wonder of youth who discovered a forest on Manhattan Island, one they never knew existed.

Local partnerships go hand-in-hand with giving students such diverse experiences, and empower youth through the process of meeting a community or business need.

Recently, students were sent to the [New York Botanical Garden](#) and tasked with finding ways to sustain an old-growth forest there. Their proposals

Discovering PLACE celebration dinner

Event: Dinner to celebrate accomplishments of Discovering PLACE teachers and partners

Date: Wednesday, December 14

Time: Registration at 5 p.m.; hors d'oeuvre reception (lobby) at 5:30 p.m.; buffet dinner by [Fandangle's](#) at 6 p.m.

Location: UM-Flint's [Harding Mott University Center](#), Happenings Room, 400 Mill St., Flint

Special guest speaker: [Matthew Washington](#), Executive Director, Friends of the High School for Environmental Studies

Tickets: Free; limited supply

RSVP: By Dec. 9 to Barb Urlaub, urlaubb@umflint.edu or (810) 424-5486.

are currently under review by a panel of judges.

While not every student is enchanted by the outdoors, the experience leads to deliberate choices instead of living life by default. Students of the High School for Environmental Studies who participated in 4-week outdoor trips all wrote about the venture in their college admission essays, said Washington.

Encountering new vistas also adds perspective to academic discussions. "If someone can speak from personal experience, it can really elevate the classroom," said Washington.



Matthew Washington at Brooklyn Bridge Park. Washington, the Executive Director of the Friends of the High School for Environmental Studies in New York, will speak on Diversity of the Mind at the December 14 Discovering PLACE celebration dinner.

Discovering PLACE teacher gets Chevy Volt

Members of the Discovering PLACE program are fortunate to work with such an outstanding group of educators and community partners.

Take Dr. Don Hammond, for example. The Beecher High School biology and environmental science teacher has been accumulating more awards than he likely has room to display.

Hammond was one of 20 teachers nationwide honored with the [Chevrolet Green Educator award](#) this fall. The award, a joint effort by the Earth Force program and the General Motors Foundation, rewards teachers who go “above and beyond to integrate quality environmental education” into their class curriculum. For Hammond’s efforts, GM awarded him the use of a [Chevrolet Volt](#) for his class to study.

Dr. Hammond, one of the first teachers to become part of the [Discovering PLACE](#) program, used three smart tactics to benefit students:

1. He and his students looked outside the classroom for learning opportunities, including a nearby pond being crowded out by an invasive species, and unused land near the school. Along with cleaning the pond’s shoreline, they planned and built a trail, planted raised garden beds and created a butterfly garden. These projects are now being used as an outdoor classroom.
2. Hammond got creative about seeking multiple grants, resulting in project sustainability and greater knowledge from working with several organizations, some of which was shared with

other teachers at the October 2011 workshop. Teachers’ feedback: “Enjoyed hearing firsthand experiences.” “I was encouraged to keep on to get our garden up and running.” “Really enjoyed listening to the teachers share their successes.”

3. He implemented a cross-grade, interdisciplinary strategy, so projects impacted more students. For example, Hammond’s high school students worked with Beecher kindergartners from Shelly Roberts’ [Tucker Elementary](#) class along the school’s trail. Older students helped children with coats, showed them birds’ nests, examined trail flora and fauna together and high-fived kindergartners’ discoveries. Kindergartners were thrilled with the attention of the high school students, whom they sometimes see as tough and inaccessible. Older students profited academically by teaching the material they’d learned to others.

In addition to the GM honors, Hammond received a [2011 Appreciation Award](#) from the Michigan Alliance for Environmental & Outdoor Education (MAEOE), which “recognizes deserving educators who have excelled in their efforts to provide environmental and outdoor education” through the program.

A former elementary school principal, Hammond also authored a recent article on green, sustainable schools for *Principal Leadership*, a publication of the [National Association for Secondary School Principals](#).

Place-based education takes extra effort,

especially in our urban schools, which face monumental challenges. Hammond is among the educators who have persevered, believing the investment is worth the payoff for students and the community.

“Place-based education creates rigor by making schoolwork relevant,” says Hammond.

Congratulations to Dr. Hammond and all of the teachers, administrators and community partners who are positively impacting the students – and the future – of the Flint community.



(Above) A Beecher High School student helps a Tucker kindergartner glimpse a bird's nest along the school's trail. (Below, left) Dr. Don Hammond is one of 20 teachers nationwide to be presented the Chevrolet Green Educator Award for his environmental work with Beecher students. (Below, right) GM awards Hammond the use of a Chevrolet Volt for his class to study.



Find volumes of inspiration in new lending library

No doubt about it, place-based education requires some creativity. Our new lending library will help get the creative juices flowing.

While the library is housed at University Outreach, you can easily find titles online. In some cases, we will even bring books to you.

A few examples:

- John Elder's [*Stories in the Land: A Place-Based Education Environmental Anthology*](#), is described as a "handbook" for implementing PBE projects, highlighting both urban and rural PBE curriculum examples.
- Teachers who want to implement projects across the curriculum may find writing inspiration for their students in Florence Caplow's [*Wildbranch: An Anthology of Nature, Environmental, and Place-based Writing*](#).
- Elementary educators may be inspired by [*Hands-On Nature*](#), by the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, which is jam-packed with ideas, including puppet

shows to help children remember concepts. One Amazon reviewer mentions the "tongue-in-cheek" nature of the book, offering this advice: "A hint: NEVER skip the puppet shows! They are the best starting points for the big ideas of the lessons."

- Those who heard David Sobel at the recent Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative conference can testify that this author is amazingly inspiring. Read more in [*Place- and Community-Based Education in Schools*](#), authored by Sobel and Gregory A. Smith. Two must-read chapters: "Why Worry about the Local in the Era of No Child Left Behind? A Rationale for Place- and Community-based Education" (Ch. 4), and "Place- and Community-based Education in Practice: Starting with the Traditional Disciplines" (Ch. 5).

Ready for some fresh inspiration? Check out our [lending list](#). The growing library features nearly 100 titles, ranging from curriculum to reference to theory. Hint: The list is searchable; you can also browse by subject tags.

Barb Urlaub, University Outreach senior administrative assistant, oversees the lending library. Make an appointment with [Barb](#) to pick up books in our downtown Flint office, or [send a request](#) (at least a week in advance, please) for a book to be delivered during a Discovering PLACE workshop or event.

Want some reading material over the holiday break? Just contact us by Dec. 9 and we'll deliver it to our Dec. 14 Celebration Dinner!

View the guide to borrowing from the Discovering PLACE lending library [here](#).



Barb Urlaub

Community Corner

For each edition of *Flint Currents*, Discovering PLACE features one of our community partners.

Flint Children's Museum: Hands-on Learning

Back in the 1980s, Mary Newman knew children learn through actively exploring their environments. A longtime Flint educator, Newman founded the Flint Children's Museum.

FCM started small. Originally just a couple of exhibits at Sloan Museum, FCM expanded when it relocated to the Northbank Center in 1986. Since moving to its current site in 1993, visitors are astonished at the amount

of hands-on educational fun packed into the building, situated on the campus of Kettering University, one of the Museum's partners.

A special room offers rotating exhibits, such as November's "Explore the 5 Senses." A sampling of other interactive experiences: bridge-building, puppet and costume stages, a larger-than-life customizable storybook, an antique carriage made long ago in Flint plus the Our Town play areas, including a post office, grocery store and pizza restaurant.

New is *Sproutsides*, a garden and outdoor interactive learning area. Students from nearby Durant-Tuuri-Mott helped develop the area when Museum personnel recognized a need to "inspire curiosity" through a natural learning environment, said Kimberly Roddy, FCM marketing and communications director.

Under the direction of Brian Dilworth, the new Flint Children's Museum Executive Director, the Museum will strengthen its hands-on approach to learning. Dilworth has a strong background in nonprofit management. Because he and wife Julie are parents to son Connor, 8, he has a personal interest in childhood education.

The Museum, a drop-off site for Toys For Tots and Food Bank contributions, has a long history of community partnering.

Partnering just makes good sense, Roddy said.

This year, Museum personnel partnered with Discovering PLACE to help teachers engage students in place-based projects and ultimately, become stewards of their community.

That's good news for elementary teachers, who can request customized [curriculum](#) programs, as well as their students, who are constantly delighted with the colorful, hands-on museum exhibits. The Museum now offers traveling outreach opportunities; contact [Cathy Kelley](#) at (810) 767-5437.

The FCM is also considering engaging classes of older students to work with children in *Sproutsides*; contact [Kimberly Roddy](#), (810) 767-5437.



Kimberly Roddy operates marionettes at the Flint Children's Museum.



1602 W. University Avenue, Flint
(810) 767-5437

Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday
From January through May 2012, FCM
will also be open noon - 5 p.m. Sunday.

Teacher Feature

For each edition of *Flint Currents*, *Discovering PLACE* features one of our member teachers.

Florist turns educator to help math skills and citizenship bloom

Before Kevin Gavulic began teaching math to seventh and eighth graders at Flint's Holmes Foundation Academy, he worked in his family's floral shops - Curtis Flowers, Royal Gardens, and the former Flowers By Buck's.

Seeing adults struggle with basic calculations motivated him to become an educator.



"They could not do even the simplest math because they didn't know how," said Gavulic, who'd always had a knack for numbers. "I started thinking maybe I could make a difference."

Teacher Kevin Gavulic examines For-Mar elements in an Inquiry-Based Learning activity at October's *Discovering PLACE* workshop.

When he started teaching eight years ago, Gavulic wanted to teach math differently than the methods he'd learned. That meant plugging in to what students already know.

"I try to throw in a lot of real life," said Gavulic.

For example, the equation $x + 4 = 100$, says Gavulic, is merely math jargon for real-world transactions. "You want to buy items that cost \$100 but you only have four dollars," so x is just a word in the language telling how much you need to borrow.

"Or pop costs 50 cents and you only have a quarter; how much do you need? You've got to look at it in terms of math being a language. If you don't know the language, you're really stuck."

Gavulic's own children - he has a daughter who's 15 and a son who's 13 - aren't much older than his Flint students. While it can be both rewarding and challenging to work with teens, Gavulic is among the educators who see serious issues among the youth he teaches. Students who "do the right thing," for example, can be treated with hostility. Fear for safety also keeps students indoors.

"Parents don't allow them out because

they don't want them influenced by gangs," Gavulic said.

Seeking ways to address these problems is part of the reason Gavulic became involved with *Discovering PLACE*. He says what educators need most is to work together to incorporate innovative teaching strategies into classroom curriculum, since attendance in after-school clubs may be erratic.

"It's hard to do it by yourself," said Gavulic, who is also encouraged by community partners' willingness to work with teachers. "If you're part of a group, hopefully it will be a nice way to expose students to new things."

Inquiry-based learning, a concept *Discovering PLACE* teachers have been studying since October, resonates with the Flint teacher. After all, says Gavulic, it's rooted in history and a foundation for the future.

"It's the process of understanding where the answer came from, instead of just having an answer," Gavulic said. "Our forefathers were pioneers, they had to figure it out. What are we going to figure out beyond what we have today?"

Fundamental focus: Environmental Justice

Linking curriculum projects to the local environment - or community - is key to place-based education. In urban areas such as Flint, connecting to what's local often means addressing Environmental Justice issues.

[Environmental Justice](#), or EJ, is simply a movement meshing social justice and environmental issues. The aim: making communities healthier for everyone, regardless of race, income, location or heritage.

As of this year, Environmental Justice in Flint has become a fundamental focus for *Discovering PLACE*. September's professional development workshop focused on the concept, as did subsequent readings and discussions. Environmental Justice was also highlighted in a poster session at this month's place-based education conference organized by the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. Key examples of EJ issues include:

Food Justice: Feeding children healthy meals using locally-sourced school food, which boosts the local economy, is one example of food justice demonstrated by [The Farm to School](#) program.

- Place-based education projects on Food Justice could involve mapping community food resources, planting gardens, learning about healthy eating or running a food drive.
- These projects can be integrated into curriculum involving geography, biology, economics, English/language arts, health, and earth science.

Open Space: Examples of these issues range from green space such as parks and community gardens, to [Brownfield](#) sites - previously developed property that can be re-used, after any site contamination is cleaned up.

- Place-based education projects involving Open Space could include raising community awareness of issues through a student letter-writing campaign, getting people talking about local land

use and zoning, or researching park or playground safety and quality, along with impact on play and health for students.

- These projects can be integrated into curriculum involving social science, government/civics, English/language arts, and history.

Clean Air: Industrial sites near residential areas may be examples of clean air issues, especially when linked to health problems such as [asthma](#). Clean air concepts involve the quality of air - both indoors and out - as well as pollutants, which may be substances introduced to an environment, or natural substances exceeding safe levels.

- Place-based education projects focusing on clean air could include [collecting air samples in buckets](#), tracking changes in the [air quality index](#), exploring links between air pollution and asthma, and growing indoor plants to improve indoor air quality.
- These projects can be integrated into curriculum involving math, earth science, biology, physics and health.

Upcoming Events

Date

Time

Celebration Dinner	Wed., Dec. 14, 2011	5:30-7:30 p.m.
Day-long workshop	Sat., Jan. 21, 2012	9 a.m.-3 p.m.
After-school workshop	Thurs., Feb. 16	4-7 p.m.
After-school workshop	Wed., March 21	4-7 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Date

Time

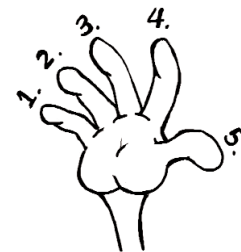
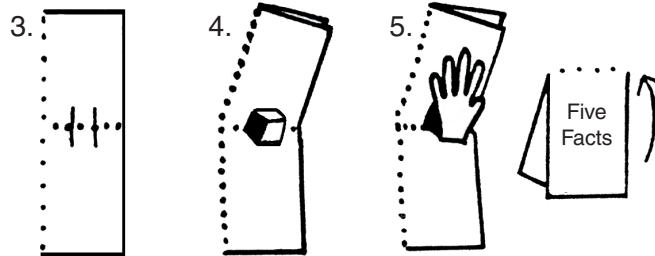
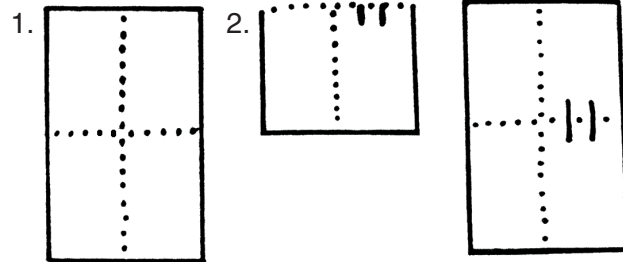
Day-long workshop	Sat., April 21	9 a.m.-3 p.m.
After-school workshop	Thurs., May 17	4-7 p.m.
After-school workshop	Wed., June 13	4-7 p.m.
After-school workshop	Wed-Thurs., Aug. 22-23	TBD



GIVE MY PLACE A HAND

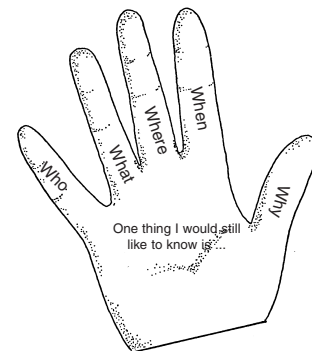
Directions:

1. Fold 12" x 18" construction paper into fourths, then unfold.
2. Next fold in half (so the size is 9" x 12") and cut two slits 2 inches apart, as shown. Unfold.
3. Fold in half (size will be 18" x 6").
4. Keeping the tab to the inside, fold the top down, pushing the pop-up tab toward you.
5. Trace your hand and cut it out.
6. Think about the community where you live. List five persons, places or things that make where you live unique. (Write one on each finger.)
7. In the palm area write a question you have about one of the persons, places or things.
8. Illustrate the front of your Pop-Up Book.



Other HANDY ideas for the Pop-Up Book.

1. Use it as a graphic organizer to write a report.
Label each finger WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN AND WHY.
2. Write a Core Democratic Value on the hand. List an example of this value on each finger.
3. List five things that students should remember:
Five Parts of a Story (characters, setting, problem, solution, ending),
Five Vowels, Five Key Points in a Lesson (ex: Animal reports: habitat, food, skin covering, family, predators).



Glimpses of success: Discovering PLACE participants

Stockton Center:

[Stockton Center at Spring Grove](#), a Flint historical site and a local example of Italianate architecture, held an open house in October for the film [Alleged](#), a romantic drama based on the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. The movie was partially filmed at the historical house and was screened at the Flint Film Festival this fall.

Local historical columnist Gary Flinn, author of [Remembering Flint Michigan](#) said on his book's [Facebook page](#) that the Stockton Center scenes portray a “women’s institution for the epileptic and feeble” and use the



Stockton Center at Spring Grove, a Flint historical site, can be seen in “Alleged,” a romantic drama based on the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925.

“addition built for the original St. Joseph Hospital, including the original operating room,” a part of the movie that sheds light on the Scopes Trial. The movie also included scenes filmed at Flint’s Crossroads Village.

“Of course, Stockton Center at Spring Grove has a chapter in my book,” wrote Flinn.

Jacky and Dora King:

As you likely know, Jacky and Dora King, who run the [Harvesting Earth Education Farm](#) in Flint, are the subject of [The Kings of Flint](#) documentary, produced by Michigan State University faculty and students. Since 2010, the film has been screened at venues around the country, ranging from Detroit to Chicago to Oregon.

According to the film’s Web site, the film has been described as “Ambitious, comprehensive, real and complex.... an inspiring look at a small town’s struggling economy and their incredible drive to inspire young people to be the change.” Another review called it “compelling on a personal level and convincing on a political one. ‘The Kings of Flint’ shows that environmental



Jacky King cools off Tucker kindergartners on a hot day, during a student visit to Harvesting Earth Educational Farm, the subject of a documentary. Jacky was inducted into the Greater Flint Afro-American Hall of Fame this year.

sustainability alone isn’t enough: we need economic sustainability and cultural sustainability too.”

This month, the film received honorable mention in the Best Short Documentary category at the Lake Michigan Film Competition.

Also of note: Jacky King is a 2011 inductee into the [Greater Flint Afro-American Hall of Fame](#).

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 Elizabeth Lowe at ellowe@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 eight 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.



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