

LEARNING EXCHANGE PEDAGOGY

Community Site Visit

Outcome: Design and facilitate community (site) visits that are both informative and experiential.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION (Tailor your question to relate to your focus and the site):

Description: Place-based learning in and with the community in which an organization or school is situated is vital to constructing outcomes that are culturally consonant and useful to all constituents. Community or site visits can take multiple forms, but should be designed to foster reciprocity. The visitors need roles and responsibilities with clear protocols and processes so that they interact in the community spaces in ways that foster gracious space and achieve learning outcomes.

Theoretical Underpinnings: Authentic place-based learning answers this question based on Dewey: How can the stories of this place and the experience in this place be a *moving force for change* in our current situations? **How can you “tell” the story of this place through experiences of the participants (visitors)?** Thus, the community/site visits are co-constructed with the community experts to be informative as well as experiential. They start with an essential question, incorporate key pedagogical elements of the CLE (mini-opening circle, gracious space, learning walks and talks, critical conversations). The visit should inform the participants about the spirit and the historical facts of the place and stimulate the participants to connect the experience to the organizational purpose with a focus on connecting our work in organizations and schools to the community spirit and settings.

As we all take responsibility for holding the sacred trust of educating and loving our children into their futures, these are our guiding questions:

1. **How does your story and history inform this experience** and guide your development as an advocate for healing in your community?
2. **What is the power source fueling this place**, work or idea?
3. What does leadership for community work and action/advocacy look like?

Implementation Steps

Design specific OUTCOMES for SITE VISITS with these in mind:

All participants will be able to:

- Fully engage all participants in inquiry and experiential learning, based on specific site history and information
- Connect stories of origin and identity to the stories of this site
- Connect the purpose of community visit to overall purposes/goals
- Connect stories of this site to home communities

Community Visit Facilitator(s) will be able to:

- Develop SPECIFIC OUTCOMES for site visit
- Prepare an experience (and specific agenda) for the community/site visit that includes CLE pedagogies and honors the community expert’s information and experience

Community experts will be able to:

- Look for connections between the purpose/goal of community visit to the stories of the place and people.

- Pose questions
- Engage with the site visit facilitator(s) to develop processes for the site visit that inform and engage. More *doing* than *telling*.
-

Preparation:

- Timeline and/or overview and readings or photos for each group. In preparation, ask community experts to help you understand the most important events and implications and the right materials for your group
- Consider how the group will “record” the experience and be ready to share with others
- Might want to assign roles for map “drawer”, artist(s) who draw the experience, photographer(s), videographer, note taker(s), questioner(s) of experts or collecting additional questions, collector(s) of information or objects, drawer(s), process observer(s) who not only take notes on what was “visited” but are asking provocative questions of fellow participants (what are you observing? What are you feeling? What does this cause you to think about?),

Possible Agenda

1. **Mini-Opening Circle** (may or may not include the community experts): *Design an opening question that relates to purpose of the community visit AND the people in group.*
2. **Gracious Space:** *How have you accounted for gracious space implicitly (or explicitly)? How is this a setting and a spirit to invite the stranger and learn in public?*
3. **Essential or Inquiry Question:**
Remind all of guiding questions and using an inquiry stance?
 - What do you observe?
 - What do you feel?
 - What do you know and what did you learn?
 - What does this mean?
4. **Experiential Learning for Community Visit:** This will depend on the information, the experts, the places, etc. Here are some ideas for constructing this so it is experiential:
 - KWL: What do folks already know? What do they want to know? Followed at end with what did you learn?
 - Divide up group for going to different experiences with the site visit
 - Learning walk of pairs in certain place(s) on the site
 - Music and art experiences
 - Town hall with community expert(s)
5. **Closing Circle:***What resonates with you the most in this community site and how will that inform your/our work?*
6. **Reflection/De-brief**
 - What are the contradictions in this place?
 - What does this place tell us about the goals or purpose of the community visit?
 - What surprises or “aha’s” did you have during this community visit?
 - What power does this give you for advocacy in your community?