Section 3: School Space and Community Support Inventory

Module Overview

Section Goal: For educator teams to think strategically about what resources they currently have on their school grounds to support outdoor learning and to begin planning on what they can do to enhance use of existing spaces and resources.

Pre-Work:
- Email a reminder to all team members about the meeting, including date, time, location, and Section 2 and 3 Workshop Summaries.
- Sketch the outline for the community asset map on a large piece of chart paper (see example below). Print and cut out the Community Asset Mapping cards to use as prompts during Activity 2. Gather sticky notes and writing utensils.
- Print or write out the below definitions of different types of community assets on chart paper as a thinking prompt for team members.
- Encourage team members to invite other peers to join the group, now that they have a better understanding of the goals of this module. They can get caught up on some of the materials/reflection points by accessing the Individual Learning Journey Guide for this module.
- REMEMBER: If you’re tight on time, you can always lift out the GOAL WORK activities in the next three module sections and add them on as follow-up discussions to the module.

Section 3 Workshop Summary:
1. Introduction to Potential Outdoor Spaces (10 minutes)
2. Community Asset Mapping (30 minutes)
3. School Space Inventory Activity (30 minutes)
4. Outdoor Space Goal Setting (20 minutes)

Workshop Length: Approximately 1.5 hours
Detailed Protocols

Activity 1: Introduction to Potential Outdoor Spaces (10 minutes)
Purpose: To revisit lessons learned from reviewing case studies during the last meeting and use that to frame a discussion about assets and resources available at this school site.

Procedure:
1. Welcome team members back and explain that today’s workshop is going to take the background and conversations we’ve had during the first two meetings and think more concretely about the resources and assets at our school.

2. Ask team members the following discussion question: Is there anything that percolated up in your minds based on our last conversation together?

3. Encourage all team members to share how they are feeling about teaching outside and how to support it at your school.

4. Take notes on chart paper about key or recurring themes - these will be revisited in Activity 4.

Activity 2: Community Asset Mapping (30 minutes)
Purpose: For team members to think about what’s special and unique about their school and community and to use their collective wisdom to identify resources available to support outdoor learning for your students. Remind team members this activity is about Community Assets - the next activity will dive further into School Space Resources.

Procedure:
- Introduce Community Asset Mapping: a great way to think about what’s special and unique about your community and what resources you have available to support environmental learning for your students.

- Review the different types or categories of “assets” your community has (below). Ask if the group has any additional categories to add.
### Types of Community Assets

1. **Physical Assets** include land, buildings, transportation, and facilities (either used or unused).

2. **Economic Assets** include what residents produce and consume in the community, in both formal and informal ways. These may be local businesses or bartering and trading relationships.

3. **Stories** and history carry the memory of a community. These include the perspectives of local historians, community members, indigneous peoples, etc.

4. **Local Residents** are those who live in the community. All community members have skills, experiences, and capacities that can contribute to community strengthening.

5. **Local Associations** include associations in the community primarily run by volunteers, such as athletic clubs, faith-based groups, birding clubs, etc.

6. **Local Institutions** are public spaces in the community such as schools, libraries, parks, and government entities, such as nonprofits.

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- With your team, define the **boundaries** of what you consider your school community to be - this may be your town, region, watershed, etc.

- Show your team an **example community asset map** (see the one pictured below) and point out the asset categories and examples that fall within each category.

- Instruct your team to use sticky notes to write down the names of assets (in any one of the 6 categories). Include notes about why/how this asset could be a potential partner to your school to support environmental learning.
  - Put the **Asset Mapping Cards** on the table as a source of brainstorming.

- Allow everyone to work for 5-10 minutes to brainstorm and write down as many community assets as possible. Place the sticky notes in the appropriate spots on the community asset map chart paper.

- Discuss the ideas and categories that team members brainstormed. Identify “low hanging fruit” - assets that may be most easily accessible or individuals most willing to help. Consider existing connections within the team to these assets. These will be further discussed in the next activity, as well as the next section.
Activity 3: School Space Inventory Activity (20 minutes)

Purpose: To identify what assets, physical spaces, and natural features are available on your school property to support teaching and learning outside.

Procedure:

1. With your team, walk around your school grounds and explain that you are going to think about the assets available on your own property. Feel free to take a moment to reflect on examples from other schools that you discussed in the case studies in the previous section and the potential for transformation of your landscape.

2. Prompt team members to think about and discuss the following prompts as you are walking the school grounds:
   a. Are there outdoor spaces that are beloved by your students?
   b. Are there areas that are very highly used or underutilized?
   c. Are there spaces with potential or areas you would like to see developed to support more outdoor learning?
   d. Who else needs to be involved in this conversation about developing outdoor spaces (certain administrators, town planning board, facilities directors, etc.)?

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3. Return to your meeting space and revisit the asset map, adding in any school property assets that weren’t previously there.

4. Discuss whether there are local people/institutions on your asset map who could help support any potential development of outdoor spaces (i.e. you really want benches and an outdoor classroom space and there’s a local lumber yard that might be able to support you in building these).

**Resource Roundup**

The Teach ME Outside website has a directory of outdoor and environmental learning organizations who can help support your work. To find organizations or resources within your community, you can use the “near me” search and mapping feature. See if there are any resources in your community that you might not have been aware of before!

Interested in learning more about how partnerships and collaborations between schools and organizations are occurring in Maine in support of outdoor and environmental learning? Check out this interactive network map of projects and partnerships from the 2019 Census of Community-Based Environmental Learning in Maine.

**Activity 4: GOAL WORK: Outdoor and Environmental Learning Goal Setting (30 minutes)**

Purpose: To identify goals and concrete actions your team can take towards development of your school’s outdoor spaces and environmental/outdoor learning projects to support use by teachers and students.

Procedure:

1. Revisit the chart paper from Activity 1 where team members brainstormed how they are feeling about teaching outside and how to support it at your school. Briefly revisit the asset map.

2. Based on previous discussions - prompt your team to identify and come to a consensus on an overall vision for outdoor and environmental learning at their school. Then, work to identify 1-2 attainable school-wide goals for outdoor spaces and/or environmental learning at their school this year to support teaching and learning outside. Goals might include the development or addition of physical structures, cleaning up or revitalizing spaces that are underutilized, or making a commitment as a team to utilizing existing outdoor spaces a certain number of times a week.
3. Come to a consensus and finalize your school’s 1-2 goals. Tell team members that you will revisit these goals next session to identify some action plans for achieving success this year.

4. Designate one person from your team to reach out to the rest of your school community with an update on goals that were determined by the group and with an open invitation to join the conversation. Keeping communication channels open will increase buy-in from your school community and generate further interest in teaching outside! Also be sure to ask questions and gather perspectives of reluctant staff. This information will support conversations about removing potential roadblocks.

**FACILITATION TIP**

Consider some of the following facilitation and consensus strategies if the team needs help settling on a vision or specific outdoor and environmental learning goals:

- **Narrowing ideas**: have participants “vote” for their top 2 or 3 goal ideas using sticky notes or sticker dots on the chart paper - this can help quickly identify the ideas that are most likely to gain consensus. The “dot voting” can be used multiple times in rounds to narrow from a long list of ideas to just a few.

- **Further discussion**: if further discussion is required, make Pro/Con lists, or talk in rounds where each participant has 20-60 seconds to voice support or concern; participants can pass if desired.

- **Consensus**: Use the **Fist To Five hand signals** to gauge nuanced consensus level in the room around specific goals. Or use the Thumbs Up/Sideways/Down hand signals from Section 1, Activity 2 for a more simplified “yes/no” to gauge consensus on a single idea.

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**Model Example**

Our neighbor to the south, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative (BSI), has worked since 1995 to revitalize 88 schoolyards with incredibly positive results. Principals reported that BSI schoolyards lead to increased physical activity (100%); improved student behavior (63.2%) and improved relationships with parents and community (73.7%). Their website is a resource for outdoor and environmental learning and the initiative has developed several guides that may be helpful in your goal planning:

- **A Schoolyard Design Guide**
**Student Opportunity!**

You can involve your students in the process of identifying goals and thinking about outdoor spaces on your school grounds. The Boston Schoolyard Initiative has developed this [student survey](#) and [student mapping activity](#) to ensure that students have a voice in the revitalization of their schoolyards.