



PARTICIPATORY DESIGN ACTIVITY SERIES
Model Making

"If you could have the best school ground ever, one that's good for people and the planet, what would be in it?"

Details

Building models with children and youth is one of many ways to engage them as valued participants in the design process for their school ground project. Through this fun and tactile experience, students of different grade levels are encouraged to reflect on their observations and perspectives about their school grounds and contribute their wishes into 3-dimensional design ideas.

Category: Design

Grades: K – Grade 3 & Grade 4 – Grade 8 (with modifications per age group)

Time: 2 x 45 min sessions

Summary: Students will dream about what could actually be on their school grounds! They will explore in a tactile, experiential manner, using a variety of materials and loose parts. They could even decide to put all their individual creations together to create one large school ground to represent everyone's hopes and dreams.

Materials:

- Cardboard squares approximately 8"X8" or 20cm X 20cm to be used as a base
- Construction or coloured paper, extra cardboard
- Clay (natural), plasticine or home-made playdough
- Loose parts (sticks, stones, leaves, bits of grass, string, branches, pinecones and flowers)
- Pens, coloured pencils, crayons, markers

Students will:

- Tap into their creativity and explore the design of outdoor spaces by building on the ideas and images they generated in the **Window of Wishes** and what they learned through the **Dotmocracy** activity, developing it into a 2- or 3-dimensional model.
- Use decision-making and critical thinking to decide which aspect of their earlier work they wish to represent in this activity.
- Deepen their speaking and listening skills, as they may present these models to each other and listen to each other present.



Step 1. Setting the stage for design

Review where the students are in the Participatory Design Activity Series by reminding them when they began this project sharing ideas through their Windows of Wishes and their participation in the Dotmocracy activity. What came out of these activities? Then review the results of these activities and any additional visioning activities that were completed by engaging students in a brief discussion.

Prompts:

- “Can anyone remember some of the most popular features and elements in the Dotmocracy activity?”
- Pick a few, “ Who can share why they put a sticker on this?, and this one?”
- “Why would these be amazing things to explore in a play area?”

Step 2. Design Principles

Before we begin building our dream school grounds, let's consider some key guiding principles for our designs.

Prompts:

- **Connect to Nature** - make a play space that is appealing to other living things like birds, insects, pollinators, turtles, toads, trees and flowers.
- **Connect to each other** - imagine making a play space that you could enjoy with your family and friends.
- **Use natural materials** - design a nature-filled play space with logs, trees, rocks, soil, sand and plants

Step 3. The Build

Students will create a model or 2- or 3-dimensional image of what they would like to see on their school grounds, and what they feel would be fun, inclusive and appealing for everyone.

Prompts:

- “Put your engineering, design and landscape architects' caps on, we are going to design a new school ground for our school! (K - grade 3)
- “Your ideas are so important in helping to create a new design for the school ground – you spend lots of time out there and have valuable experience to offer about what it feels like to be in the space!”
- “Think of what you and their friends would be doing on the school ground”

Instructions:

- “Each one of you has a cardboard piece that you can build on”.
- “Using the material on your table, you can begin to build your dream nature playground”.
- “We also have a table of extra materials up here which you’re welcome to use”.
- “There are no right and wrong ways of doing this”!
- “Remember to consider the guiding principles”.

Step 4. Interpretation and Documentation

Once the students have created their 2- or 3-D images or models, speak with each student (independently or in small groups) about what they have created. You can write 1 or 2 sentences to go with the creation and take a picture or shoot a short clip (1 min) to capture their ideas on video. (grade 4 - grade 8) If possible, the older grades could help put these images together into a PPT, with the explanation of what they have created included.

Reflections

What did you notice about the common approaches used in all of the models? What did you notice about how different students built some of the same elements?

Additional Resources

I Have a Dream Photovoice Project

<https://www.growingupboulder.org/ihad-photovoice.html>

For outdoor, nature-connected learning materials:

https://evergreen.ca/resource-hub/umbrella_resources/outdoor-classroom-resources/

For more information on Climate-Ready Schools:

https://evergreen.ca/resource-hub/umbrella_resources/climate-ready-schools-resources/

