

# Mapmaking Project: Redefining Curriculum

*Dr. Randa Suleiman, Alverno College*

The goal of this practice is to build/reframe content-based curriculum that integrates socio-emotional learning (SEL) while prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

**Description:** Pre-service teachers will participate in a map making project that they can take and replicate in their field classroom. The project is adapted from David Sobel “mapmaking with children.” The project can be adapted to any grade level. The way it is designed with pre-service teachers is more at upper elementary level to middle school. This project can be compressed and taught in one lesson, but ideally, it is designed to be taught over multiple days or content areas as it focuses on an interdisciplinary approach.

According to Sobel, mapmaking benefits are:

- Foster Ecological Literacy Through Mapmaking
- Maps are a valuable bridge between the real world and the abstract world and can prepare children for understanding graphs of math and scientific information.
- Mapmaking is useful for teaching the content of social studies and geography + developing a sense of place.
- Maps and drawings are representations of things that are emotionally important to children.
- In the beginning maps represent their experiences of beauty, secrecy, adventure and comfort.

Children's ability to make and understand maps:

- Ages 5-7 -children start to move away from home and parents and explore the natural world.
- Ages 7-11 -children are predisposed to merging with nature and making geographic sense of the world around them.
- Ages 11-13 -children's geographic skills mature, and they start to move into a stage of social consciousness.

**Objectives:** Teacher candidates will apply the mapmaking strategy using place education by creating treasure hunt maps.

## **Interdisciplinary Academic focus:**

- **Social studies:** Geography and mapmaking
- **Literacy:** using journaling to document the process of mapmaking as well as the treasure hunt experience. The focus will be on narrative writing and using descriptive adjectives with the integration of emotion and how you feel through the experience.
- **Math:** measurement and using a scale to make the map.
- **Science:** examining the treasure hunt location by creating a map of the site and identifying all living and nonliving items.
- **Arts:** the option to use drawing, or photography, or videographing with the journal and the science map.

## **Observation = Mindfulness:**

### **Connecting to self**

- Mindfulness - mental health

- **Check-in:** Start every lesson with a check-in by asking “how are you doing?” Give time for teacher candidates to share how they are feeling and acknowledge those feelings. If space is available, you can ask teacher candidates to sit in a big circle where they can see everyone. The check-in fosters and supports expression and regulation of emotion as well as empathy.
- Awe - deep sense of peace
  - **Breath:** take one minute of deep breathing and mobility moves.

**Socio-emotional goals:**

**Connecting to human community**

- By making maps as a team
- Connecting through creating, not necessarily verbal or intellectual connection
- Working as a team to accomplish a goal (find the treasure)

This project fosters teamwork. The class will be divided into small groups of 3-4 teacher candidates. If times allow, it is strongly recommended that every lesson starts with team building “meet and greet” activity to foster healthy interactions and relationships with peers and adults. In addition, it is strongly recommended to establish and use teamwork norms and expectations. Each member of the team should have a role in every lesson that they can contribute to the team's success. This will foster and support identity of self and recognition of ability as well as social understanding as the team works together to find the treasure.

**Equity & inclusion goals:** This project is focused on inclusiveness of all teacher candidates and eventually students with all academic abilities. All will be equally engaged with this outdoor activity.

**Goals for this project for the teacher candidates to apply with k-12 students:**

- All students (particularly those who may exhibit disruptive classroom behavior) will be equally acknowledged for participating and cooperating in their team as they assume different roles in the team.
- Students will be working outdoors and will be encouraged to see that we are all an equal part of the natural world, which is here for all of us to enjoy, get peace from, and take care of.
- All students will be encouraged to see each other as equal contributors to work done as they plan, create, draw, and support each other to accomplish the goal as a team.

**Materials:** paper, pencil, measuring tape, measuring tools, sturdy construction paper, coloring tools or material, option to use phone for photography or videography, and any material to create the treasure. Make sure to provide multiple and various materials and resources for the teacher candidates to explore and use.

**Resources:**

Read books by David Sobel:

1. Place-based Education: Connecting classrooms and communities
2. Mapmaking with Children: Sense of Place Education for the Elementary Years

Read articles:

1. Drawing on Children's "Sense of Place" - The Starting Point for Teaching Social Studies and Geography. By Dr. David Hutchison - Brock University
2. What is Place-Based Education and why does it matter? Getting smart in partnership with eduInnovation & Teton Science Schools

General Guidelines:

This project can be used in outdoor or indoor space based on weather and availability. Preferably, an outdoor space around the school building or a nearby park. This project is designed to be fluid and has less structure that allows the teacher candidates or students to create structure as they work on their treasure map and go through problem solving as needed. This project is focused on team work.

### **Project outline:**

**Creating Rebus Treasure Hunt:** Based on activity in Mapmaking with Children by David Sobel

**Some big ideas:**

- Turn everyday into mysterious
- Challenge children to understand the language of clues
- Make connections between images on paper (maps) and the real world

**Suggested steps toward creating a treasure hunt**

- Create a panoramic view map of the area using a scale
- Locate a hiding place for the treasure
- Create a rebus that describes the location of your hiding place on stiff paper
- Cut the rebus up into pieces
- Hide the pieces in the mapped area
- Designate locations for the hidden puzzle pieces on the map
- Find or make a treasure and place it in a hiding place.
- Make sure to continue journaling as you reflect on your experience. You might want to document how you feel, what problems did you solve, how your team interacted, .....
- You can choose to draw pictures, take photos, or use a videograph to journal your experience.
- When done, teams will exchange maps and go on a treasure hunt.
- When your team locate the treasure, create a map of the location identifying living and nonliving things in the area.

**Design elements to consider**

1. Try to choose intriguing locations for hiding the puzzle pieces. Make it so people look at or into interesting places they wouldn't normally notice.
2. Make the puzzle pieces not too easy to find and not too hard to find
3. Come up with a novel way to hide or present the treasure (up in a tree, down in a hole, underneath the water fountain)