

## School Site Walk

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**Overview:** School grounds hold ample opportunity for learning but also require time for planning and professional development throughout the school year – starting with a site walk through to explore learning opportunities, a mid-year check-in to identify and clear hurdles to site-based learning, and finally an end-of-year reflection to model lessons and share successes. All parts of school curriculum can be integrated into the development and use of these resources.

**Targeted Grades:** K-12

### Suggested Implementation

**Step 1.** The **site walk** is a key part of this professional development plan. At the start of the school year, teachers walk their campus, visiting areas that could become learning laboratories – gardens, wooded areas, water bodies, neighboring businesses/public spaces, paths, sports fields, boiler rooms, hallways, whatever is on your school grounds. They engage in structured observations and small group conversations, taking notes on what they might teach in these places, and on learning experiences that students could have in those places.

**Step 2. Logging your ideas** After the walk, teachers come back to the classroom, put their top 2-3 ideas on post-it notes, and locate these post-its on a map of campus. They then sit down at computers, and populate rows in a common google spreadsheet, with columns for each of the following questions:

- 1) In what course could students explore this place?
- 2) What standards could students learn to master in that space?
- 3) What essential questions could students tackle?
- 4) What learning experiences could they take on?
- 5) How big is this experience – a lesson, a unit-long investigation, a performance task, a culminating project?
- 6) What are your next steps in planning?
- 7) What resources/support do you need?

By the end of a 2-3 hour session, faculty will have created a master list of site-based learning opportunities for the coming year. School leaders, department chairs, and support staff should use this spreadsheet to check in on progress, and to identify common and individual resource needs, etc.

**Step 3. Integrate these site-based learning experiences** into course and unit plans.

This is just one step of a process – but it’s an important step!

**Curriculum Integration example:** This strategy can identify learning opportunities in every subject area. Here are a few examples of experiences that have resulted from Site Walk work at Common Ground High School:

Course	Standards	Essential Questions	Learning Experiences	How Big?	Resources Needed
Pre-Algebra	Operations with decimals	What does our food really cost? What is the true cost of a Common Ground egg?	Students analyze all the inputs necessary to produce an egg, and determine what the school should charge for the eggs from the farm.	3 day project/performance task	Access to farmer, farm budgets, hands-on experience with chickens
Spanish 2/3	Written communication in Spanish/writing for public audiences	How do we make our campus welcoming to Spanish-speaking visitors?	Students translate interpretive and directional signs for the school’s campus.	2- week performance task, culmination of course	English language signs, professional-looking Word templates for signs
English (Nature Lit)	Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective	What is nature? How can narrative writing help us explore our relationship with nature?	Students explore the school site, identifying things that are definitely natural or definitely unnatural. Then, they examine several narrative, non-fiction texts that reflect different definitions of nature. Based on this, they develop their own definitions of nature, citing these sources, which they present to the class.	1-day site-based experience during first major unit of course	Anchor texts – narrative non-fiction nature writing

**Resources Needed:**

- Staff members familiar with the site to lead the walk, ask probing questions, etc.
- Maps of site
- Access to computers and Google Drive
- Observation worksheets
- Post-it notes, writing implements

**Potential Modifications:** School Site Walks work well at the beginning of the school year (or during the summer prior to the start of the school year), but can happen at any time teachers are thinking forward to the next set of classes that they teach.



*Above photo submitted by Joel Tolman. Common Ground teachers explore the school's urban farm during a site walk, looking for learning opportunities. Whatever the school grounds, a site walk may surface opportunities for learning.*

*These suggestions are examples only, and may require adaptation. Check your grade-specific standards to determine whether or not the suggestions provided meet your individual curricular needs.*

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