



Photograph by Avalon Park Elementary Student

K-12 Teacher Generated Curriculum: *My Community*

The following curriculum was developed by Chicago Public Schools teachers who participated in professional development workshops led by the MoCP. This program was funded by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Jenn Morea and Corinne Rose additionally contributed to this section.

Inspired by MoCP collection images from the Changing Chicago project, which is described in the MoCP-produced street photography curriculum guide (available at <http://www.mocp.org/education/resources-for-educators.php>) Avalon Park students of Sheila Morrow and Patricia Goodrich went for a walk with cameras to look at and document their community. Back at school, students viewed the images they made and discussed some of the things that they feel make their community a positive place to live and the things that could be improved.

Students then wrote descriptive paragraphs or poems about the images they made, noting things such as a Sears store that had served many generations in their community and was closing, causing residents to have to travel further to shop for essentials such as clothing and hardware. They documented a colorful mural on the outside of a store wall and noted the positive presence of their school and public library. They noticed the businesses that were well-maintained and added to quality of life in their community and those that they felt brought the community down. Teachers noticed how enthusiastic their normally reluctant writers were to write about photographs they had made and that represented places they knew well.



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Curricular Extensions

There is a lot of emergent language arts and social science curriculum within the context of this project that could be taken in many directions. One idea is to have students think in terms of urban planning. For example, students could write a proposal to their alderman, in which they outline improvements (additional businesses, infrastructure, public space, city/government services, etc.) for their community and provide photographs or sketches and even estimate a budget. Another idea is to have students do research, conduct interviews with community members, and look at older photographs of their community in order to document the changes over time. This could be an on-going project that 4th grade students add to each year.

Below are some questions for students to reflect on before, during and after their walk. These activities should be done in connection with close-readings of works by professional artists featured in the MoCP “Framing Ideas” street photography and landscape and place curriculum guides.

My Community: Guiding Questions for Students

1. What kinds of places do you see in your community? For example: parks, shoe stores, gas stations, gardens, restaurants, barber shops/hair salons, banks, libraries, schools, empty lots, houses, apartments. What do you see a lot of? What do you see only a little of? What don't you see/what is missing? [Note: Teachers could set this up as a scavenger hunt where students mark off various things on a list as they see them during their walk. They could then write 2-3 things that they did not see on their walk. They might then discuss what they would like to keep in their community and what they would like to change. They could work in small groups and make a “Wish List” which could then be developed into an urban planning project where each group would have to decide on a few changes to make in their community and justify how this would enrich the community.]
2. Engage your senses. What are the smells, tastes, sounds of your community? How would you describe how your community feels? If specific places in your community could talk, what would they say? What would the basketball hoop at the park say? What about the front porch of your best friend's house?
3. What colors and shapes do you see? Be specific.

4. What can we learn about our community from the kinds of places that exist within it?
5. What do you think others would think or feel about your community if they visited it or saw the photographs you made? What details would lead them to think or feel that way?

Select Avalon Park Student Images of Their Community



Select Avalon Park Student Comments about Their Photographs: *This is my community. I live in it with my neighbors and friends. I have family all around me. It's nice to have a community where people are all around you to help if you are in danger; These are my friends. This is my school. There is a bird house next to my school; Sears is a good store but it is closing. My mother used to buy my clothes at Sears; This is Goodies Supermarket but people don't go there anymore because it is old and nasty. It makes our community look bad, but I still go there because their chips are off the chain; This (mural) is on the side of a store. I think it makes our community look beautiful like this is a "new you;" This is a chicken and waffles restaurant in my community. It is a nice place to sit and eat; This is my school playground. It is a very nice area to play in. It is safe for children to go out to play with their friends and not get bullied; I pass this store everyday. Maybe families go there everyday because everything is a dollar.*

Variation: Cheryl Pope from Skinner West Elementary school had her students view and discuss MoCP collection images from the Changing Chicago project and the MoCP landscape and place curriculum guide and consider the places that are important to them. They then did a close reading of the poem Knoxville Tennessee by Nikki Giovanni, noting the sensory details and structures the artist used to evoke a strong sense of place. They additionally discussed the inevitability of change in the landscape and in nature and did a close reading of the poem *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost. Inspired by the theme of change and Frost's writing, students wrote their own poems.

Knoxville Tennessee

I always like summer
Best
you can eat fresh corn
From daddy's garden
And okra
And greens
And cabbage
And lots of
Barbeque
And buttermilk
And homemade ice-cream
At the church picnic
And listen to

Gospel music
Outside
At the church
Homecoming
And go to the mountains with
Your grandmother
And go barefooted
And be warm
All the time
Not only when you go to bed
And sleep

-Nikki Giovanni

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.
-Robert Frost

Skinner West Student Poems about Change

Time Goes By
-Torger S.

Time goes by
And you just sit and
Wait until you die.
Why you live and
Why you die
Still is missing an answer.
But I have learned
Across my days
That life is for
The ones we love
 We cherish them:
For all we know
We might not be with
Them anymore.

Joe And The Crows By Will R.

A guy named Joe
Used a scarecrow
To make some crows go;
They were here
Eating corn ears
With the scarecrow
The crows Go!

Avalon Park Lesson Select ELA Common Core Learning Standards Used:

CC.K-12.L.R.3 Knowledge of Language: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CC.K-12.R.R.1 Key Ideas and Details: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

K-12 R R.2 CC.K-12.R.R.2 Key Ideas and Details: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CC.K-12.L.R.6 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

CC.K-12.R.R.6 Craft and Structure: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CC.K-12.R.R.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CC.K-12.R.R.9 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

K-12 R R.10 CC.K-12.R.R.10 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Skinner West Project. Upper Grade Common Core Standards for Reading Literature and Writing Poetry/Narrative and Use of Multimedia

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Quote Accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Determine A Theme Of A Story/Poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story

Compare And Contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama on specific details in the text (e.g. how characters interact).

Writing Connection generate poetry or narratives with similar themes, settings, or characters.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Determine The Meaning Of Words and phrases as they are used in text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Explain How a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Writing Reflections in poetry or narratives showing point of view from their personal experiences.

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

Analyze How visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g. graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Compare And Contrast stories in the same genre on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Use Of Multimedia (e.g. photography) in representing themes or personal perspective of original writing.

RANGE OF READING AND COMPLEXITY OF TEXT

By The End Of The Year read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry at the high end of the grades 8-9 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Assessment In Writing poetry and narratives that show use of theme, figurative language, character and point of view.

Multimedia Reflections in photographic images related to thematic writing.