

Place-Based Education

What Is Place-Based Education?

The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement defines place-based education (PBE) as an immersive learning experience that “places students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences, and uses these as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum” (Promise of Place). This learning model is grounded in the local community context and can take place in rural, urban, and suburban areas. Place-based education connects communities and schools and invites students to become engaged and active citizens. According to the Learning and The Power Of Place Project, outcomes of PBE include increased student engagement, improved learning outcomes, social and emotional learning, improved motivation and persistence, and a positive community impact.

Why Is Place-Based Education Important for FoodCorps Service Members?

FoodCorps service members engage students in a wide-variety of public school contexts across the United States. One objective of hands-on food education is to ensure that a lesson’s content and approach is relevant for individual students. Food education is inherently place-based because of how climate and seasonal differences affect growing food. A spring rural school garden in the Southwest is extremely different from a spring rural school garden in the Pacific Northwest. The food students eat is also influenced by the local community and cultures. Across the country, communities also have differing socioeconomic

pressures, histories, and values. Despite these differences, it is possible for *all* students to feel pride in their community and value what makes their place special. By using the place-based approaches described below, hands-on food education can provide a wonderful opportunity to engage students in their place.

What Are the Principles of Place-Based Education?

The following set of place-based learning design principles can help create place-based learning experiences in any setting:

- **Community as Classroom:** Communities serve as learning ecosystems for schools, where local and regional experts, experiences, and places are part of the expanded definition of a classroom.
- **Learner Centered:** Learning is personally relevant to students and enables student agency.
- **Inquiry Based:** Learning is grounded in observing, asking relevant questions, making predictions, and collecting data to understand the economic, ecological, and sociopolitical world.
- **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The curriculum matches the real world where the traditional subject area content, skills, and dispositions are taught through an integrated, interdisciplinary, and frequently project-based approach where all learners are accountable and challenged.
- **Local to Global Context:** Local learning

serves as a model for understanding global challenges, opportunities, and connections.

- **Design Thinking:** Design thinking provides a systematic approach for students to make meaningful impact in communities through the curriculum.

Questions to consider that inform a PBE approach to teaching:

- How can I use the surrounding community and environment to inform my teaching in an age-appropriate way?
- Have I explored the local community, including its history, economics, politics, ecology, and social dynamics?
- What are challenges the local community faces?
- How have I adapted my lesson to reflect the local community?
- How can I collaborate with other teachers to develop an interdisciplinary lesson?
- Does my lesson allow for student inquiry and ownership?
- Is there an opportunity to engage my students in a service-learning project?
- Do students have an opportunity to help adults with genuine problem solving?
- How can my students become agents of change?
- How are my students involved as school leaders?
- How can I learn alongside my students?
- Do my students feel a sense of pride in their community as a result of my lesson?

As you plan to lead hands-on experiences with students, keep these principles and questions in mind.

Source: *What is Place-Based Education and Why Does it Matter?* Developed by Getting Smart in partnership with Edulnnovation & Teton Science Schools (gettingsmart.com)

Recommended Resources

- The Center For Place-Based Education
- Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative
- Rural Schools Collaborative

