REL Pacific Ask A REL Response

Curriculum and Instruction

April 2020

Question:

What are best practices in place-based education?

Response:

Following an established REL Pacific research protocol, we conducted a web-based search for resources related to place-based education (see Methods section for search terms and resource selection criteria). We first focused our search on studies in the Pacific for greater relevancy to our partners in the Pacific region; however, we also included studies with more generalizable findings due to the currently limited amount of research that is specific to these contexts.

References are listed in alphabetical order as opposed to order of relevance. Descriptions of the resources are quoted directly from the publication abstracts. Sources in this response have not been evaluated in terms of quality and are offered only for reference. It should also be noted that we enlisted only the most commonly used research sources for our searches and that, because these sources are hardly comprehensive, other relevant references and resources likely exist.

Note: In response to COVID-19, the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) have collaborated to produce a series of evidence-based resources and guidance about teaching and learning in a remote environment, as well as other considerations brought by the pandemic. To access a full list of these resources, visit https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19.

Research References

Chawla, L., and White, A. (2018). Place-based education and citizen science: Resources for learning beyond the classroom. *NAMTA Journal, 43*(3), 4–22. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1244425.

> *From the abstract:* "This fully documented article about place-based education and citizen science offers annotated sources that can be used for Montessori programs at all levels and in all settings for site selection and curriculum connections. This compilation of resources can serve as a practical tool kit for organizing place-based learning in schools. The reader can enjoy this chapter by reading through from beginning to end or can simply go directly to the resources that are organized by type and topic."

Deringer, S. A. (2017). Mindful place-based education: Mapping the literature. *Journal of Experiential Education, 40*(4), 333–348. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1160753.

> *From the abstract:* "Place-based education and mindfulness are not new concepts, but the idea of combining the two bodies of work to explore what mindful place-based education might look like may provide a useful new perspective. The purpose of the literature review is to take place-based pedagogical methods and examine how mindfulness might influence the experience of educators engaged in place-based teaching. In this literature review, I examine the constructs of place-based education and sociocognitive mindfulness with special attention to literature that offers insight about possible overlap between the two constructs. I examine methodological choices and findings of foundational research describing both constructs. This literature review found that place-based education and mindfulness are closely linked, and that a mindful place-based pedagogy may help teachers and students experience place in a deeper way and think more critically about the societal norms and power structures that surround them. Outdoor educators should use mindful place-based education to help deepen student and teacher experiences of place with the intent of encouraging students to critically examine power structures and strive for deeper learning experiences."

Howley, A., Howley, M., Camper, C., & Perko, H. (2011). Place-based education at Island Community School. *Journal of Environmental Education, 42*(4), 216–236. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ932560.

> *From the abstract:* "This qualitative case study of Island Community School provides a detailed description of how one school incorporated place-based, environmentally conscious education over the course of more than a decade. The study explored the conditions that supported and constrained this approach in an isolated rural community. Data came primarily from interviews with educators, students, and community members but also from participant observation. Four themes helped explain relevant dynamics: leadership by the principal, interaction with seasonal residents, teachers' varied practices, and school culture invested in student inquiry. The research illustrated an approach that prepared students in one rural community with environmental awareness and skills that might serve them wherever they choose to live as adults."

Liebtag, E. (2018). Leveraging the power of place: A new commitment to personalizing learning. *Childhood Education, 94*(2), 37–42. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1173530.

> *From the abstract:* "Personalized learning offers instruction that matches students' learning preferences and specific interests. Taking innovative approaches to engaging with students' individual contexts and interests through place-based education can be particularly meaningful. Place-based education (PBE) is anytime, anywhere learning that leverages the power of place, and not just the power of technology, to personalize learning. PBE is learning that immerses students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, and opportunities, using these experiences as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and other subjects across the curriculum. This article offers tips to educators on how to get started integrating place-based experiences into their curriculum on a small, yet comprehensive scale."

Power, A. L. (2004). An evaluation of four place-based education programs. *Journal of Environmental Education, 35*(4), 17–32. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ707586.

> *From the abstract:* "The Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC) was formed to invest in the development of place-based education models of professional development and whole school improvement through more rigorous evaluation. An external evaluation team conducted a cross-program study, analyzing the effects of 4 place-based education programs on teachers, students, schools, and communities. This article reports on 2 aspects of the study: (a) a cross-program analysis of the 4 programs strengths and challenges, and (b) an analysis of trends in teacher practice change across the programs. Data sources included 163 adult interviews (teachers, administrators, program staff, and community, members). 85 student interviews, and 41 field observations. Recommendations for program development and emergent themes for further research are reported."

Reid, R. E. (2019). Intercultural learning and place-based pedagogy: Is there a connection? *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* 157, 77–90. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1207699.

> *From the abstract:* "Place-based education has the capacity to extend the learning community beyond the parameters of the university and to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous, domestic, and international students into the public space and onto the local landscape. By intentionally using place-based and intercultural pedagogy, this paper draws on student reflections to investigate how intercultural learning occurred through a place-based assignment."

Sang, K., and Worchel, J. (2017). A place-based process for reimagining learning in the Hawaiian context. *Voices in Urban Education, 46,* 26–32. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1148604.

> *From the abstract:* "What would an educational system centered on core Hawaiian values look like? The Office of Hawaiian Education, established by the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) in 2015, has been exploring this question through a community-based process that differs significantly from typical Western approaches to policymaking. Often,

policymakers use a top-down approach to policy formulation and implementation that focuses on outputs, outcomes, and impact. In contrast, Hawai'i's new student outcomes framework emphasizes community and indigenous values, knowledge, and shared ownership. This values-based approach is embedded in every aspect of the Office of Hawaiian Education's work—from the student outcomes framework, to the implementation process, to the way they speak about their work. Hawai'i's unique emphasis on community, adaptability, and teaching to the whole child contains transferrable lessons for other policy efforts and contexts. This article provides reflections from leaders in the Office of Hawaiian Education as they answer questions and review their process in developing a culturally responsive assessment framework rooted in Hawai'i's indigenous context, values, and beliefs."

Sianturi, M., Chiang, C., and Au Hurit, A. (2018). Impact of a place-based education curriculum on indigenous teacher and students. *International Journal of Instruction, 11*(1), pp. 311–328. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1165222.

From the abstract: "This study aimed to investigate the impact of a place-based education curriculum (PBE) on the indigenous teacher empowerment and improvement of indigenous students' learning achievement. This study applied mixed method research particularly concurrent triangulation design. The study took place in a remote indigenous elementary school in Papua, Indonesia. The participants were an indigenous teacher and eleven indigenous students. The PBE curriculum entitled 'Who is Papuans' was developed by integrating the indigenous students' place. Findings of the study revealed an effective teaching for the indigenous teacher provided by developing and practicing the PBE curriculum. In order to teach indigenous students effectively, there is a need for indigenous teacher to: (a) focusing on the curriculum; (b) starting from day to day of students' life; (c) emphasizing the use of dialogs, pictures, story, writing, and telling; and (d) utilizing the cultural approach to enable students' learning achievement. By developing and practicing the PBE curriculum, indigenous teacher also obtained a new sight of culture awareness."

Smith, G. A., & Sobel, D. (2010). *Place- and community-based education in schools.* KY: Routledge. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED515662.

From the abstract: "Place- and community-based education—an approach to teaching and learning that starts with the local—addresses two critical gaps in the experience of many children now growing up in the United States: contact with the natural world and contact with community. It offers a way to extend young people's attention beyond the classroom to the world as it actually is, and to engage them in the process of devising solutions to the social and environmental problems they will confront as adults. This approach can increase students' engagement with learning and enhance their academic achievement. Envisioned as a primer and guide for educators and members of the public interested in incorporating the local into schools in their own communities, this book explains the purpose and nature of place- and community-based education and provides multiple examples of its practice. The detailed descriptions of learning experiences set both within and beyond the classroom will help readers begin the process of advocating for or incorporating local content and experiences into their schools. This book contains the following: (1) Young Achievers

Science and Mathematics Pilot School; (2) Place- and Community-based Education: Definitions and Antecedents; (3) Why Worry about the Local in the Era of New Child Left Behind: A Rationale for Place- and Community-based Education; (4) Place- and Community-based Education in Practice: Starting with Local Knowledge and Issues; (5) Place- and Community-based Education in Practice: Knowledge and Issues; (6) Impact on Academic Achievement; (7) Striving for More than Test Scores; (8) Collaborating with Community Partners (by Delia Clark); (9) Leaders as Gardeners: Creating Space for Place- and Community-based Education; (10) No School is an Island—Except on the Coast of Maine; and (11) Changing Schools to Embrace the Local."

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- Place based/place-based education
- Culturally relevant education
- "Place-based education" and "evaluative"
- "Place-based education" and "practice"

Databases and Resources

We searched ERIC, a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences, for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database Google Scholar.

Reference Search and Selection Criteria

REL Pacific searched ERIC and other academic journal databases for studies that were published in English-language peer-reviewed research journals within the last 20 years. REL Pacific prioritized documents that are accessible online and publicly available, and prioritized references that provide practical information based on peer-reviewed research for the education stakeholders who requested this Ask A REL. Sources included in this document were last accessed in April 2020. Methodological priorities/considerations given in the review and selection of the references:
- Study types—randomized control trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, etc.
- Target population, sample size, study duration, etc.
- Limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.