

# The Sad School Site!

## Essential Question:

*How can we improve our school site?*

**At a Glance:** Through guided imagery, learners will envision the transformation of their school site into a healthy ecosystem flourishing with gardens and wildlife by implementing a community-centered service learning project.

## Background Information:

This activity is designed to elicit ideas from students on transforming their school site into a healthy ecosystem and an exciting outdoor classroom. The guided imagery describes a boring school ground being changed into a thriving ecosystem through the efforts of Garden Earth Naturalist kids, their teachers, their parents and other community individuals. After the students listen to the guided imagery, they go outside on their school site and draw designs for changing their school site.

## Procedure:

1. Read the guided imagery story 'The Sad School Site' to students. You may want to adapt the story so it describes your school site. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine what the story is describing as you read.

## Discussion/Assessment:



Stone Mountain Elementary



Buchanan Elementary

Ask students what they thought of the story.  
Did it remind them of their school? In what ways?  
How would they like to change their school site?

**Location:** Outdoors or indoors

**Objectives:** *Learners will:*

- 1) discuss ideas and design plans for changing their school site into a healthy ecosystem and exciting learning environment

**Skills:** communication, listening, observation

**Supplies:**

- story script: *The Sad School Site*
- pencils and cardboard clipboards

**Subjects:** language arts

**Time:** 20 minutes

## The Sad School Site

Once upon a time, there was a poor miserable school yard that nobody loved. A long time ago, much of it had been paved over with blacktop and surrounded with a chain-link fence. In some places, soil was exposed from heavy rains that formed deep erosion gullies. Very few birds, trees, or flowers lived there, but a few weeds grew around the edges of the playground. In one corner there was some old playground equipment, and game designs were painted on the blacktop. Kids spent a lot of time sitting around, playing on the old swing set, and playing games with balls. There wasn't much else to do. The students didn't really like the playground, and neither did the teachers. The children rarely came outside, except at playtime. They thought it was a sad, dull place.

This went on for a long time. Then one day some people had an idea. They didn't like the school yard. They knew that their school yard needed help and that it was up to them to do something. First they would need to make a plan. They needed lots of ideas from kids, their parents, their teachers and from other people in the community who cared. Everybody, the kids included, drew designs and talked about what kind of place they wanted to play (and learn) in. They raised money to buy what they needed, and then it was time to start.

The school yard was divided into different areas. One part of the school yard was saved for ball games, and another area was set aside for a playscape of wooden structures to climb on. One part was to be the wildlife area, another area, a place for children's gardens. One day everybody pitched in, tearing out some of the blacktop. New dirt was brought in to form small hills, and everybody helped hollow out a small pond.

Soon it was time to plant things. The children planted trees and flowers and grass. Around the pond they planted cattails and rushes. They built vegetable gardens, and beside the fence they planted vines and flower gardens. They put in places to sit, a weather station, bird houses, bird feeders and other study stations so they could use their school site to learn science, social studies, math, art and music. The outdoors would not just be their playground but would also be a healthy ecosystem and a fun place to learn!

After a few months, the kids noticed that several frogs had moved into in their pond. Soon birds moved into the trees, and butterflies began to visit the flowers. The vegetables, flowers, and herbs in their gardens provided food for wildlife and were harvested for classroom activities. And the children and teachers went outside often, learning something new every time.

Today it's hard to believe that there was ever blacktop and erosion gullies where the trees and gardens are. The trees are tall, the bushes are big, and the whole wildlife area looks like a small forest. The ugly chain-link fence is covered with vines, and birds sit there and sing, or look for insects among the leaves. The yard is still changing. As new kids and their parents come to the school, they have new ideas for it. Each new person who helps the yard becomes a steward to it, and as long as that happens, the student will have a great place to learn and the birds and flowers will live there happily ever after!