

CREATE A SCHOOLYARD SITE SURVEY MAP

AGES

5–18 years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Sacramento, California

fws.gov

A schoolyard site survey takes students on a journey around the campus to identify areas used by people, both formally and informally, physical features of the campus, and human-related and biological characteristics of the site.

MATERIALS

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide, see: <http://1.usa.gov/1RZLep0>
- All available maps and images of the school
- Camera
- Measuring tape
- Field guides
- Binoculars
- Pencils, markers, and graph paper

DIRECTIONS

Draw an outline of the school property, school buildings, and parking lots. This is your base map.

Walk the entire schoolyard.

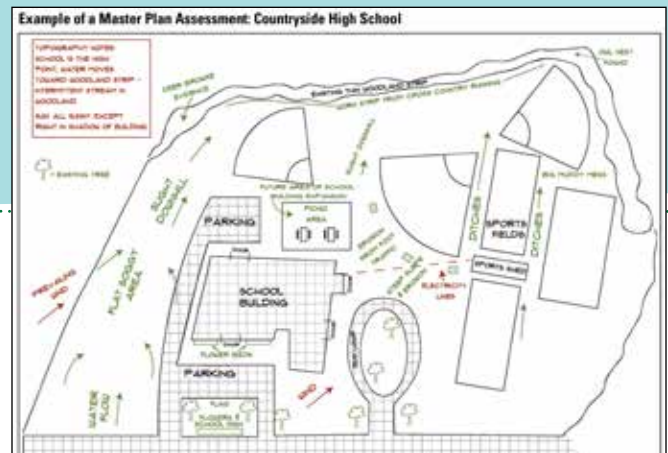
Sketch on your base map all of the important physical, human related, and biological characteristics listed below. Create a legend and designate symbols to mark important characteristics.

Create a collective schoolyard site survey that includes observations from the whole class about the following features:

Topography. Identify high and low spots. Locate steep slopes.

Prevailing wind. Indicate prevailing wind direction.

Sunny and shady areas. Distinguish between areas that receive full sun, partial shade, and full shade.



Water. Designate any areas that are obvious drainage or waterways. Indicate direction of water runoff. Locate any areas where erosion is occurring. Locate spots that seem especially wet or dry.

Structures. Identify structures where students play or gather such as playground equipment, bike racks, signs, benches, picnic tables, and fences.

Fields. Identify the athletic fields and areas that are used for informal play either by the school or other members of the community. Identify where students gather for fire drills.

Accessibility. Identify areas that are accessible during a class period. Indicate formal and informal pathways. Identify spaces used by the public.

Utility features. Locate obvious utility lines above or below ground. Locate existing water or irrigation lines and accessible spigots.

Plants. Locate and identify trees, shrubs, and plants that provide food and cover for wildlife, both on and adjacent to the school grounds.

Wildlife. Locate and identify signs of wildlife on the school grounds.

Groundcover. Indicate different groundcovers such as grass, bare earth, pavement, woodland groundcovers, native plantings, or garden areas.

Discuss your observations and completed schoolyard map with the class and with the rest of the school.



BUILDING CONNECTION VIA ACTIVITY MAPPING

AGES

4–18+ years old

CONTRIBUTED BY

MIG, Inc.

Berkeley, California
migcom.com



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The experiences children share at school can be just one facet of their “wild” lives outdoors. The goal of this three-step activity is to broaden students’ awareness of the role of outdoor spaces in their lives, while at the same time increasing their understanding of the diverse interests and experiences of their peers.

MATERIALS

- Poster-size local map
- Dot stickers, about 1 in (2.5 cm) diameter
- Star-shaped stickers
- Sticky notes
- Blank paper to draw on
- Pens, pencils, colored pencils and markers

DIRECTIONS

Give each student a blank piece of paper and ask them to draw their favorite thing to do outdoors. Allow 10 minutes to complete the exercise (more if everyone seems focused and engaged). Ask each student to share what they drew. To help students share with open minds, start by asking everyone to pay attention to the presentation and ask themselves how the person presenting is like them. Try to find something that you can identify with in every presentation. Identify common themes, interests, and experiences across the activities.

Ask students to write their favorite outdoor activities on dot stickers (3–5 per student). Open the big map. Have students take turns placing a star-shaped sticker on their homes, and then placing their activity dots on the map where they usually do the activity. Encourage students to share with the group about their choices for activities and places. Again, look for themes and point out common interests between students.

Discuss where the activities take place, who they do the activity with, and how they usually get there. (If you want, you can help students to draw their route from home or school to the place where they do their favorite outdoor activity.) Are there common spaces that students visit or modes of transportation that they use (or don’t use)? Discuss why this might be.

Do any of their favorite activities take place on the school grounds? Why or why not? Ask students to think about ways to incorporate favorite outdoor activities in the schoolyard. Use sticky notes to record comments and ideas, and place them on the map.

To close, choose one place students identified, or introduce them to a new one, and go for a walk together. Practice noticing small natural things around you, such as acorns, leaves, the sound the wind makes, etc. Discuss whether students visit this space on their own. If not, why not? Discuss ways to make accessing this space easier, safer, or more enjoyable.

Tip

When choosing a map, focus on an area that includes your school and is wide enough to cover several neighborhoods and local destinations. You can create one and print it at a local copy shop, or use a ready-made map. The map should be large enough for several students to gather around at the same time.

