

SUSTAINABILITY TEACHERS' ACADEMY LESSON PLAN

You Are Here: Discovering Your Sense of Place

Topics Covered

Sense of Place
Identity
Sustainability

Grades

9-12

Duration

45 Minutes

Sustainability

Competencies

Values Thinking
Systems Thinking

Online Resources

[Emma Marris: Nature is everywhere – we just need to learn to see it](#)

Acknowledgments

Relph, E. (1997).
Sense of place. *Ten geographic ideas that changed the world*, 205-226.

Key Questions

What does sense of place mean?
How can you develop a sense of place?
How does sense of place influence your worldview?
How is sense of place connected to sustainability?

Overview

In this activity students will reflect and discuss how their perception of their favorite place and their school may be connected to their identity. As a class, students will discuss the benefits and barriers to having a strong sense of place, then brainstorm ways to use sense of place to promote positive change in their community.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define sense of place
- Describe how sense of place influences perceptions and worldviews
- Examine the connection between sense of place and sustainability

Materials

Per Student

- One sheet of paper and coloring utensils

Technology

Projector/Computer

Teacher Preparation

Project *You Are Here: Discovering Your Sense of Place* slides for students. Students should also have a basic understanding of the three pillars of sustainability.

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Background Information

Sense of place is a concept used in fields such as geography, environmental education, and sustainability. It is focused on how we connect to places in different ways on a variety of scales. Sense of place can be a powerful way to connect people to their local environment and community. It is related to sustainability because sustainability requires input and effort from the community, so if people feel more connected to their environment, society, and economy, they may be more likely to promote sustainability.

Recommended Procedures

1. Engagement: This activity will focus students on the topic

(Optional) Watch the Emma Marris TED Talk: Nature is everywhere – we just need to learn to see it. Discuss these questions as a large group after watching the video:

- What was your biggest takeaway from the video?
- Do you see any connections to your school or community?

2. Exploration: A student-led activity with guidance

Give each student a piece of blank paper and coloring utensils. Give them 10 minutes to draw their favorite place. They can be as detailed as they want, no creative restrictions besides staying within the one sheet of paper. After they are done drawing, ask them to turn to a partner and describe their favorite place. They should answer the following questions:

- Where/what is it?
- Why is this your favorite place?
- Why did you choose to draw it the way that you did?
- How might this place be connected to your identity?

After they are done discussing with a partner, ask a few students to share their drawings and describe their place to the class.

3. Explanation: Students discuss their understanding of the concept

Introduce the students to the concept of “sense of place” by reading the Edward Relph quote. Explain that Relph is a geographer who studies sense of place. Discuss how sense of place can be both positive and negative using school spirit as an example. School spirit can help connect students more deeply to their school, encouraging them to care more and be more invested in their education. However, too much school spirit can cause animosity towards other schools. This happened when a University of Alabama fan poisoned trees on the Auburn University campus.

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4. Elaboration: Students apply the idea in a new context

Give them another sheet of paper or use the back of the original sheet of paper and ask the students to draw their school. After 5-10 minutes, have them turn to a partner to describe their drawing and discuss these questions:

- How are they different?
- Why might they be different?
- How might these differences be an expression of your identity at your school?
 - For example, a student who loves reading may have a more detailed drawing of the library, while a student who loves being outside may draw the playground or athletic fields in more detail.

Ask a few students to share their findings with the class.

5. Evaluation: Students assess their knowledge, skills, abilities

As a class, discuss how sense of place is connected to the three pillars:

- Environment
- Economy
- Society

Ask, what is something you can do to leverage your sense of place for good?

Extensions

After determining what they could do for good, the students can develop a sustainability-related project for their classroom, school, or local community. Instruct the students to use a positive sense of place as part of their project planning. For example, if sports are important to many students at the school, they could host a “green game” to encourage recycling and composting of concessions and/or provide donation bins for food and clothes during a game.

Vocabulary

- **Sense of Place:** A feeling of connection or attachment to a specific place and/or the way we perceive different places psychologically and physiologically.
- **Sustainability:** Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Three Pillars of Sustainability**
 - Environment: The natural world, nonhuman plants and animals
 - Society: People, governments, cultures, social systems
 - Economy: Markets, products, trade

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Next Generation Science Standards

Science and Engineering Practices	Disciplinary Core Ideas	Crosscutting Concepts
Engaging in argument from evidence	ESS3: Earth and Human Activity	Patterns
		Scale, proportion, and quantity
		Stability and change

Common Core English Language Arts

Reading: Informational Text	Writing	Speaking & Listening	Language
RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.4, RI.11-12.1, RI.11-12.4	N/A	SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.1C, SL.9-10.1D, SL.9-10.2, SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.1C, SL.11-12.1D, SL.11-12.2	N/A

Common Core Mathematics

6 through 8	9 and 10
N/A	N/A

Other Common Core

Science	History/Social Studies
N/A	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5