

## What is Place-Based Education?

**Next Step Adventure Outdoor Education resources** are created with a number of guiding principles – engaging, hands-on STEM activities, the Iowa Core, service learning, and project-based learning. One guidepost that educators often have questions about is **place-based education**. Though not a new idea, it is gaining traction as educators seek to link learning to neighborhoods, communities and the environment.

**Place-based education** connects with the local community – nearby nature and culture – as the foundation for the curriculum. Real world experiences provide the starting point for deeper investigations. The schoolyard becomes an **outdoor lab** as students use magnifying glasses to examine insects in the grass, journal their observations of trees from a “wonder seat,” or measure the wind speed in math class. Even if the topic is an abstract concept in a faraway place, such as rain clouds, students’ entry point is a local connection like making a rain gauge.

From the “forest kindergartens” in Europe to schools right here in Iowa, a growing body of **research** supports place-based education.

“The findings are clear: place-based education fosters students’ connection to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and communities. It boosts student achievement and improves environmental, social and economic vitality.” (A *nine-year survey*, Place-Based Education Collaborative, 2010.)

## Principles of Successful Place-Based Education

- Learning takes place on-site in the school yard, and in the local community
- Learning is personally relevant to the learner
- Local learning serves as the foundation for understanding and participating in regional and global issues
- Learning supports the development of a love for one’s place in the world
- Learning is supported by strong and varied partnerships with local neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, and government

### For more information:

*How to Raise a Wild Child: The art and science of falling in love with nature* by Scott Sampson, 2015

*Into the Field* by Clare Walker Leslie, John Tallmadge and Tom Wessels, 1996

*Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, 2005

*Mapmaking with Children* by David Sobel, 1998

*Nature as a Guide* by Linda Lloyd Nebbe, 1991

*Place-Based Education* by David Sobel, 2004

*Schoolyard Enhanced Learning* by Herbert W. Broda, 2007