The Open Canopy Handbook
Slowing down, sharing stories, making connections
Liz Dawes Duraisingh and Shari Tishman
with Carrie James and Sarah Sheya
Pedagogy and Practices from the Out of Eden Learn Project
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How to Navigate This Book

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When you want to navigate back to the Table of Contents, simply click it and it will transport you there.
This book has been a long-held dream. The four of us—Liz Dawes Duraisingh, Shari Tishman, Carrie James and Sarah Sheya—were the original developers of The Open Canopy program, formerly known as Out of Eden Learn, and for several years we envisioned a volume that would crystallize and share all that we’ve learned. In the end, circumstances and competing demands resulted in the authorial work being taken up by Liz and Shari. But the ideas represented here are for the most part the fruit of a collective intellectual and practical effort that took place over many years.

Our ideas rely heavily on the work of the thousands of students who have actively taken part in Open Canopy learning journeys: At this writing, over 70,000 students situated in more than 70 countries have participated. Students post on the platform pseudonymously and we don’t know their real identities. But we have had the privilege of learning from their work and their interactions with one another, as well as from their thoughtful reflections in online surveys and interviews. The Open Canopy program, and the philosophy underlying it, have been profoundly shaped by their contributions.

We do know the identity of the numerous educators whose participation and reflections have also shaped the development of the program and its philosophy. We thank them sincerely for choosing to enroll their students in The Open Canopy and for seeking to broaden their students’ understanding of the world while extending their own practice as teachers. We have relied on them to implement the program and have learned a great deal from the ways in which they have adapted our curricula and resources to meet the needs of their students and teaching contexts.

Next, we thank writer and explorer Paul Salopek, whose crazy-sounding scheme to walk around the world in the migratory footsteps of our human ancestors was the original inspiration for The Open Canopy. His commitment to slow journalism and openness to new encounters have informed and remain deeply aligned with the educational philosophy presented in this book, and we greatly value his friendship. We similarly thank Julia Payne, who for many years has managed Paul’s walk and its associated activities: She has been a longstanding thought partner and friend to us. Linda Lynch also provided invaluable advice to us in the early years of our endeavors. We additionally thank the Out of Eden Walk board members—particularly Don Belt, Dave Pond, and Stephen Kahn—who have enthusiastically supported our ongoing collaboration, as well as the Walk’s longtime cartographer Jeff Blossom.

The Abundance Foundation, founded and directed by Stephen Kahn, was the founding supporter of this work. Stephen’s initial leap of faith
into an unconventional research project, and his subsequent support and enthusiasm for everything that we do at Project Zero, have been essential for the entire Open Canopy enterprise. We also thank Emi Kane, who for many years was our program director at the Abundance Foundation. She, like Stephen Kahn, contributed important ideas and helped make the work possible.

Additional funders have also been immensely important to us. Anne Germanacos, through The Germanacos Foundation and then the Firehouse Fund, has been an early and constant supporter of our work. Marjorie Tiven and her team at Global Cities Inc., an initiative of Bloomberg Philanthropies, run an online intercultural exchange program similar to The Open Canopy—one that brings middle school-age children from around the world for year-long learning experiences focused on important global issues. Marjorie and her team have generously supported our work and become important thought partners and colleagues through our collaborative work on learning outcomes. In addition to Marjorie, we especially want to thank Anissa Bazari, Ester Fuchs, and Megan Wilhelm for their collegiality and friendship. We also thank the Qatar Foundation and the National Geographic Society for providing invaluable financial support at critical junctures.

We are profoundly grateful to the additional current team members of The Open Canopy project: Christina Smiraglia, Madison Sorel and, more recently, Andrea Sachdeva. Our work continues to flourish and develop because of them. We also thank our former team members, each of whom made uniquely valuable contributions to the work: Anastasia Aguiar, Susannah Blair, Luz Helena Cano Diaz, Vincent Chunhao, Jessica Fei, Kim Frumin, Nimah Gobir, Nia Hamilton, Alyssa Kreikemeier, Jessica Metzger, Morgan Nixon, Dami Seung, Kate Tanha, Devon Wilson, and Yan Yang. Over the years, many master’s students from the Harvard Graduate School of Education attended open project meetings and offered helpful ideas and feedback.

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For many years, the project published a blog. Although it is not currently active, many blogpost authors contributed in a variety of ways to the lifeforce of the project, bringing fresh ideas and perspectives,
and reporting important insights and developments. We are grateful for the blogpost contributions of: Anastasia Agular, Brenda Ball, Susie Blair, Arina Bokas, Andres Camacho, Luz Helena Cano, Jolyn Chua, Alexis Cole, Maria Fabiana Grasso, Jessica Fei, Kim Frumin, Nimah Gobir, Alyssa Kreikmeier, Charlotte Leech, Linda Lynch, Jordan Magid, Verónica Boix Mansilla, Micaela Manso, Deb McLean, Mike McPharlin, Kiriaki Mellou, Paula Mello, Vanenka Mosqueira, Michele Nguyen, Morgan Nixon, Tabbatha O’Donnell, Amanda Ottaway, Cameron Paterson, Vincent Chunao Qian, Melissa Quiter, Juliana Reydon, Anjali Rodrigues, Ann Rooney, Andrea Sachdeva, Barbara Sahli, Paul Salopek, Hollis Scott, Dami Seung, Annie Sheridan, Christina Smiraglia, Kate Tanha, Mark Urwick, Devon Wilson, Yan Yang, and Kim Young. We also want to thank the talented web developers and designers who created, maintained, and have continued to evolve the custom-built platform that allowed us to build an international learning community and to experiment with new pedagogical practices. John Sulkow and Jeremy Lachs did the original website design work, building it from scratch. Since 2016, Rudy Mutter of Yeti LLC has been our trusted thought partner and go-to person for maintaining the platform and developing new features.

Finally, we especially thank the people who helped to bring this book to fruition: Majo Brito Paez and Madison Sorel took great care and effort in assembling the companion galleries of student work, Andrea Sachdeva proofread the text and provided invaluable editorial advice, and Andrea Tishman, the book designer, worked with us every step of the way to help us produce an accessible and visually compelling book.

Finally, Shari and Liz want to thank their families–Bob and Stefan Sowa and Manoj, Joseph, and Tom Duraisingh–for their encouragement and support, not only during the writing of this book but also over the many years it has taken to build and develop this project.

An acknowledgement of our context

The Open Canopy pedagogy has evolved over more than a decade of working closely with teachers and students from many different learning contexts and corners of the world. It has also been enriched by contributions from graduate students and research assistants at the Harvard Graduate School of Education—who likewise come from many different contexts and geographical locations. This diversity of contributors has helped us work towards a key purpose of the Open Canopy program, which is to create opportunities for young people to exchange their stories and perspectives largely on their own terms and in ways that honor the complexity of their identities and lived experiences. At the same time, our own perspectives and life experiences, as well as those of our contributors and colleagues, inevitably shape our approach. We acknowledge that the Open Canopy pedagogy is not neutral, nor are the values it
expresses universal.

We also wish to acknowledge that Harvard University, which is where we work and where this book was written, is located on the traditional and ancestral land of the Massachusett, the original inhabitants of what is now known as Boston and Cambridge. We pay respect to the people of the Massachusetts Tribe, past and present, and honor the land itself which remains sacred to the Massachusetts People. We admire and acknowledge indigenous ways of knowing and find many points of inspiration in the First People’s Principles of Learning, as articulated by the First Nations Education Steering Committee in 2006/2007.
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Introduction

In a large classroom filled with 10-12-year-olds, there is a pleasant level of quiet conversation as students work on preparing a presentation that they will shortly share with their peers. Recently, as part of an activity called “taking neighborhood walks,” students have each taken a walk in their own local areas. Their assignment was to slow down and look at their everyday surroundings with fresh eyes, imagining what might be interesting to other people and documenting things that newly catch their eye. Students have taken pictures of swirling clouds and layered tree bark; of intricately cracked concrete and overhead electrical wires; of insects and flowers and bicycle spokes. Same-aged students in five other classrooms around the world have also done the activity. Soon, all the students will post their presentations online and explore each others’ local areas through the eyes of their global peers.

This classroom is imaginary, but the activity it describes has been done by students in thousands of classrooms around the world. It is drawn from a curriculum called The Present and the Local, one of several curricula associated with The Open Canopy: an approach to teaching and learning that encourages young people to slow down and observe the world closely, share stories and perspectives with one another, and make connections between their own lives and bigger human stories.

The Open Canopy was initially developed in 2013, under the original name of Out of Eden Learn, as a free online intercultural exchange program for youth aged 4-19. Since then, the program has evolved into a unique pedagogy that is applicable to both online and in-person contexts: Educators use Open Canopy principles and practices to expand their vision of what learning can look like, and to enhance the way they teach. The map below, which does not objectively represent the size of countries and continents, shows the range of locations from which young people have participated in The Open Canopy since 2013. At this writing, the program has reached over 70,000 students in more than 70 countries and continues to be freely available to educators worldwide.
This book describes the underlying principles and practices of the Open Canopy approach, bringing them to life by drawing on a wide variety of original student work. The book also offers curricula (what we call learning journeys), activities (which we also call footsteps), and instructional tools that educators can use directly as written or adapt to fit their own contexts. Our hope is that the book will be of interest to people who want to learn more about the educational philosophy behind The Open Canopy, as well as educators who are looking for some daily inspiration about what to teach tomorrow.

The remainder of this Introduction gives a brief overview of the philosophy and history of the Open Canopy approach, and provides a roadmap of the chapters to come.

The Open Canopy Principles

There are five basic principles at the heart of the Open Canopy approach. Three of the principles were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and are lightly woven into the opening story about neighborhood walks. They are:

1. **Slowing Down to Observe the World Closely.**
   This principle emphasizes the importance of slowing down to observe the world in ways that take us beyond our first impressions, helping us to notice things we might otherwise overlook and to discern greater nuance and complexity.
2. *Sharing Stories and Perspectives.*
This principle focuses on the related practices of telling stories and offering and taking perspectives—practices that are important for exploring and building identity, for learning about other people and the world, and for developing one's own voice.

This principle encourages students to make connections to other people and their life experiences, and between the everyday artifacts of daily life and larger global forces, stories, and systems.

These principles describe three distinct but overlapping orientations towards learning. We believe that instruction that reflects these principles can play an important role in helping young people understand the complex, interconnected world they live in today, and also help them develop a sense of individual and collective agency with regard to the challenges they will likely face in the future. In different measures, these principles are present in all Open Canopy activities and curricula.

There are two additional Open Canopy principles with a slightly different focus. They emphasize elements of instructional design that support the development of the three primary learning principles. These elements inform the design of all Open Canopy offerings, and they can help educators design their own learning experiences as well. They are:

4. *Learner-generated content.*
This principle underscores the importance of giving students the opportunity to find and explore themes that are personally interesting or relevant to them, and to engage with content that has been chosen and produced by other students.

5. *Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange.*
This principle emphasizes the power of learning with and from one's peers through live or asynchronous dialogue—dialogue that can enhance students’ sense of wellbeing and belonging, as well as their understanding of the world, other people, and themselves.

**A Brief History of the Origins of The Open Canopy**

Where do the five Open Canopy principles come from? In part, they reflect a long history of education initiatives at Project Zero, a research organization at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where we, the authors of this book, work. For more than half a century, Project Zero has developed educational frameworks and programs that emphasize deep understanding, critical thinking, creativity, intercultural exchange, and civic and moral learning. The Open Canopy draws on these roots, and in a moment we say more about the Project Zero connection. But first we want to talk about a special event that inspired the first three principles: slowing
down, sharing stories, and making connections.

In the fall of 2013, a journalist and National Geographic Explorer named Paul Salopek came to Harvard University as a visiting Fellow at Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism. His purpose was to connect with scholars and educators to help him prepare for what would become a multi-decade walk around the world. Called Out of Eden Walk, the journey would begin in the Rift Valley in Ethiopia and follow the migratory pathways of ancient humankind. The project would be a prolonged experiment in “slow journalism”—an approach to reporting that emphasizes immersive storytelling and deep observation. While on campus, Paul met with anthropologists and archaeologists, scientists and journalists, artists and educators. He eventually found his way to Project Zero. As we sat around a table listening to him talk about his upcoming journey, we were struck by the resonances between his approach to journalism and Project Zero's approach to learning. Both approaches favor depth over breadth, reciprocal dialogue over transmissive communication, careful observation over quick gloss, and deep connection-making across contexts and cultures.

This resonance sparked an idea. What might it look like, we wondered, to create an online program for young people in which they could explore their own local areas in the spirit of slow journalism, and then share stories and make connections online with other young people across the globe who had done the same? Paul's journalism might serve as an inspiration, and the pedagogical practices of Project Zero might serve as a foundation. One thing led to another, and, with the invaluable help of a philanthropic organization called The Abundance Foundation, a new educational initiative was launched to coincide with the commencement of Paul's walk. For most of its existence the program was called Out of Eden Learn, echoing the name of Paul's project. Recently it has been renamed The Open Canopy, to reflect the wider thematic scope that has evolved over the years and the diversity of initiatives it encompasses. We have since had other generous funders and thought partners, including a peer organization called Global Cities, Inc, which is an initiative of Bloomberg Philanthropies. But Paul's journalism, along with the work of other writers and artists, still remains an inspiration. We say more about the new name, The Open Canopy, in the concluding chapter of this book, using it as a metaphor to describe our vision of the future of the project. For friends and readers who know the program as Out of Eden Learn, be assured that, at this writing, the core curricula and practices remain the same.

As mentioned earlier, another part of the Open Canopy's history has to do with its roots in the work of Project Zero. Since 1967, Project Zero has been home to an ever-changing collection of loosely-linked research projects. Most of these projects are situated...
at the intersection of education theory and practice, focusing on rich, complex learning in whatever physical or virtual settings it occurs, from preschool classrooms to business boardrooms. We, the co-authors of this book, have been affiliated with Project Zero for most of our working lives, and over the years we have collectively worked on scores of projects. Along the way, we have had the good fortune to learn from amazing collaborators—including our fellow researchers at Project Zero as well as many brilliant educators and education leaders in diverse fields. There are many ways that the work of Project Zero is reflected in the Open Canopy approach. Two themes in particular stand out.

The first theme is a belief in the power of active learning. This is the view that learning happens best when people have the opportunity to actively engage with what's around them in order to generate new ideas and make new connections. Virtually all of the Open Canopy activities reflect this view: Each one begins by asking students to do something themselves—take a neighborhood walk, notice the global in their everyday environments, interview someone in their community—and then actively build on what they learn by reflecting on it and making new connections.

The theme of active learning has a long history at Project Zero. In the 1990s researchers at Project Zero developed the Teaching for Understanding framework. Now widely used around the world, it provides a template for curriculum design based on a performance conception of understanding—a view that defines understanding as a dynamic and evolving activity or something you do rather than something you have. Many current Project Zero frameworks—Visible Thinking, Making Learning Visible, Studio Habits of Mind, Artful Thinking, Pedagogy of Play, to name just a few—similarly emphasize the active nature of thinking and understanding. In recent decades, a popular approach that many Project Zero projects have used to promote active learning is “thinking routines.” These are short, three- or four-step thinking strategies that help learners generate and examine their own ideas, observations, and questions. In The Open Canopy, the Dialogue Toolkit draws on many of the steps in these thinking routines to support rich dialogical exchange among learners.

A second theme The Open Canopy shares with other Project Zero projects is a belief in the importance of helping young people to engage with complexity. Often, educational programs aim to simplify topics in order to make them more accessible to students. But many things worth understanding in the world happen to be complex, and in their complexity lies their richness. Consider the intricate complexity of the physical world, or the multi-perspectival complexity of history. And looking to the future, consider the complex challenges youth will face, such as the far-reaching causes and consequences of an unfolding climate crisis or the complicated futures of artificial
and augmented intelligence.

The Open Canopy approach encourages young people to engage with complexity in a variety of ways, almost always by starting with the everyday complexity of students’ own worlds. For example, there are activities that encourage students to uncover and diagram the connections between everyday objects and global forces, to explore the complex relationships between changing ecosystems and human health, and to consider and reconsider their own relationships to history.

Like the theme of active learning, the theme of engaging with complexity has a rich presence at Project Zero. For example, the Understandings of Consequence project aims to help students understand and reason about causal complexity in science; its findings show that young learners are far better able to do this than earlier research suggested. The Agency by Design project offers a framework and tools to help learners explore the complexity of designs and systems in their everyday worlds. The Making Learning Visible project emphasizes the dynamic, evolving documentation of student learning as it unfolds in complex contexts. The Visible Thinking framework uses thinking routines to help students think through the complexity of objects, systems, and ideas. Projects under the Global and Cultural Understandings umbrella offer strategies for exploring and navigating complex intercultural exchange. The initiatives of the Good Project offer tools for engaging with the complex ethical dilemmas of contemporary life. The Center for Digital Thriving investigates ways to help youth navigate the complexities of a tech-filled world.

The two themes of active learning and engaging with complexity can be seen in almost all Open Canopy activities. And there are other Project Zero influences as well. Books, articles and other resources about all of the above-mentioned projects and more can be found on the Project Zero website.

How this book is organized and how to use it

The book is divided into four parts, bookended by an Introduction and Conclusion. Part I focuses on the core principles mentioned above, devoting a chapter to each one, plus a coda that discusses the intercultural exchange element of the Open Canopy pedagogy. Part II focuses on what we call "activity-types." These are categories of structurally similar activities that occur across several Open Canopy curricula and that are particularly well-suited to supporting the Open Canopy principles. Activity-types can inspire the design of a single lesson, or be used by educators as building blocks to create their own curricula. The six short chapters in Part II are each devoted to a single activity-type. Part III consists of five ready-to-teach Open Canopy curricula, called “learning journeys.” These curricula are nearly identical to the learning journeys that can be found on the online Open Canopy website. The
main difference is that they have been adapted for non-online use too, so that educators whose students don’t have access to online learning can also use them. Part IV discusses the theory and practice behind two Open Canopy instructional tools that support high-quality student interaction—an essential element of the Open Canopy experience, whether it is online or in the classroom. The Dialogue Toolkit, mentioned earlier, provides strategies for supporting thoughtful, probing, respectful student exchange. The Three O’s helps students avoid common pitfalls when learning about—and with—people who are different from themselves: pitfalls such as making assumptions, stereotyping, or viewing one’s own culture or perspective as the norm. These tools are built into many Open Canopy activities, and they are also used by educators in their instruction beyond The Open Canopy. The concluding chapter revisits some key themes in the book and revisits the name of the project, The Open Canopy, as a metaphor for envisioning the future.

This handbook has been written with two overlapping purposes in mind. The first is to present the Open Canopy philosophy in a way that is accessible to both educators and non-educators, drawing on vivid examples from classrooms around the world.

The second is to offer a practical compilation of the materials we have developed over the past ten years. If you’re an educator looking to implement the ideas in your classroom, there are several routes you can take. You can have one or more of your classes enroll and participate in a learning journey on The Open Canopy digital platform, which will allow them to interact with students from other classrooms who are following the same curriculum. Alternatively, you and other teachers can experiment with an Open Canopy curricula by having your classes connect via your own preferred digital platform. Some of you may choose to implement Open Canopy activities with a single class—either in person, or digitally. And some of you may draw on ideas in this book to design your own curriculum entirely. Whatever your entry point, we hope you find some value and inspiration in these pages.
PART I: Foundations: Five Principles and a Coda
Overview

The chapters in Part I describe the five principles that underlie the Open Canopy approach. As a set, the principles offer an aspirational vision of what Open Canopy learning can look like, along with a rationale for why such learning is important. The chapters aim to use clear language to describe each principle, drawing extensively on authentic examples from the work of students who have participated in the Open Canopy program over the years. Part 1 closes with a chapter that discusses the intercultural exchange dimension of the program—a dimension that is often present in the exchange between students who live in very different locations around the world, but is also often present in the exchange between students in the very same classroom.

Chapter 1: Principle One: Slow down to Observe the World Closely
Chapter 2: Principle Two: Exchange Stories and Perspectives
Chapter 3: Principle Three: Making Connections
Chapter 4: Principle Four: Learner-Generated Content
Chapter 5: Principle Five: Thoughtful Peer-to-peer Exchange
Chapter 6: Coda: Using this Pedagogy for Intercultural Encounters or Exchange
Chapter 1: Principle #1: Slowing Down to Observe the World Closely

This principle emphasizes the importance of slowing down to observe the world in ways that take us beyond our first impressions, helping us to notice things we might otherwise overlook and to discern greater nuance and complexity.

When was the last time you were captivated by something you normally walk right by? Maybe it was the silhouette of a tree, or the geometry of a city skyline, or a line of ants crawling across the sidewalk. If you stopped for a moment to look more closely you may have felt moved by something that many young people also find moving: the sense that there is so much to see in the world, if only we would slow down to look. This idea, that it is worthwhile to slow down to observe the world closely, is a core principle of the Open Canopy pedagogy.

What does it mean to slow down to observe closely? The phrase is straightforward, but from a definitional perspective, it’s useful to break it into two parts. To slow down means to pause, to linger, to look with fresh eyes. To observe closely means to notice detail, to discern features, to register the complex fullness of something rather than pass it by or pass quick judgment. In action, this practice is a matter of tempo and intention rather than duration. Slow looking for a kindergartener may look different than it does for a high school junior (though not always). And close observation may be practiced differently in a science classroom than in an art studio (though the similarities are striking).

Importantly, close observation often involves using one’s eyes, and we tend to use the language of the visual to talk about the practice of observation. But observation can happen through all the senses. The principle, slowing down to observe the world closely, is meant to embrace the full range of our observational capacities.

What does this principle look like in the Open Canopy approach?

The practice of “slow” finds its way into almost all the instructional materials in this book. Sometimes it is the explicit focus of an activity, such as in the Taking Neighborhood Walks activity described in the story that opens the foregoing chapter. Its instructions are straightforward:

- Plan to take a walk in your neighborhood or local area. You can walk by yourself or with a classmate, friend, or family member. As you walk, take photos of things that catch your attention. What do you see, feel, hear, taste, or smell? Try to look at the place and the people who live or work there with fresh eyes.

Over the years, the Open Canopy team has looked at the work of thousands of children...
worldwide who have engaged in this activity. What do these young people notice? The objects of their attention are almost as varied as the students themselves. A student in a town in Mexico notices the distinctive shape of the font on a sign for a local convenience store. A student in a suburb in the United States lets their gaze linger on the pattern of leaves scattered across a front yard. In a small village in India, a student studies the intricacies of a flower and photographs it from several angles. In a large Canadian city, a group of kindergarteners takes a walk with their teacher and notices the shoes of every pedestrian that passes by.

Other Open Canopy activities extend this activity so that close observation becomes a starting point for targeted inquiry. For example, in an activity called Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems, students closely observe an everyday object, generate questions about it, and then make a diagram showing how the object plays a part in a larger system. In an activity called Noticing Global Forces in the Everyday, students take a walk in their local area and look for signs that we live in a globally connected world. In the Everyday Borders activity, students begin a study of human migration by taking a slow walk, looking carefully for both visible and invisible borders. In an activity called Public Remembering in Our Neighborhoods, students take a walk in their local neighborhoods and look for ways in which the past is publicly remembered where they live.

Naturally, these examples from the Open Canopy learning journeys are only a few of the many ways to design “slow” into the curriculum. The practice is in play any time a learning experience invites learners to slow down, linger in close observation, and then build on their observations to extend their learning—either by sharing their observations with others, or using them as a springboard to explore new ideas.

What are the learning benefits of slowing down to observe the world carefully?

Slowing down to observe the world closely helps students notice and appreciate details

It is almost impossible to observe something closely for a period of time and not see details you hadn’t noticed before. As the activities cited above suggest, the targets of students’ observations are often familiar objects or places. A student from Massachusetts in the United States walks through a section of a town she knows well, and becomes fascinated by the many different ways of looking closely at trees. She observes them first through their reflection in water, then through the overlapping patterns of their branches, and later through the way they sway in the breeze. A teenager in Tampico, Mexico looks closely at a soccer ball and is amazed at what he discovers: its stitching, its texture, its intricate pattern of five-sided and six-sided shapes fitted together to form a sphere. A 10-year-old in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania draws on multiple senses to make observations. He
stands at an open window and looks out at his city: *I see many buildings filled up with dust, he says ... I can smell mud ... I hear birds chirping and water splashing and people shouting around and talking.*  He seems to appreciate the multisensory experience.  He concludes his write-up of his observations by commenting: *I feel that I am very lucky ... and I even feel soft.*

How is noticing details a benefit to learning? Discerning more details is quite literally a way of knowing more about the world, and students often express amazement at the astounding specificity of the things they notice. Moreover, slowing down often sparks curiosity and motivates further learning.  If there is a single theme across what students have told us, it is this: The more you look, the more you see; and the more you see, the more you realize how much more there is to see.

*Slowing down encourages students to explore perspectives*

When students slow down to observe the world closely, they often begin to explore new or unusual perspectives. Many Open Canopy activities invite students to take photographs, and students’ exploration of perspective-taking often begins very literally as they snap pictures from unusual or unexpected angles. For example, a 12-year-old student reports: *I went across the street and lay on my stomach and took the picture of my house looking up. I was surprised that we had a lot of cool nature and so many leaves!* A 10-year-old lingers by a fence in her backyard and observes: *If you tilted the camera a certain way it looked like our fence went on forever.*  Looking over a range of student photographs, it is striking to see the enthusiasm with which they explore different physical perspectives. They bend down to capture the lattice work of cracks in the sidewalk; they climb hilltops to capture an aerial view. They lean back to capture the geometry of electrical wires overhead, and lean in to capture the perspective of a bug crawling up a tree. Each act of perspective
taking brings out something new. As a 10-year-old explains: *When you look at something from a different angle it can be a whole new thing.*

Interestingly, exploring different photographic perspectives often leads students to an attitudinal shift in perspective as well: By adopting an unusual angle when taking a photo, students begin to see the world in a profoundly different way–either through the eyes of another person or from a perspective they hadn't previously considered. Here is a teenage student from the city of Crystal Lake, Illinois in the United States reflecting on a rooftop view.

> I took this picture to show how from a different perspective things can look much different. Here I am looking out across my school’s campus from a view I have not seen before. From my everyday point of view all I see is the dismal winding road leading towards a busy road, and the graying forest that seems to wrap around the campus. But from up here I can see everything better, I can see farther, I can think of these things from a different mindset. It makes me kinda think that you need to take account of all the different perspectives in life to see how things really are.

This double mode of perspective-taking–both visual and attitudinal–aligns well with the aspirations of The Open Canopy: Close observation teaches students that no single perspective can capture the whole of reality, but also, that slowing down to appreciate a unique angle or perspective opens up worlds they might never have known. These insights serve students well as they continue on with Open Canopy activities–sharing stories with one another, exploring perspectives in the media and in their communities, and making connections between their own lives and larger forces and stories in the world.
Slowing down to observe the world closely helps students see that their own perceptions and impressions are a valuable source of knowledge

Authentic discovery means that the experience invites learners to find something unexpected or novel on their own. In The Open Canopy, the slowing down principle isn’t achieved by simply conducting a scavenger hunt or fulfilling a checklist in which every item to be found is predetermined. Students take great pleasure in discovering things on their own, and the authenticity of the experience matters to them. This doesn’t mean that a general theme can’t be pre-specified for an observational activity. For instance, in the Everyday Borders activity, students search broadly for borders—a specific theme—and in doing so make their own discoveries of everyday borders hidden in plain sight. One student looks anew at a river bordering the edge of her town. She comes to see it as both a geographical and economic boundary, and goes on to speculate about how such borders work at both a local and global scale. In the Walking with Health in Mind activity, students look with fresh eyes at their own environments to discover things that might have an impact on human health. These and similar activities emphasize some kinds of things to look for. But, unlike fulfilling a checklist in which the items to be found are decided by someone else, these activities encourage students to make discoveries on their own, and help them to see that their own perceptions and impressions are a valuable source of information about the world.

Close observation helps students consider the unobserved

When students practice slow looking, they repeatedly discover that there is much to see by observing what’s directly in front of them. But sometimes prolonged observation also leads them to wonder about what they can’t observe, such as when they look at an empty seashell and imagine the creature that no longer occupies it. Here is a teenager in Salt Lake City in the United States writing about a slow walk she took in the mountains near her home. Consider how she continues to notice observable
When walking along the Lakeside Mountains, I noticed the variety of organisms that were preserved in the blue limestone. There were many different fossils, not every organism being the same, which made me think of what a diverse ecosystem there would have been many millions of years ago. It was so interesting to me also how each fossil wasn’t preserved by the rock the same. What I mean by that is when looking at some of them, you could see very detailed lines and patterns, and it was a white bony color. On the other hand, when looking at other fossils, they were harder to make sense of, and they were a rusty brown color. This made me think a lot about how many years there have been before I have seen it. How much history has passed? Who has ventured over the landscape years before I was born? Were any wars fought on the landscape? And did any dinosaurs live there? It’s easy to see how much has changed when you stare at a rock with a million old fossils residing there, but then I wonder, what else has happened on this landscape?

As this student discovers, ‘seeing’ can be as much a matter of discovering what isn’t visible as noticing what is.
also considers environmental systems by wondering about the effect of the table’s production on the environment. A 10-year-old in Accra, Ghana follows a similar thought process. In an activity called *Noticing Global Forces in the Everyday*, he draws on all his senses to observe the schoolyard where he spends time on a daily basis, noticing a wide range of smells, sounds, and sights. Eventually, he focuses on a basketball hoop. He imagines how the hoop was produced and installed, and wonders both about the cost of its manufacture and its effect on the environment. Considering these systems in the context of a simple basketball hoop seems to lead him to a broader awareness of the world he inhabits. He settles on two final questions: *Is there a system of how things are exported and imported from country to country?* and *How long does it take for products to transfer?*

Not surprisingly, when students start with their own observations, they often develop a deeper awareness of their role in the systems they uncover. For example, a 10-year-old in the state of Virginia in the United States looks at the shelves in his local food market and reflects on his own experience as part of a global food community. He writes: *I saw rice from China, dried peppers from Mexico, and oatmeal from Ireland. I thought about the people who grew this food and how it got here by ship, plane, and then truck. I enjoy these foods myself. Next time I eat dinner I promise to think where my food came from and all the people involved in getting it to the table.*

Systems can be tremendously complex, and in the foregoing examples, students are only just scratching the surface. Some students will go on to learn more about the systems they uncover; others may not. But even an early glimmer of awareness of how things connect to systems is a strong learning benefit. In a world where the challenges of the future must increasingly be addressed at a systems level, it is important for each one of us to be attuned to the complex interconnectedness of the planet we share.

**An emphasis on slowing down contributes to student wellbeing**

We write this handbook at a moment when there is growing concern about young people’s mental health. The world is newly emerged from a global pandemic. We are in the midst of a climate crisis. Polarized perspectives and intolerant attitudes seem to dominate the news. Young people have much to be anxious about. So it is noteworthy that students often remark that they experience a sense of wellbeing when they slow down to observe the world closely. The Open Canopy team did not design the program with this goal in mind, but we are thrilled with the effect. The evidence we see to support this observation comes from the comments students post on the Open Canopy platform. What do they say? Sometimes, students link a sense of wellbeing to the simple pleasure of seeing the world.
in its bountiful detail. We see an example of this in the comment of the student cited earlier, who wrote of feeling lucky as he stood at an open window and used all his senses to observe his city. We hear it, too, in the remarks of a 10-year-old student whose comments reflect the sentiment of many: You should dig deep down close and notice the tiny little details, she advises, because when you do, you notice amazing things that if you haven’t taken time you wouldn’t experience. The sensory world is indeed bountiful, and students seem to find joy in lingering in its specificity. Relatedly, students often report that the experience of slowing down encourages them to reflect on their own lives, and to feel grounded in something good. I pass by this place every day and I had never stopped to see this beautiful landscape, one student comments. When you are seeing this you feel free and good with yourself. You can think about your problems and try to solve them. Another student writes: Everything is alive and coming together to make the world peaceful and calming, even if it’s only for a couple minutes as you walk through it.

Interestingly, although students often use digital devices to take pictures of what they observe, the experience of slowing down invites them to reflect on the limitations of digital life. A student comments: I should get out of the house and away from my computer more often. Another student remarks: I never really noticed this tree... but when I took the pictures I think I might have realized that life is not based on electronics. Yet another student, who had been watching clouds and airplanes and birds overhead, remarks: It’s amazing to think about life! Try some day to look up, leave your cellphone for some minutes... It’s good to refresh your mind.

Of course, slow observation can also bring difficult features of contemporary life into focus. For example, in the Introduction to Planetary Health learning journey, students become attuned to the everyday effects of environmental degradation; in Stories of Human Migration, students look for everyday borders and often notice their hurtful effects. Even on casual walks in their neighborhoods, students struggle with difficult sights. A student writes:

I walked on the side of the road... and there is trash everywhere that people throw out their windows. At first when I was taking the picture I was trying to avoid the bottle because it represents the unpleasant truth that our world is not taken care of the way it should be. But then I decided I should include it. So I did.

Slowing down to observe the world closely does not—and should not—sugarcoat reality. Still, as we look across a decade’s worth of student work, it is impossible to ignore how many students find that slowing down contributes to their sense of wellbeing. Their comments suggest that it helps them appreciate the sensory richness of the world in which they live, and encourages them to reflect
on and even discover the values they find personally meaningful. Here is how a 14-year-old writes about it:

_We went for a walk as a group, and I found myself quieter than usual, giving my full attention to the elements surrounding me ... Sometimes, this all becomes a muffled backdrop, quickly disappearing from my focus as my attention is fixed on a list of would-be insistencies: deadlines, meetings, schedules. I remember today that attention is a choice. I can choose to be here, noticing these details. I returned to school with a clearer mind._

The “slow” principle in the context of the larger Open Canopy pedagogy

This chapter on “slow” appears early in this handbook, not because it is the most important instructional principle, but because it leads so fluidly into the other four Open Canopy principles. When students slow down to observe the world closely, it comes naturally to want to share what they’ve learned with their peers—that is, to exchange stories and perspectives with one another. And, as students uncover complexities and ask questions about their observations, they begin to see the interconnectedness of the world, and, in particular, how these interconnections include themselves—that is, they make connections between their own lives and bigger forces, stories and systems. These three principles—slowing down, sharing stories, and making connections—are strengthened when students think and look for themselves, leading to the fourth principle of learner-generated content. And finally, they get the most out of these principles when they have the opportunity to engage in thoughtful peer-to-peer learning.

We now take a deeper look at the second Open Canopy principle: exchange stories and perspectives with one another.
Chapter 2: Principle #2: Sharing Stories and Perspectives

This principle emphasizes the related practices of telling stories and offering and taking perspectives—practices that are important for exploring and building identity, learning about other people and the world, and developing one’s own voice.

We humans are a storytelling species. From origin stories and historical narratives, to everyday anecdotes about daily events, stories shape the way we understand the world. The second key Open Canopy principle taps into our human capacity for storytelling and our natural curiosity about other people’s lives and perspectives. Our definition of storytelling is intentionally very broad. We define a story as any account that describes the experience of people, place, or identity, usually from a particular point of view. Stories can be long or short, written or pictorial, plot-driven or descriptive. Great works of fiction are stories, but so, too, are the tales we tell ourselves and others about who we are and how we experience the world.

Storytelling is central to the Open Canopy approach in large part because of the program’s origins as a space to explore the concept of slow journalism in collaboration with journalist Paul Salopek. His Out of Eden Walk project is committed to taking the time to uncover stories that otherwise wouldn’t be told in our era’s constant churn of “breaking” news. Our curricula in some ways invite young people to become slow journalists themselves by interviewing their neighbors, documenting slow walks around their neighborhoods, and sharing their everyday experiences—with or without the technological tools that profoundly shape our fast-paced and plugged-in lives. In other words, our first principle of slowing down is inextricably entwined with our second principle of sharing stories and perspectives.

What do we mean by “perspectives?” We loosely mean a way of looking at or experiencing the world, which will in some ways be unique to each individual learner, even as they find resonances with the perspectives of other young people or community members who are also engaged in the same curriculum. As young people engage in slow journalism-type practices, they have the opportunity to tell and listen to stories and perspectives that are relevant to their own lives. They can also share their opinions or points of view in ways that may or may not be tied to a story. For instance, they may express their opinions on how the past should be remembered in their community and why, or critique common media representations of migrants or the phenomenon of migration. We comment further on the concept of perspective-taking in our chapter on the fifth Open Canopy principle of thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange.
What does this principle look like in the Open Canopy approach?

Opportunities to tell personal and collective stories are present in most Open Canopy activities. For example, in an activity called *Creating Neighborhood Maps*, students create visual representations of their local area, as seen through their eyes, and share a related story. For instance, one teenage girl living in greater Boston in the United States revisited a fond memory when she noticed traces of flowers that she and a friend painted onto a fence with nail polish when they were eight years old.

At the time it didn't really mean anything to us and we used nail polish so we thought it would come off in the rain the next day. For 7 years those flowers we painted stayed on that fence and now, it means so much to me. It almost represents that even though we live far away from each other and we can't hang out everyday, we still manage to stay really close friends.

In an activity called *Our Own Stories of Migration*, students listen to and retell the migration story of someone who is close to them. For example, a student from a town in Maine in the United States recounted the migration story of her stepmother and grandmother who left Cambodia as refugees as a result of the Vietnam War. They walked from one refugee camp to another until they reached Thailand, from where they traveled to the United States. The student describes how that experience still shapes her grandmother’s behavior, including sewing pockets in her bras to keep her money safe.

As students share stories with one another, they are also sharing perspectives. This perspective-sharing happens in two important ways. The first has to do with telling and listening to stories. Telling a story about one's own life is an act of perspective-sharing simply because the story is told from a personal vantage point—that is, a perspective—and usually received as such. When students share stories with one another, they are sharing perspectives. In an environment where several students are sharing stories, multiple perspectives are surfaced simply by virtue of the coexistence of a variety of stories in a single space. The space can be physical or virtual, and the sharing can happen synchronously, as in a live conversation, or asynchronously over time and distance, as in social media or written exchange.

For example, students from a single location may tell different stories via the *Neighborhood maps*.
activity. There will likely be similarities across the stories and maps, but interesting differences will also be revealed in terms of how students perceive or experience the same place. For instance, students from the same class in India represented their Mumbai neighborhood quite differently and told different stories about it: some chose to focus on places they personally cherish such as a temple or forest reserve, while others emphasized their city’s evolution over time, or its most impressive amenities.

A second way that perspective-sharing connects to storytelling has to do with perspective-taking, in the sense of actively trying to see something from another person’s vantage point. This often happens naturally in the context of storytelling, such as when we imagine ourselves inside a perspective offered by a story. For instance, young people from varied locations read about students’ memories of learning how to hunt in their remote Canadian community and their deep sense of connection to the wide open sky and river. While some of those reading had no familiarity with hunting themselves, they had the opportunity to try to understand why hunting is important to these students and why it makes sense in this rural context.

Part of what makes sharing stories and perspectives powerful for learners is the juxtaposition of diverse experiences. You may be wondering if a sufficient diversity of stories or perspectives will surface if you use the principles of The Open Canopy in a single classroom—particularly if you think your students have similar backgrounds in terms of race/ethnicity, affluence, religion, culture, or other forms of identity. But in fact, we have found such concerns to be unwarranted, especially as the Open Canopy approach encourages learners (and teachers) to broaden their understandings of the concept of diversity. In surveys and interviews, students have told us that they are excited to zoom in on the details of their own lives and parts of themselves that they decide are worth sharing—and those details and stories can vary greatly from one student to another. Furthermore, they report looking at themselves and the world around them a bit more carefully, with an eye to inquiry and an openness to new perspectives.

The Open Canopy approach encourages young people to look closely at their lives and communities and to share what they uncover in the form of photographs, drawings, and written stories. When they do this, they tend to share the details about themselves that make them who they are but are not likely to be categorized by checkboxes on a census report, such as the kinds of music genres they listen to or the modes of transportation they use, the foods they eat and the styles of clothing they wear, and where they might be on a typical afternoon. Young people can develop the capacity to thoughtfully explore and appreciate the rich diversity in their life experiences, whether they are connecting across oceans or across tables in the same classroom.
What are the learning benefits of exchanging stories and perspectives?

Students engage in exchanging stories and perspectives in two ways: by offering their own stories and perspectives to others, and by actively listening to others’ stories and perspectives. Both of these roles—the role of teller, and the role of listener—have benefits for students.

Offering stories and perspectives helps students explore and build their own identities

Telling a personal story or sharing their perspective can bring a student’s own identity into focus in several ways. For one, as students create a narrative from their own point of view, they need to discern what their point of view is, which is an act of identity-building. Similarly, as students draw material for their stories from their own life experiences, they become more aware of how their unique circumstances and histories help shape who they are. One student who lived in rural Maine received several admiring comments about the spaciousness and beauty of the greenery surrounding her home, which she described as a kind of everyday border between her family's home and their neighbor’s property. She commented that she had previously taken her environment for granted but could now see that it seemed quite unique to students growing up in big cities. In another example, students who shared stories of recent family migration found it very meaningful to do so, and were struck by the interest and admiration expressed by peers who recognized that they had not faced the same degree of disruption or upheaval in their own lives.

Moreover, when students tell their stories in a supportive peer-to-peer environment—that is, when the peers who receive their stories do so with appreciation and respectful curiosity—students’ sense of identity can be reified and affirmed. At the same time, students become aware that in telling their own stories, they must make choices about what to include and what not to include, and how to portray themselves. This process of selection can lead to an important understanding about the relationship between storytelling and identity: Stories can help us build a sense of identity, but they also reveal that our entire identities cannot be captured in a single story. The Open Canopy actively promotes this insight through the Three O’s resource, which aims to discourage overconfidence, overgeneralization, and othering. Teenage students in particular are developmentally primed to consider big questions about who they are and how they fit into the world, even if there is cultural variation in terms of how they might think about themselves in relation to family and society. Telling stories related to their own lives in the company of peers who are doing likewise can help fulfill this developmental need.
Offering stories and perspectives helps students develop their individual voice

Each one of us has a unique vantage point, simply by virtue of being an individual. Learning to express views from one’s own vantage point with confidence and authenticity is the process of developing voice. It is an important part of youth development, and it connects to building identity because working out the tone and style of one’s voice is a form of exploring identity. Because much of the world is still new to young people, it can be challenging to find opportunities where youth feel that their voice is authentic and valued. Open Canopy activities typically ask students to tell a story or share a perspective about a familiar object, activity, or place, or to find something in their local environment that they may not have noticed or interacted with before. In so doing, the activities provide opportunities for giving voice in ways that honor youth expertise and local knowledge. As further support, teachers have told us that in an online format where students use pseudonyms rather than their real names, students who are otherwise reticent or socially uncomfortable in class often “find their voice” through Open Canopy activities. And even if students initially have misgivings, they typically discover that their peers are quite interested in their stories or perspectives. One student participating from Beijing, China, said in an interview, This experience has taught me that what I want to share doesn’t have to be “special.” As long as it means something that matters to me, that’s special for me personally, then it is valuable and worth sharing.

Sometimes, in the context of intercultural exchange, young people feel that they need to give voice to a community or place to which they belong. They may anticipate other students’ stereotypes or lack of knowledge, or feel that they need to correct or add nuance to common perceptions. For instance, one teenage student from Erbil, Iraq, noted in a survey that they wanted people to learn about Iraq and to understand that while they might think that it is filled with terrorism, some parts are in fact safe, including the student’s home region. Meanwhile, a student from Pittsburgh in the United States expressed the following opinion: Some people think of America as a conservative and isolationist kind of place. I hope people could learn that not all of us are like that—we do want to learn about different cultures. We do want to learn about other people. A student from Shanghai, China wanted peers in other countries to get a good impression of their education system and to understand that environmental problems in China are not as bad as people in other countries may think. While students should not feel obliged to serve as ambassadors for their communities or countries, creating opportunities for students to share their stories and perspectives generally enriches or adds nuance to other students’ understandings of communities and places—which is particularly...
important given our human tendency to view groups we do not feel we are part of as more homogenous or monolithic than groups to which we do feel we belong.

*Listening to other people’s stories and perspectives leverages students’ natural curiosity*

Storytelling is part of human nature, and most of us have an eager and enduring appetite to hear about other people’s life experiences and perspectives. Curiosity is a powerful driver of learning. A straightforward but important way in which this instructional practice contributes to learning is by providing content that many students find intrinsically engaging—that is, stories told by similarly-aged young people, often with very different life experiences. Supported by The Open Canopy’s *Dialogue Toolkit*, students exhibit their curiosity by asking follow-up questions about stories—such as what motivated someone to make a particular life decision—or by making connections to their own experiences. One student located in a small city in Illinois in the United States made the following comment in an interview after his Open Canopy learning experience:

*S sometimes, we allow for creativity or a break in the norm, but usually we don’t. And now, I’m going around and doing that almost every day. I’m trying to reach out to people that I haven’t reached out to before. I’m trying to learn about people and learn their stories and learn how they’re different from me, and then I’m trying to relate to other people.*

Leveraging and expanding students’ curiosity in this way can be an important learning benefit of the Open Canopy approach, one which can have ripple effects that reach into other parts of students’ daily lives and educational experiences.

*Listening to other people’s stories and perspectives widens students’ understanding of the world and other people’s lived experiences*

Learning about others’ experiences and perspectives in an open, thoughtful way can help students appreciate the diversity of human experience both within and across groups or places, helping them to move beyond “single stories” or stereotypes about certain communities or groups of people. The inclusion of concrete details in stories that are specific to a student’s own experiences or perspective can help show peers the complexity or nuance of a theme such as planetary health, for instance, by illustrating how global issues can play out on the ground in different ways.

We live in an age of echo chambers in which people tend to seek out people very similar to themselves both in person and online. It is vitally important to encourage young people to listen to stories and perspectives they likely wouldn’t otherwise encounter, and in serendipitous ways that
do not feel controlled by educators or curriculum requirements. One early childhood educator from Piraeus, Greece told us: *My students have become more curious about other cultures and other people. I have noticed a positive change in their attitude toward people who are different to themselves, and this is very important since in recent years thousands of refugees have moved to Greece.*

Ideally, by listening to a variety of firsthand accounts from peers, students start to develop greater cognitive empathy—that is, an ability to understand the world as someone else sees or experiences it. One of the teenage students from the class in Mumbai, India who posted the maps featured above, told us that her interactions with other students *touched my heart and left me with a desire to know more. I have lived bits and pieces of their lives through their words. They have shown me the world through several different perspectives.* In this case, she was referring to her interactions with students living in different parts of the world. But students also tend to notice variation in perspective within the same classroom or locale: a student from the city of Pittsburgh in the United States reflected, *It was cool to see that not only is it different around the world but even classmates see a different approach to their neighborhoods.*

*Listening to other people’s stories and perspectives can enhance students’ understandings of themselves*

Listening to other people's stories and perspectives can also help students understand how identities and perspectives—including their own—might be shaped, at least in part, by diverse cultural, geographical, and political contexts. They might notice, for instance, that students in one place tend to have a different relationship to history or nature and then consider their own relationship to history or nature in a new light. For instance, the *Connecting our own lives to the past* activity asks students to visually represent their own connections or relationship to the past before they were born. Students in a classroom in Sydney, Australia noticed that they had quite narrowly focused on family, sports, and other leisure activities compared to their peers in other countries, who had included other themes such as religion, national narratives, and technological developments. Their teacher said that they went back and considered deeper connections that they might have to the past, as well as possible differences in perspective based on their local Australian context. One of the students from the class in Mumbai shared:

*I have learnt about my own past. Some things that I did not know and others that I knew and was proud of. I am living a life that has been affected by an age of technological outburst. I am living*
so vastly different from my ancestors. I learned that I value my country and I take pride from it. It defines who I am.

This chapter has offered an overview of the second Open Canopy instructional principle of exchanging stories and perspectives. We now turn to the third principle: making connections.
Chapter 3: *Principle #3: Making Connections*

This principle emphasizes making connections to other people and their life experiences, and making connections between the artifacts and experiences of everyday life and larger global forces, stories, and systems.

As a highly social species, we are naturally inclined to seek out connections to other human beings. When we meet a new person, we often take delight in discovering points of commonality, such as a mutual acquaintance, a shared birth month, the same favorite book, or the holding of a similar opinion. Making connections is also an important dimension of meaningful learning. We learn best when we make connections between new knowledge and old, between new experiences and our existing beliefs and values, and when we intentionally explore how familiar aspects of our lives are connected to broader themes that transcend our everyday existence. Not surprisingly, when we make connections between disparate ideas, facts, and experiences, knowledge not only becomes more meaningful, in a very real sense it becomes more memorable: we are much more likely to retain information when we actively connect it to other things we know and care about.

Furthermore, young people are developmentally primed to engage in certain kinds of connection-making. Teens in particular are likely to seek to understand the ways in which they are part of something bigger than themselves and how they fit into the wider world in terms of their identities, lives, or values. In addition, the interconnected nature of our globalized world makes it important for today's youth to understand the ways in which local phenomena are linked to bigger unfolding stories that are affecting people in many different parts of the world. Further, they must learn to grapple with global issues that implicate us all, such as human migration, public health, and environmental degradation.

**What does this instructional practice look like in the Open Canopy approach?**

The Open Canopy encourages two broad types of connection-making: (1) making personal connections to other students, family members, or other people in one's community and (2) making connections between the everyday artifacts and experiences of daily life and larger forces, stories, and systems in the world.

With regard to the first kind of connection-making, many Open Canopy activities encourage young people to reach out to members of their families or communities, including people with whom they might not routinely have substantive conversations. Examples of such activities include *Listening to Neighbors’ Stories*, *Learning from Other Generations*, and *Intergenerational Perspectives on the Past and Public Remembering*. Many students enjoy hearing
about aspects of family history they did not previously know, noting that they appreciate the opportunity to develop connections across generations and tap into the knowledge and wisdom of elders. One 18-year-old student in a small agricultural town in Chiapas, Mexico learned from her grandmother that her grandfather had fought—and died—in a local communal uprising to retain local people’s farming rights; this student then became passionate about finding out more about her family and community’s history. In a different example, an 11-year-old student living in a small coastal town in Massachusetts in the United States was excited to discover the history of a rocking chair in her family’s home. The chair was a replica of one made in 1962 by her great-grandfather’s furniture-making company to ease US President John F. Kennedy’s chronic back pain—something she was proud to share with other students. Numerous students have reported feeling a new sense of connection to their neighbors or classmates after learning about their migration stories; some of these stories involved significant challenges or trauma but others involved the pursuit of educational and economic opportunities.

Explicit invitations to engage in the second type of connection-making—that is, making connections between oneself and larger forces, stories and systems—are also woven into Open Canopy activities. For example, in the Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems activity, students make connections between the local and the global by exploring and then representing how a single object is implicated in bigger systems of production, power, or ecology. Students have investigated and reflected on how chapsticks, boxes of fruit juice, and smartphones—among many other items—are used, produced, and/or distributed. One 11-year-old from a town in New Jersey in the United States represented the system of making paper, also mentioning that the piece of squared math paper she had closely observed (and drawn on) was connected to systems related to schools, hospitals, and trade.

As part of this activity, she asked where and how paper is made, and what type of wood and machines are needed to make paper.

Another activity in the learning journey Connecting our Own Lives to the Past asks students to create a visual representation of how their own lives connect to the past. Students can approach this open-ended task in many different ways. They might tap into their various identities—such as their nationality, racial or ethnic identity, religion, interests, or family lineage—to represent a mosaic or web of different kinds of
connections to the past. Or they might attempt to put their family’s migration story into broader historical context, explaining why their ancestors moved from one geographic location to another or how they were caught up in world events. For instance, students have shared how their families were directly impacted by the Iranian Revolution, China’s Cultural Revolution, World War II, and the Cold War. While care needs to be taken with the framing of this activity to account for traumatic or troubled pasts, we have found students to be interested in situating their lives, identities, or values within a sweep of history that is bigger than their own immediate lived experiences.

In the learning journey Introduction to Planetary Health, which focuses on the ways in which human health is inextricably linked to broader environmental wellbeing, students are asked to create a concept web that maps the connections between an aspect of human health and environmental change. For instance, students have mapped the connections between urban landscapes and mental health issues, air pollution and conditions such as asthma, and unclean water and diseases such as typhoid and dysentery. Other activities, while less explicitly about connection-making, implicitly ask students to consider how they are part of bigger stories or systems. For example, the Remembering the Past? learning journey asks young people to consider how the media they consume, the kinds of history education they have received, the families they come from, and the neighborhoods they live in help influence their perspectives about who or what from the past should be memorialized, and why.

**What are the learning benefits of making connections?**

From talking to students and looking closely at their work, we’ve found that making personal connections to other people in their schools, homes, or communities and making connections between themselves and bigger forces, stories and systems can benefit young people in several different ways.

*Connection-making fosters curiosity towards other people*

Just as the principles of slow looking and sharing stories can foster curiosity and openness, forging connections can have a similar effect. Most young people are naturally inclined to learn about their peers’ lives and perspectives. Making personal connections through shared activities that involve slow looking and storytelling only seems to enhance that interest because the content is varied and unpredictable and can involve deeper or more substantive topics than those typically encountered on social media-type platforms. For example, in Remembering the Past?, students are often excited to discover that families in very different geographic contexts also pass down precious items of jewelry or outmoded pieces of technology from one generation to another, or that they cherish comparable culinary or holiday...
The new generations lose those traditions and they are not even aware of them." I believe that this statement is true. Our history is being lost and we do not realize it! Older adults have witnessed the change in their locality, their home, their beginnings, and it is sad to think that perhaps they will be the last to know.

Here the student’s curiosity about an elder’s perspective seems to have genuinely led to new knowledge, new feelings, and new connections.

Connection-making encourages students to ask questions about the world

Making connections between everyday life and larger forces, stories, or systems naturally fosters curiosity. This is especially evident in the way students enthusiastically engage with the Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems activity. In one example, a 12-year-old from a small town in Massachusetts in the United States drew out the steps by which a glass cup is made.
At the end of her accompanying written explanation, she says:

Now, this all seems very fascinating, but if you think about a glass cup, questions start to pop up in your head. Here are some questions I have about cups.
1. Why are there different kinds of cups? Why can’t there be just one?
2. Why do some glass cups have paint on them and others are just see-through?
3. Where do these cups come from?
4. Who even invented cups?
5. Why are cups only made of plastic, paper, and glass?
These were only some of the questions I had. Do you have any questions about cups? I hope you do.

Sometimes the kinds of questions generated by connection-making can take on a more critical, civic, or global slant. For example, a teenage student from a small city in Illinois in the United States chose to closely examine a light bulb because I think it has many different qualities that can be related to the world globally. He generated the following questions:
1. How much power does it take to keep the light bulb on?
2. Why do light bulbs eventually burn out?
3. Do energy-saving light bulbs really help the planet by conserving energy?
4. Do places around the world have this luxury of having constant light?
5. What different sources of light have been used instead of the light bulb?

His post sparked further questions and comments. A classmate wondered if other countries had similar energy saving strategies. He replied that Thomas Edison’s revolutionary invention is still making dividends today, not in just the physical act of illuminating a room, but illuminating the connections we have globally—that is, the ubiquity of the lightbulb and concerns about energy usage is something that humans around the world have in common. Another classmate chimed in to respond to one of the initial questions about lightbulbs: I do know that a lot of energy-saving lights contain dangerous gasses that illuminate when
electricity is run through them but if they break or are incorrectly disposed of then the gasses inside are potentially toxic and are damaging to the environment. Here the student is contributing knowledge but also pointing to larger questions or complexities about the world.

Connecting to bigger stories, systems, or issues can help students to understand various influences on their lives

Integral to the Open Canopy pedagogy is the idea that by comparing their own experiences to those of diverse peers, students will gain perspective on how their own views of the world have been shaped, at least in part, by the contexts in which they are living and the kinds of ideas and values to which they have been exposed up to now. In other words, students may be better able to move beyond what is known as an ethnocentric stance: the view that one’s own experiences or culture constitute the baseline norm by which to judge others. For example, one student from Singapore noted that she had come to realize the importance of getting outside what she calls her “bubble” by learning about other people’s perspectives; she noticed that she and her classmates had a tendency to be judgmental towards foreign laborers in ways that they had perhaps taken for granted due to cultural and economic norms or prejudices. Many students similarly reflect on their own attitudinal tendencies, garnering new insights about the ways in which their own lives are enmeshed in bigger stories and systems, and the ways in which their individual and collective identities are both multiple and complex.

Connection-making can enhance global or intercultural competence

In many countries, there is great interest in cultivating global or intercultural competence among young people, in no small part to help equip them for navigating the complex challenges that need to be addressed in our contemporary world. The connection-making principle of The Open Canopy is highly compatible with such concepts because it encourages young people to situate their lives within a broader context and understand at least some of the ways in which our lives are interconnected and part of bigger ecological, economic, or political systems, particularly in our age of accelerated globalization and hyperconnectivity. We have found that students are readily able to make such connections with the light structure and support provided by the Open Canopy approach.

Teaching global or intercultural competence usually involves encouraging or preparing young people to take positive action in the world. Open Canopy activities do not tell students specifically what actions to take. Rather, they are deliberately designed to be open-ended enough for students to generate ideas, develop insights, or draw conclusions that
are authentic to them rather than predetermined or prescribed. But it is fair to say that the Open Canopy pedagogical approach is imbued with the sense that what we do as individuals matters and that our individual lives are bound up with the rest of humanity and the wider natural world. Activities that fall under the category of *Reimagining the world and looking ahead* explicitly or implicitly involve students engaging in some kind of action. For example, in *Publicly remembering the past today*, students are asked to design or redesign a monument that reimagines how the past is remembered or what or who is commemorated. In the *Exploring what we can do* activity in *Introduction to Planetary Health*, students consider choice points in their own lives and think of alternative choices that would be healthier for their communities and the planet, such as decreasing the amount of time they spend in the shower, eliminating their use of straws, or reducing food waste. They are also invited to think about disparities in access to resources and energy.

In sum, connection-making is a core principle of the Open Canopy pedagogical approach—and one that is intimately tied to the first two principles. The principle of slowing down opens up opportunities to notice or observe the world in new ways, which can involve or lead to the making of new connections between people, objects, or places. Sharing stories or perspectives can also be an opportunity for connection-making, particularly in terms of making connections with people in one's community or family. Similarly, connection-making is implicated in the fourth and fifth Open Canopy principles, to which we turn next: learner-generated content, and thoughtful peer-to-peer learning.
Chapter 4: Principle #4: Learner-Generated Content

This principle underscores the importance of giving students the opportunity to find and explore themes that are personally interesting or relevant to them, and to engage with content that has been chosen and produced by other students.

The content of any curriculum consists of the themes, topics, skills, and information that students study. In most education systems around the world, curricular content is largely determined and created by outside sources or adults, such as curriculum developers, boards of education, textbook writers, and teachers. Learner-generated content, in contrast, occurs when students themselves choose and create the content with which they engage. Many educational contexts blend both approaches, and good teachers everywhere understand the value of giving students the opportunity to discover and explore themes that the students themselves find meaningful.

The Open Canopy approach places a special emphasis on learner-generated content in two ways. One way involves straightforwardly giving students the opportunity to find, explore, and develop themes that are personally interesting to them. Doing so is typically guided by one or more of the first three Open Canopy principles. Specifically: students slow down to look closely at things in their own environment in order to surface themes of interest; they find and share stories related to people, places, and things they care about; and they are encouraged to make connections between things or experiences that are familiar to them and larger global themes or forces.

A second way The Open Canopy emphasizes learner-generated content is by explicitly encouraging students to engage with content that has been created by their co-learners. In other words, students aren’t just choice-makers and content-generators themselves, they are also responding to content that other students have generated. The students to whom they respond may be peers in the same classroom. Or, if students are engaged in a digital intercultural exchange program—and particularly if their classroom is participating in an Open Canopy learning journey—they may be same-aged peers who have very different life contexts than their own.

What does this instructional practice look like in the Open Canopy approach?

At the time of writing, every Open Canopy learning journey includes several activities in which students make their own choices about what to investigate and how to present their work. This doesn’t mean that there aren’t any guidelines. Each activity includes parameters within which students make a personal choice. For example, different activities ask students to do such things as: choose a community member to interview, find evidence of environmental change in their neighborhood, identify a public monument to
explore, examine a migration story in the news, take a walk in their local area and look for invisible borders, or look for evidence at the local level that we live in a globally connected world. Each of these activities, and others like them, has a specific theme. But importantly, within the activity there is an opportunity for students to make their own discoveries and to create work that reflects their own personal contexts. Then, when they share their work and respond to what others have created, they are both sharing content that reflects their own interests and choices, and learning from the work of other students who have done the same.

To illustrate this principle in action, consider the Creating neighborhood maps activity. It asks students to create visual representations of their local area as seen through their eyes and share a related story. Students’ maps differ widely, and reflect both their individual personalities as well as the circumstances of their lives. Some maps emphasize human relationships, showing routes that lead to homes of friends and relatives. Other maps carefully examine the geometry of rooflines and streets. Yet other maps reflect themes like places to play, or places to congregate, or places to worship. Almost always, in making these maps, students learn something new about their local area and something new about themselves. Moreover, when they look at maps that other students have generated, they continue to learn about neighborhoods and experiences very different to their own or about the incredibly varied ways that even students within the same classroom can look at the world.
In the younger grades, teachers often ask students to make collaborative maps. For example, students from a kindergarten class in Hydra, a small island in Greece, collectively worked on a three-dimensional map of their neighborhood to share with students in other locations in Greece, including Florida, USA; Ontario, Canada; and Antananarivo, Madagascar.

**What are the learning benefits of learner-generated content?**

As with the other principles, the benefits of this principle are varied, ranging from the obvious benefit of increasing intrinsic motivation to the more tacit benefit of communicating important messages about what counts as knowledge and who gets to decide.

*Learner-generated content is intrinsically engaging because it incorporates student choice*

The Open Canopy approach offers more autonomy to students than might be typical in their other educational experiences. Many young people have told us that they enjoy opportunities to get out into their neighborhoods and to have conversations that they wouldn’t ordinarily have. They like having choices about what to focus on and how they present their work. As an 11-year-old student from Marblehead, Massachusetts in the United States once wrote of her experience with the program: *You can’t just explore the world from a textbook.*
Students also like the opportunity to be creative, and they often choose to post work that takes an original angle. Doing so usually garners praise and interest from other students. For instance, the Everyday borders activity—which asks students to look for visible and invisible borders in their daily experience—typically generates a lot of engagement. Some students choose to reflect on tangible borders such as gates, fences, locks, or property lines. Other students choose to look closely at more abstract social or emotional borders or divisions. As an example of these latter types of borders, a high school student living in Portland, Maine in the United States photographed the protective visor she wears in her favorite metalworking class. Her accompanying description delved into gender expectations and barriers to participation for girls: This creative exploration of the phenomenon of borders elicited numerous comments from other students.

Another activity that foregrounds choice is Documenting the everyday, which invites students to observe and share an everyday activity in their community or family. Students often exhibit pride in showing how they or others go about completing hands-on tasks or engaging in daily routineness. A student from Erbil, Iraq photographed the different steps involved in preparing his favorite chicken and rice dish. A student in Singapore chose to document the daily walk she takes home from school—and surprisingly discovered new baby chicks.

Content generated by other students is typically interesting for other students to learn about, especially in a social media-like format

Students usually enjoy hearing firsthand, unique accounts from their same-aged peers. The online Open Canopy platform uses a social media format, similar to the ones that many students use outside of school on a regular basis. Students tend to find this format engaging because its content is unpredictable, unlike the static content of a textbook or curated website. Students post content that they have developed offline through local experiences in the classroom and community, with the content on the platform continually changing as students respond.
to one another’s posts, develop comment threads, and create posts for each new activity. Regardless of whether the program is implemented online or offline, students tend to engage with one another’s posts with great curiosity: How did someone’s grandparents forage for food in rural Italy when food was scarce? What does a Russian-made Santa Claus look like and why is this figurine so special to one family? What does a shopping mall look like in Tampico, Mexico?

*Learner-generated content creates an inclusive, inviting learning environment*

This pedagogy celebrates a variety of perspectives. While some children, particularly those from marginalized or minority communities, do not typically see themselves in school curricula, the Open Canopy approach offers them a chance to share—on their own terms—glimpses of their lived experience, heritage, and perspectives on the world. It is a highly inclusive pedagogical approach that can help young people feel seen. For example, in the *Remembering the Past?* curriculum, students typically make connections to the past or history in ways that lie outside conventional national narratives. They might explore how their family was affected by local or world events. Or they might show how their home life involves special customs or rituals that are particular to a community to which they belong, such as an Iranian family living in the United States marking the Iranian New Year, or students from the Chinese diaspora treasuring their family’s jade jewelry. This kind of learner-generated content provides an opportunity for students to get to know one another as whole human beings and to see aspects of one another’s lives outside of the four walls of the classroom.

*A diversity of learner-generated content helps to forge surprising connections*

In a particularly divisive and mistrustful age, genuine human connections are important for overcoming both real and perceived barriers, and for getting past one-dimensional narratives or stereotypes. Student-generated content helps young people identify points of connection with other young people that might not otherwise emerge. For example, two students—one from Greater Boston in the United States and one from Como, Italy—were excited and surprised to discover that they each had a grandfather whose most treasured possession was an old typewriter.
Reatedly, students in rural communities in Chiapas, Mexico and Bihar, India discovered that the traditional stone grinding tools in their communities look very similar, even though they have different names and are used to grind different ingredients. On a more global level, students often find common ground regarding their concerns about big issues like climate change and the impact of COVID-19 on their schooling experiences, even if—and often because—their individual experiences vary widely.

**Learner-generated content communicates important messages about the nature of knowledge**

Schools are considered to be places where students obtain knowledge. A tacit but still-dominant view of knowledge is that it is created by experts, delivered through the curriculum, and consumed by students. Curricula that emphasize learner-generated content challenge this tacit idea by inviting students to create knowledge as well as consume it. Students create knowledge in several ways: by sharing with other learners what the world looks like from their own perspectives, by offering their own questions, observations, connections and stories, and by connecting the unique features of their own local contexts to larger global stories and forces. Indeed, The Open Canopy’s *Three O’s* tool, which helps students detect overgeneralizations and stereotypes, often emboldens students to question what might appear to be authoritative knowledge. For instance, one student in Adelaide, Australia questioned how miners in Indonesia were portrayed in sources she had referred to in a project: She wondered if the sources had presented them as a monolith rather than as varied human beings, and that overgeneralization had therefore crept into her own work.

Hopefully, this list of benefits provides a strong argument for the importance of learner-generated content. But even if you find the list convincing, it’s hard to ignore the challenge of time. That is, the time learner-generated content “takes away” from the regular curriculum. Time can be invoked as an issue for all of the Open Canopy principles, but is particularly salient here. In most schools, the curriculum is already over-full with subjects and topics that students are required to study. There is little room to squeeze in opportunities for students to choose and create their own content. Time poses a genuine challenge, and we acknowledge that it creates hard choices. But for educators seeking to make those choices, we offer a few observations. First, the Open Canopy learning journeys aren’t entirely a matter of free choice: they often connect to themes that are already present in the curriculum. For instance, several of the learning journeys offer students the opportunity to investigate timely and important themes such as environmental change, human migration, and the public remembrance of history. The content students self-generate is directly
relevant to these themes, and teachers often use the Open Canopy approach as an alternative or supplementary way of teaching these subjects. We invite you to ask yourselves: How might these practices fit into my existing curricula? How might they support my existing teaching goals?

Second, we point again to the list of benefits, including an emphasis on student agency and student voice, the opportunity to explore a diversity of perspectives, and the promotion of a participatory conception of knowledge. To the extent that these benefits reflect educators’ goals and values, the Open Canopy curricula are directly relevant. Finally, we point to the dimension of learner-generated content in which students engage directly with content developed by other students. This engagement happens when students share their work with other students and enter into probing and thoughtful dialogue. In terms of developing a critical life skill, the value of learning to learn both with and from one’s peers—especially similarly-aged peers who come from very different backgrounds and contexts—cannot be overstated. This brings us to the fifth and final principle of the Open Canopy approach: Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange.
The Open Canopy approach to teaching and learning relies heavily on the power of peer-to-peer exchange central to its practice, young people learning with and directly from other young people. Unlike some forms of peer-to-peer learning where students work together to collectively arrive at a single solution or answer, this form of peer-to-peer learning taps into the inevitable range of individual perspectives and experiences that are present in any group of learners. This range may be located within one classroom, or across learners located in different parts of the world and from very different backgrounds. In our interconnected yet divided contemporary world, learning to converse across real and perceived boundaries is important for young people’s general wellbeing and intellectual and personal growth, bearing in mind that boundaries can exist between students within a single classroom as well as between different communities or nations. While intercultural exchange is not an essential component of the Open Canopy approach, the pedagogy was developed in the context of a digital intercultural learning platform, so it is well suited to bringing young people from a range of backgrounds and geographic locations together.

What do we mean by “thoughtful” peer-to-peer exchange? While it can include any kind of respectful, curious exchange between students, here we use the term thoughtful to emphasize exchange that is characterized by the other Open Canopy principles. Specifically, it refers to exchange that involves slowing down to engage with other students’ work, listening attentively to other people’s stories or perspectives, and making a variety of connections. Moreover, we note that such exchange is more likely to occur when students have generated content that is of personal interest and relevant to them, or their communities or families.

The Open Canopy conception of dialogue—and the thoughtfulness associated with it—is deeply aligned with the views of education philosopher Paulo Freire. To draw from an essay written by Jessica Fei, a researcher who formerly worked on the Open Canopy project, the dialogue that The Open Canopy encourages is a process that Freire considers the humanizing work of naming the world in order to transform it. According to Freire, dialogue is based on respect for others’ perspectives, and on a willingness to work together towards shared understandings of the world. As Fei points out, for Open Canopy
as we’ve mentioned previously and talk more about below, many educators—including the teacher we just quoted—also use the Open Canopy dialogue strategies in their in-person teaching, where students who know each other well talk directly with one another.

**What does this instructional practice look like in the Open Canopy approach?**

Peer-to-peer learning takes various forms in The Open Canopy. While there’s room for students to work collaboratively, and we might even recommend it for some activities, the Open Canopy pedagogy does not *require* deep collaborative learning—that is, students do not have to jointly create products, solutions, or other pieces of work together. However, they do have to engage in thoughtful exchange with one another around the work that they may have individually (or collaboratively) produced—to extend both their own thinking and the collective thinking of the group. For instance, if young people take a slow walk in their neighborhood and document what they see, that in and of itself can be a powerful activity. But when young people read and comment on one another’s documentation, whether in real time or asynchronously, their learning is further extended: How are their neighborhoods different or similar? How do students’ perspectives on where they live differ from place to place or from one person to another? How do students’ awareness of their own
perspectives shift when they discover how other students view those perspectives?

Commenting on one another’s posts is a form of dialogue: That is, two or more people sequentially exchange information or ideas in ways that acknowledge what has previously been said. Despite participating in structured activities or learning journeys, students should be given considerable freedom regarding how they choose to engage in dialogue with one another, and do so as equal partners. Dialogue is such an important component of The Open Canopy that there are two tools entirely devoted to it: the Dialogue Toolkit and the Three O’s. In brief, the Dialogue Toolkit is a set of easy-to-make dialogue moves that students can draw on when responding to other students’ work. The Three O’s is a framework for helping students be thoughtful about the assumptions we can make when meeting people or hearing stories that we find unfamiliar, and being mindful of how our responses might be received. (The Three “O’s” stand for overconfidence, overgeneralization, and othering.)

What are the learning benefits of thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange?

While others have written extensively about the benefits of peer-to-peer learning, we focus here on the benefits we have seen regarding the kinds of dialogue promoted by the Open Canopy approach.

Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange can cultivate a sense of affinity with other young people

The very premise of engaging in dialogue—whether it be asynchronous or face-to-face—presumes some degree of connection-making. Many students who have taken part in our online learning journeys have said that they felt a sense of connection to the students they interacted with on the platform, even though they were often many miles apart and knew they would likely never meet or speak in person. While a small minority of students have found interactions on the platform forced, when an online group is particularly active, a great many students report that the very experience of feeling “seen” by peers and having the opportunity to exchange comments is highly meaningful, and they are especially delighted—and sometimes surprised—to find points of commonality with individual students. Interestingly, students (and educators) seem to like the asynchronous nature of communication on our online platform, because it gives them time to compose thoughtful comments and replies. They also get to choose what about themselves they want to share in ways that are not always possible in face-to-face encounters given the quick assumptions that people often make based on physical appearance, accent, or affect. At the same time, educators have also told us that the Dialogue Toolkit has been very helpful for enriching in-person class discussions.
Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange can help counter stereotypes and fear

We arguably live in an age of misinformation and distrust. Further, we are evolutionarily hardwired to be less trusting towards those who seem different from ourselves. Through the Open Canopy approach, young people have opportunities to develop a sense of connection with young people who might at first seem quite different, especially if they live in unfamiliar places. Students have expressed to us over the years that some of the connections they made with peers online helped overturn some of their preexisting assumptions. For instance, some students in the United States were surprised to find out about the kinds of technology and resources available to their counterparts in India, and to discover that they shared similar tastes and interests. Meanwhile, students in Erbil, Iraq were taken aback to hear that some of their peers in Oregon, United States had to work to support their families while still attending high school; Conversely, those same students in Oregon were surprised to learn that the students they were interacting with in Erbil celebrated Christmas.

However, even with an open heart, it is still quite possible for students to switch out one stereotype for another. Indeed, the Three O’s tool was designed to make sure that personal connection-making through The Open Canopy doesn’t lead students to be overconfident about how much they now know about a particular place or community based on the testimony or perspectives of only one or a few people. Getting to know people as unique and complex individuals rather than straightforward representatives of a single group seems more important than ever if we are to promote intercultural dialogue and challenge stereotyping and fear.

Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange can help meet students’ developmental need for belonging

Young people are developmentally primed to try to figure out who they are and how they fit into the broader world. Forging personal connections with peers living in different places—or getting to know people more deeply from within the same classroom—can broaden the sense of possibility for students with regard to communities to which they could belong. Furthermore, the “making connections” principle of The Open Canopy means that some activities are explicitly designed to have students reflect on the ways in which they are part of something bigger than the day-to-day immediacy of their own lives. They might consider how they are part of an unfolding story related to their family, a community, a region or country, a movement or struggle, or even humanity as a whole. In one exchange, for instance, a 16-year-old boy from a small town in Chiapas, Mexico, shared how a grinding tool has been passed down for 200
Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange can enhance students’ mental wellbeing

Fostering a sense of connectedness with peers can be helpful for young people, particularly those who feel isolated or struggle with anxiety or other mental health challenges—which, according to recent research, may represent the majority of teens in some places. In a thoughtful and safe context, a sense of connection may develop among peers because of being at the same life stage—that is, a developmental period when they may be envisioning their future lives, figuring out their personal values, beliefs, and identities, and navigating shifting relationships at home, school, and beyond.

Sometimes, some students choose to share specific struggles they are facing. For instance, in response to the Everyday Borders activity, one student reflected on the borders and boundaries she was experiencing within and outside school because of her transgender identity; other students left encouraging comments for her that she later said in a survey had helped make her feel both validated and supported. Other students referred in posts to the sadness they felt at losing a family member such as a grandparent, or their general anxiety about the state of the world; in these cases, students invariably left supportive comments for one another, sometimes noting that they had similar experiences or concerns. Of course, this pedagogical approach inspired numerous comments from other students. They expressed their admiration for the object and asked questions about how it is used; they also drew connections to things that have been passed down in their families, such as necklaces.

The boy replied to one of them: I find your observation interesting, regarding that, despite being from different places, our families have followed the same traditional dynamic of inheriting objects in order to remember them, it seems as if inheriting objects was a very common way of remembering the ancestors.
is no substitute for expert counseling or health services. But creating spaces for these kinds of topics to emerge—and for other students to then reach out and respond to one another—seems important for humanizing education and acknowledging the many experiences young people bring into their learning contexts.

*Thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange can help develop communication skills and intercultural competence*

Successful peer-to-peer exchange demands that students learn to communicate with one another and engage in productive dialogue. Developing these capacities is supported by The Open Canopy’s *Dialogue Toolkit*, which offers a repertoire of moves that students can adapt or incorporate into many different contexts, especially with guidance and support from their classroom teacher. For example, the “snip” move, which involves students copying and pasting a sentence or phrase from a peer’s online post and then commenting on it, allows them to be more specific in their responses to other students and to demonstrate that they have paid careful attention to what they had to say. The Toolkit also encourages students to ask probing questions, with a particular eye to finding out about someone else’s perspective. One teenage student from Beaverton, Oregon in the United States says: *I think the interaction has made me a lot more open-minded, especially when I write out the responses. I’m kinda thinking, ‘Well, how can I relate this to other people...?’ I also take into mind the different circumstances, so I wouldn’t want to say anything that would ... be kind of single-minded.*

Meanwhile, the Point of View (POV) move is a strategy that enables students to state their perspective on an issue or topic without personally attacking those who hold a different viewpoint: by starting a comment with a phrase such as “from my perspective” and then offering some evidence, students are not saying that another student is wrong—rather, they are creating space for respectful dialogue. Reflecting on their online peer-to-peer exchange using the Dialogue Toolkit, a student from Salt Lake City in the United States says: *I’ve actually never thought of that until now! I suppose, yes. Because of heavy media influence, sometimes people avoid topics of controversy and fail to speak up. I’ve been reading up on this, and there was a recent case where [one platform] was censoring news about the Orlando shootings because the shooter was Islamic, and by doing so, a subtle sense of avoidance when it came to discussing things like these was realized in myself. Thanks for the insightful comment!*
In cases where The Open Canopy is used to engage in intercultural exchange, students can develop confidence and skill at communicating across cultures. Some examples include taking care to explain phenomena that might not be apparent to someone from outside of their geographic location or culture, avoiding complex language for learners of the language of communication, or practicing their own competency in a language that is foreign to them (which in the case of The Open Canopy platform is English). Given the recent leaps forward in AI-driven translation software, we have also noticed young people developing their skills at using such technologies to communicate across languages and translate text back and forth. Patterns of migration and globalization mean that young people are likely to have to interact with people from different backgrounds to their own, and it is important for young people to gain the confidence, skill, and inclination to communicate with peers across cultural and linguistic differences.

This chapter concludes the five chapters in Part I that are devoted to each of the foundational Open Canopy principles. The first chapter described the principle slow down to observe the world closely and made the case that starting with “slow” makes a space for all the other principles to unfold. The second chapter discussed how sharing stories and perspectives helps learners explore and build identity, learn about other people and the world, and develop their own voice. The third chapter argued for the power of making connections—to other people and their life experiences and between the everyday artifacts and experiences of daily life and larger global forces, stories, and systems. The fourth chapter on learner-generated content emphasized the importance of giving students the opportunity to find and explore themes that are personally relevant to them, and to engage with similarly-sourced content from other students. This chapter, on thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange, argued for the power of respectful, curious student dialogue, especially when it builds on, and is shaped by, the other four principles.

Readers will have noticed that many of the examples of student work throughout these chapters are drawn from students’ encounters with peers from another culture. Sometimes the intercultural encounters are within a single classroom. More often, the encounters are between learners who live in very different places and have very different life experiences. However, we, the authors, wholeheartedly believe that the five principles are as relevant to in-person, locally-based learning as they are to learning that takes place in a global context. Why? Because regardless of the cultural makeup of a learning space, every learner can benefit from slowing down to observe the world closely. Every learner has their own
Every learner has their own unique perspective. And every learner can learn with and from other learners. That said, because there is so much intercultural exchange on the Open Canopy platform and we are university-based researchers, we have purposely tried to learn what we can about the character of student intercultural exchange, and to develop pedagogical strategies to amplify its benefits and mitigate its challenges. This next chapter shares a bit about what we’ve learned.
The Open Canopy program (originally known as Out of Eden Learn) was not initially conceived of as a vehicle for learning about culture(s). However, from the start, both young people and their teachers told us that this was one of the most exciting aspects of the learning space we had created. The five key principles—slowing down, sharing stories and perspectives, making connections, student-generated content, and thoughtful peer-to-peer dialogue—support meaningful intercultural encounters that can lead to new insights about different cultures, including cultures which students already know well. The principles can also lead students to develop more nuanced understandings of the concept of culture itself.

While the young people we've worked with have been excited to learn with and from peers living far away from them, throughout this handbook we've been careful to emphasize that the Open Canopy approach is not dependent on classes from around the world being in contact with one another. Indeed, cultural diversity is not always best measured by the distance between waypoints on a map of the world. Differences among people's lived experiences, their cultural and/or religious backgrounds, and multiple other facets of their identities including their worldviews, can be found within a single classroom—whether or not those differences are immediately obvious. In other words, we define intercultural exchange broadly and in ways designed to speak to many different teaching and learning contexts.

At the same time, our work is highly relevant to the broad trend towards what is often called “global education” in many parts of the world, as reflected in the increase in digital intercultural exchange programs similar to The Open Canopy. Teachers often view programs such as Empatico, e-Twinnings, Global Cities, Global Nomads, and i-Earn as vehicles for broadening their students’ horizons and fostering intercultural connections—and some of the points below are likely to be particularly useful in such learning contexts.

What is culture?

Culture is a notoriously difficult and slippery concept to define. The word derives from the Latin *colere*, which means to cultivate. However, in The Open Canopy, we are not interested in culture with a capital C, as symbolized by opera, literature, or architecture—even if our expansive view of what counts as culture includes room for what might be considered to be officially-sanctioned cultural endeavors. In fact, we avoid strictly demarcating what does and does not count as culture, and in our curricula we avoid specifically using the term,
to allow for a more inductive approach to learning about people’s lives and worldviews.

We do, however, seek to counter the idea of cultures as static or monolithic entities. For example, the trope of children dressed in national costumes linking hands around the world problematically connects the concept of culture to that of the nation state and implies that there are single “true” or "original" national (and ethnic/racial) identities. Of course, there is an awareness among many educators that cultures can’t be boiled down to traditional dresses or preferred food dishes: Those are merely “tip of the iceberg” manifestations of cultural difference. Deeper differences—such as relationships to time or assumptions about individual vs. collective or familial responsibility—lie below the surface and are therefore hidden from immediate view. The image of an iceberg is useful in terms of expanding our ideas about what counts as—or needs to be attended to—in terms of different cultures. Yet it too is a relatively static and monolithic image that does not reflect the ways in which cultures on the ground mix, meld, and hybridize, particularly in an era of globalization, new technologies, and accelerated patterns of migration.

Early in the history of our platform, we asked our journalist collaborator Paul Salopek to create a short audio reflection that might nudge participants away from essentializing cultures or forming rigid notions of what they are or how they work. This reflection, called *The River of Culture*, invites young people to begin thinking about culture as something more fluid and complex. It culminates with the following lines:

*Culture isn’t an oasis, a pool of water in the desert, separated from another culture by miles of sand. Human culture is instead like a river, constantly flowing, mixing, with whitewater rapids and still pools, to be sure, but it is all interconnected. Culture is restless. It flows. It lives.*

We would also add that cultures are not separate from the individual human beings who enact, uphold, innovate, appropriate, mix, or do many other things with the various cultural forces they inherit or encounter. In *The Open Canopy*, the focus is very much on individual people in all their complexities, even while broader insights might be gleaned about culture(s), as discussed below. Meanwhile, the *Three O’s* tool is designed to help guard against glossing over important differences within identified cultures, some of which are to do with differences and inequities related to race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and religion, among other identity markers. And in general, we encourage a great deal of humility when it comes to trying to understand other people’s cultures or the world at large. As individuals, we can never be neutral observers; rather, we are inescapably situated within specific contexts, with our perspectives shaped by—among other things—dynamic cultural forces and personal
lived experiences. This last point applies to us, the authors of this book, and our approach to supporting intercultural encounters should not be considered as “neutral” or definitive but as something that is in many ways a product of where we live and work, who we are, and our personal stories to date.

With these considerations in mind, we now consider how the Open Canopy approach seeks to promote thoughtful intercultural interactions.

**Learning Opportunities**

We have articulated a set of opportunities to help educators consider how they might best leverage Open Canopy-type learning opportunities with regard to learning about culture(s). These considerations are closely tied to the five core principles laid out in this handbook. The set of opportunities emerged in the specific context of digital intercultural exchange among teenage students on our platform, but it is equally relevant to in-person learning contexts and different age groups. The opportunities are:

*Connect and care*
*See culture everywhere*
*(Re)consider and (re)compare*
*Become more self-aware*
*But beware…*

*Connect and care*

The Open Canopy aims to foster a respectful curiosity and a sense of connection to or solidarity with other young people, an appreciation for other cultures, and a desire to connect with peers across different cultural contexts both near and far. Young people say that they appreciate the opportunity to connect in authentic ways with diverse peers, and it appears that such opportunities can be powerful gateway experiences that leave students inspired to learn more about culture(s). One teenage student from Tampico, Mexico said:

>Before [the program] I understood that there were other cultures and I understood that there were other people believing other stuff but I didn’t really want to interact with them. I mean I respected them but I just didn’t look to find more interactions with them, but now I find those opportunities to talk to people who believe in other things, who were raised differently in another place.

*See culture everywhere*

Being exposed to a range of firsthand stories and perspectives can expand young people’s views of what culture is: They can come to see it as a complex, fluid phenomenon of which they are a part, and as something deeply individual and personal as well as something associated with particular geographies or communities. Indeed, some students recognize for the first time that they themselves belong to or participate in cultures: It is not just something that other people have or do. While we have found that
have told us in private reflections that they realized they knew very little about places other than what they had gleaned from prevailing stereotypes. For example, students based in the United States have reported how their perceptions of life in India and China have been altered, while they in turn may have altered the views of students in India and China about what it’s like to live in the United States.

For all students, Open Canopy-type intercultural interactions can enhance their understanding of both commonality and diversity within and across cultures. One student—a Chinese citizen studying temporarily in Adelaide, Australia—reflected after a learning journey that she had become more cautious in terms of learning about other cultures from books, remembering that what she reads doesn't necessarily represent all people from a country or how things “really” are. She said her learning experiences let me think about things from a wider variety of perspectives.

Become more self-aware

The Open Canopy approach has the potential to shape students’ self-awareness of their own perspectives and why and how they might be similar and different to those of people living in other cultural contexts. The opportunity to (re)consider and (re)compare their own and other cultures can help students to situate their own lives, identities, and values relative to other students and to reflect foods, fashions, and local traditions, for example, are recurring and welcome topics of discussion in the context of The Open Canopy, many students pick up on other subtler aspects of culture, such as communication styles, prevailing cultural values and behavioral expectations, and relationship patterns across different generations. Students may also hear from peers who experience cultural hybridity in their own homes or communities and/or come to see that there can be a range of cultural influences within any one place. One student from Santa Fe, New Mexico in the United States noted: The thing about culture is it’s not quantifiable. You can’t say these two people have the same culture and these people don’t. It’s on a spectrum sort of. The principle of slowing down also helps students to notice aspects of their own cultures that they may have previously overlooked.

(Re)consider and (re)compare

For some young people, an Open Canopy learning experience might be the first time they have considered the existence of different cultures or had the opportunity to compare their own culture(s) with those of other young people, be they their own classmates or students living thousands of miles away. For other students, it is more a case of re-considering what they thought they knew about different cultures or re-comparing their own culture to those of others—which may help overturn existing stereotypes or faulty assumptions. Some students
on the ways in which they themselves are shaped at least in part by particular cultural influences or expectations. A student living in Singapore stated that comparing different perspectives and experiences had led her to understand that there are others in different communities that have different kinds of dynamics, and they inculcate different values into the students, whether or not these students or these people actually perceive and instill and accept these values. In her case, this revelation led her to assert the need for empathy and openness towards others rather than the tendency to just live in our own bubbles and perpetuate the same kind of values and understandings that have been propagated towards us.

But beware...

The Three O’s tool was developed because we found that students sometimes demonstrated behaviors or stances that didn’t seem aligned with these learning aspirations, even if the students were presumably well-intentioned. However, the Three O’s are better viewed as broad human tendencies that need to be anticipated, rather than the shortcomings or misconceptions of individual students, and the examples we found of overgeneralization, overconfidence, and othering were usually subtle or ambiguous rather than offensive.

We have found it helpful to name these potential pitfalls up front in our curriculum materials. Many students have expressed gratitude for the guidelines, saying that they helped them to interact more confidently and thoughtfully with peers in both online and in-person settings. Students told us that the guidelines also helped them to interpret or analyze others’ behaviors and stances. Nevertheless, we caution against emphasizing the Three O’s such that they make students fearful of “Three O’ing” or overzealous in their calling out of others for doing so. There are plenty of gray areas that educators need to navigate. Some questions to consider include:

- Are students using language rather carelessly, or do they truly believe that all members of a particular community or population believe and act in the same way? Do students have the vocabulary they need to convey nuance in their understanding?
- How straightforward do students think it is to take on someone else’s point of view or to anticipate their perspective? Does their curiosity about others feel appropriate and respectful given power imbalances related to factors such as geopolitics and race/ethnicity?
- How can students be authentically themselves while being sensitive to the kind of language that might offend other students?
- As educators, how can we talk about culture(s) without overgeneralizing or overlooking important nuances in terms of intersecting identities related to race/ethnicity, gender, or religion, for example?

In sum, designing intercultural learning
experiences is a rich and complex task. The Open Canopy principles can help students to get the most out of such learning opportunities, especially if a nuanced understanding of the concept of culture is incorporated into the design. As authors, we have seen the special power of young people learning both with and from peers from very different cultural backgrounds. But, to reiterate, The Open Canopy by no means relies on an intercultural component: Slowing down, sharing stories, making connections, learner-generated content, and thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange are intended to surface the uniqueness, humanity, and connectedness of students in ways that are meaningful even when students already know one another well and/or come from similar backgrounds. The next section of this book explores the types of activities that can promote these principles, regardless of learning context.
PART II: Activity Types
Overview

At this writing, there are five Open Canopy Learning Journeys, with a total of 24 distinct “footsteps,” or activities. While all the footsteps are unique, they can be loosely grouped into six distinct activity-types. These types represent six different pathways for bringing the Open Canopy principles to life. Educators interested in experimenting with the Open Canopy pedagogy can use these activity-types as building blocks to design their own curriculum.

Each chapter in this section gives an overview of an activity-type. Although the chapters don’t include specific lesson plans, in-text links are provided for readers who wish to see the step-by-step activities and examples of student work.

Chapter 7: Taking Slow Walks
Chapter 8: Mapping Meaningful Geographies
Chapter 9: Making and Mapping Connections
Chapter 10: Interviewing Family and Community Members
Chapter 11: Looking Closely at Everyday Objects
Chapter 12: Reimagining the World and Looking Ahead
Chapter 7: Taking Slow Walks

Moving slowly through the world at a human-scaled, observational pace can be a transformational experience. This activity-type encourages learners to take a slow walk through a familiar area with the intention of seeing it with fresh eyes or considering it from a new perspective. The term “walk” stands for any form of moving about, whether it involves legs, wheels, or any other journey-like mode of experience. The purpose of taking slow walks by any means is to experience the world in an immersive, nuanced, slowly-unfolding way.

Examples of this activity-type

**Taking Neighborhood Walks.** In this activity, from the learning journey The Present and the Local, students go for a walk in their local area and observe their surroundings carefully. They are encouraged to “see” with all of their senses, and to look anew at the place and the people who live or work there. Students take photos or otherwise capture aspects of their experience to share with their peers.

**Noticing Global Forces in the Everyday.** In this activity, from the learning journey The Past and the Global, students take a walk in their local area, looking for evidence that we live in a globally-connected world. The global forces they look for might include economic, environmental, governmental, cultural, or other kinds of forces. Students take photos or a video of what they see, and share related ideas and questions.

**Everyday Borders.** In this activity, from the learning journey The Past and the Global, students take a slow walk in their neighborhoods or everyday contexts, paying specific attention to both visible and invisible borders. They consider where and how their movement is restricted or enabled, what kinds of tangible and intangible features function as borders, and whether there are places where not everyone feels able to go—even if there is not a physical boundary preventing entry. Students take photos or make sketches or notes of what they notice to share with their peers.

**Walking with Health in Mind.** In this activity, from the learning journey Introduction to Planetary Health, students take a slow walk in their own neighborhoods, noticing things that may have an impact on their own health, the health of people in their community, or the health of the environment. As they walk, they are encouraged to consider different kinds of human health, such as illness, injury, diet and nutrition, and mental health. They also ponder different aspects of environmental health, such as air, water, land, animals, plants, and ecosystems.
Students take photos that capture their ideas, and the walk gives them an experiential basis for learning more about the concept of planetary health, which scientists define as the study of the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth.

**Public Remembering in our Neighborhoods.**
In this activity, from the learning journey Remembering the Past, students take a walk in their local neighborhood to look for ways in which the past is publicly remembered where they live. They consider questions such as: How is history remembered in my neighborhood? Which people or events from the past are commemorated and how? Students might look at street signs or place names, commemorative plaques, statues, monuments or memorials, murals, or other forms of remembering including natural monuments or features of the landscape. Then, they look into the history of the monument or memorial: How did it come to be? Whose stories does it tell?

**What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?**

- Volumes of stories are written into the landscapes we traverse every day—stories about who we are and where we’ve been, stories about the planet we share with one another and all life forms, stories about the systems that connect us and the practices that divide us. A primary goal of this activity is to provide an experiential entryway for learners to begin to uncover these stories for themselves.
- Another goal is simply to get students up out of their seats and into the world at a foot-level pace. One way or another, most of us will be on the move for much of our lives. Taking slow walks can help students understand the pleasure and the reward of walking through even the most familiar environments in an open, learningful way. It can also encourage a more appreciative attitude towards natural and human-designed environments.
- A further purpose of this activity-type is to activate students’ sense of agency. Once students begin walking, they make a series of choices driven by their own interests and observations: They choose what to look at, where they will linger, what to document to share with others, and ultimately what theme or item they will take away from the experience to go on to learn more about. Understanding that even the small choices one makes can shape what one learns is an important dimension of being a self-directed learner.
Tips for teaching this activity-type

Find a scope and timeframe that works for students. Walks can be long or short, wide-ranging, or circumscribed. Although it’s great to get outdoors, it can also be rewarding to walk through a familiar interior landscape, such as a school or apartment building. It’s helpful for learners of any age to understand the expected minimum timeframe before they begin. Will they aim to walk for 30 minutes? More? Less? If students seem to need additional structure, you can suggest that they make a certain number of stops, and/or give them specific strategies for noticing through multiple senses—for example, to pay special attention to sounds, smells, vibrations, etc.

Find a focus that allows for discovery. In keeping with the instructional principle of learner-generated content, the Taking Slow Walks activity-type encourages learners to make their own discoveries, some of which become “content” for further learning. This doesn’t mean that students can’t be given a focus for a slow walk, and indeed a focus can be helpful, especially if the activity is being used to lay the groundwork for thinking in new ways about a specific theme. For example, students can focus on looking for such things as everyday borders, or signs of interactions between human health and the environment, as in the above Open Canopy activities. Or, the suggested focus could be as simple as looking for signs of seasonal change, or looking for things that contain hidden beauty, or for signs of insect life. What’s important to avoid is a scavenger hunt mindset, in which students are narrowly focused on finding a set of precisely-specified items. It’s not that scavenger hunts can’t be fun or educational. They certainly can be. It’s just that they don’t emphasize the use of a learner’s own imagination and curiosity to drive discovery.
Chapter 8: Mapping Meaningful Geographies

This activity-type invites students to share a view of their local area as seen through their own eyes. Unlike the other activity-types in this section, at present there is only one instance of mapping geographies in the Open Canopy curricula, and therefore we sometimes refer to it as a single activity. The activity occurs at the beginning of the curriculum *The Present and the Local*, which is often the first Open Canopy learning journey that students experience. The purpose of the activity is to introduce students to creative mapmaking as a way to express and explore their own lived experiences. It plays an important role in setting the tone for the overall learning experience because it establishes that students’ own geographical and community contexts play an essential role in Open Canopy learning.

**Example of this activity-type**

*Creating Neighborhood Maps.* This activity asks students to sketch a map of a place they know well, and share a related story. The place could be their neighborhood or local area, their school, a place they like to visit, or a route they regularly travel—by foot, by bike, by car, or any other means. Students can make their maps in any way they want, as long as they don’t use images from Google Maps or similar mapping services. The stories students share can relate in any way to the map, such as an account of why certain places on the map are meaningful, a story of something that happened, or a detailed description of specific places or features. The activity calls for both visual and verbal engagement, and students are free to emphasize whichever aspect they prefer. Sometimes, students make very detailed maps accompanied by relatively sparse stories; sometimes the reverse is true, with many instances in between.

**MAPS**

Students approach mapmaking in varied ways, and their choices often reflect their individual proclivities and interests. For example, some students are very interested in geometry and spatial relations. Their maps are often quite detailed, and focus on the shapes of houses and the layout of paths and roadways. Many students focus their maps on a path or route...
horses, feeding chickens, playing in fields, walking with friends. Mostly, students make individual maps, but sometimes younger students work together to create a two- or three-dimensional model of a place they share, such as a village square.

**STORIES**

The stories students tell to accompany their maps are also quite varied. Many students tell stories about special locations on their maps. For example, a 9-year-old in Chicago, Illinois in the United States points out a house on her map where she and her brother were recently invited to dinner. They had a ping pong table, she explains, and we spied on all the adults for HOURS before dinner. Another 9-year-old, this one living outside of Vancouver, Canada, tells his story by writing detailed annotations that explain why several locations on his LEGO-built map are meaningful to him. A 12-year-old living near Aurangabad in Bihar, India describes the location of his house and the important activities that happen in it. All festivals are
celebrated in my house, he explains, and guests also come.

What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?

- A primary goal of this activity is to give learners an opportunity to share with their peers something about themselves, both in terms of the particular place they choose to represent and how they choose to represent it. The mapmaking activity is much more than an exercise in envisioning geography. Students understand that they will be sharing their maps with other students, possibly from other regions and cultures: They are not only envisioning how to draw an aspect of their local area, they are also thinking about how to express aspects of their lived experiences.

- Relatedly, the activity celebrates that all students have something unique and interesting to share. The instructions are very open-ended, and students can choose to represent a geographical scene and scope that is meaningful to them. Some students show vast mountain ranges with tiny houses dotted into the background; others focus on a pathway leading to a favorite place or person. Many take a bird's eye view that emphasizes features of the natural geography or the geometry of rooftops viewed from above. Some zoom in and focus on small details that are important to them, such as the doorway of their home. Because each student’s individual choice and style plays such an important role in how and what they choose to represent, the chance of possibly hurtful surface comparisons—such as who lives in the biggest house or wealthiest neighborhood—is minimized.

- Another goal of this activity is to offer students an opportunity to engage in visual thinking. Drawing or otherwise creating a visual representation of something familiar is literally a way of learning more about it. In creating a visual representation, students tend to discover new details and dimensions of what they are trying to envision; they are likely to recall related stories and associations or discover things about themselves, such as what facets of an object or environment particularly intrigue or interest them.

Tips for teaching this activity-type

**Encourage and celebrate the diverse ways students can approach mapmaking.** Students bring a wide range of skills, proclivities, knowledge, and personalities to this activity. It’s important to value this, and avoid overemphasizing one particular skill set, such as technical artistic skill. While the activity is certainly an opportunity for artistically-oriented students to use their skills, the point of the activity is *thinking* through mapmaking as a means to explore and express one’s sense of place. When preparing
students for this activity, it helps to discuss the wide range of approaches that can be taken.

**Be flexible about materials.** Consider offering a variety of tools and formats for students to work with. These might include markers, watercolors, simple pencil on notepaper, Lego bricks or other building blocks, cardboard, clay, or string. Some educators choose to let students use computer drawing programs, which is also fine, although we would urge that using tactile materials should always be an option. Whatever materials students use, they should avoid copying a pre-existing map.

**Be flexible about time.** The time students will want to take for this activity will vary widely. Many students will complete the activity in approximately 30 minutes. But others will eagerly spend lavish amounts of time. Ideally, both timeframes can be accommodated. Also, as noted earlier, some students may prefer to spend most of their time on telling a story, others on drawing a map. Both activities are valued, and students should feel free to distribute their efforts as they like.
Chapter 9: Making and Mapping Connections to Larger Forces, Stories, or Systems

This activity-type encourages learners to make connections between an object or experience that is personally relevant to them and broader global forces, narratives, or systems. There are three design elements to this activity-type, all of which are important. The first involves having students self-select an object, phenomenon, or experience that is personally relevant or familiar to them. The second involves asking students to reach for connections between their selection and a clearly-specified broader theme. The third involves asking learners to visibly map their connection-making as it is happening, either through a concept map or another technique for making their thinking visible.

Examples of this activity-type

**Connecting our own lives to the past.** This activity, from the learning journey *The Past and the Global*, invites learners to think about how their own lives and identities connect to the past or history, and to create a diagram that helps them make connections and share their thinking with others. For example, students might illustrate how their family history has intersected with major world events or show how different technological inventions impact the way that they and other people live in their community.

**Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems.** This activity, also from the learning journey *The Past and the Global*, invites learners to carefully observe an everyday object and then make a diagram to help them think about how the object connects to bigger systems in the world, such as manufacturing systems, systems of trade and commerce, environmental systems, or communications systems.

**Uncovering the Big Idea of Planetary Health.** This activity, from the learning journey *Introduction to Planetary Health*, builds on a previous activity in which learners find items in their local environment that connect to human health. Using that experience as a springboard, learners work in groups or as a whole class to develop a concept map that explores the complex connections between a locally-relevant health impact and large-scale environmental change.

These Open Canopy examples are just a few of many possibilities, and educators will have creative lesson ideas of their own. The important point in designing activities of this type is that all three of the aforementioned design elements are present: student-selected content, an explicit invitation to reach for broader connections, and the opportunity to map or diagram thinking as it is happening.
What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?

- Starting with the personal and reaching for connections helps engage students’ interest and sparks their curiosity.
- Connection-making from individual experience to broader contexts is a fundamental goal of education, but it often needs scaffolding: Unless learners are encouraged to explicitly reach for connections, the connections often don’t get made.
- The act of mapping, diagramming, or otherwise visually representing thinking as it is happening helps learners extend their thinking and make new connections.
- Extended thinking is often elaborate or complex. Creating an external representation of one’s thinking as it is unfolding—via a concept map or another kind of diagram—helps learners hold onto complex ideas.

Tips for teaching this activity-type

Start by identifying curriculum opportunities. When designing your own activity of this type, one way to start is by considering the kinds of topics you teach that you believe have important real-world connections between students’ own lives and larger human stories or systems. What are some values that are important to you as an educator and that you’d like to promote in your classroom? What kinds of connections are your students likely to find meaningful? Try the activity yourself or with a colleague first, before you teach it.

Prioritize content over form. Messy and complex diagrams are often okay! When students make diagrams, it’s helpful to de-emphasize creating a finely finished product, and instead emphasize diagramming as a means to think more expansively about something, rather than an end in itself. One way to do this is to be sure to respond first, and positively, to the thinking illustrated in a diagram, and secondarily—if appropriate—to the diagram’s artistic elements. That said, some learners do take great pride in their artistic expression, so it’s important not to overlook it. Just be careful not to elevate artistic virtuosity above an emphasis on making thinking visible.

Consider the benefits of group work. Depending on the focus of an activity, you might want to have students work in pairs or small groups when making diagrams, especially if they are making connections between their local community and larger global forces, stories, or systems. Group work can help students think in broader terms about how systems reach into our lives in multiple ways.

Allow enough time. Students can usually make
some connections on the spot. But new and perhaps deeper connections are likely to come to them over time. Consider letting students start on their diagrams during one class session, and have them continue to work on them over time.

**Have students share their ideas with one another.**

It can be helpful for students to notice the kinds of connections they didn't initially think of and to consider why or push their thinking in new directions. For example, create opportunities for students to share their work with one another at various points in the process—as they are going along, and as a culminating experience. Consider using the *Dialogue Toolkit* to help students respond to one another's work.
Chapter 10: Interviewing Family and Community Members

In this activity-type, learners listen attentively to other people’s stories and perspectives and then distill what they hear for other learners. Learners are particularly encouraged to interview people from a different generation than their own. The activity-type helps learners develop practical listening and interviewing skills that can be applied to other areas of life or study. It encourages them to listen closely to other people’s stories and opinions and to try to understand their perspectives. It can also help them to consider how belonging to a particular generation, being at a certain stage of life, coming from a certain place, or having had certain life experiences can help shape someone’s perspective or understanding.

Examples of this activity-type

**Listening to Neighbors’ Stories.** This activity, from the learning journey *The Present and the Local*, involves interviewing an adult to learn about their experiences and memories of the local area, which the learner can then compare to their own.

**Intergenerational Perspectives on the Past and Public Remembering.** This activity comes from the *Remembering the Past?* learning journey. Learners interview an adult who is familiar with their neighborhood to learn about their perspective on the past and how they think the past should be publicly remembered in their neighborhood. If appropriate, they also ask the adult to comment on contemporary controversies involving monuments.

**Our Own Stories of Migration.** This activity, from the *Stories of Human Migration* learning journey, asks learners to listen carefully to the migration story of someone they know well and then retell this story for a peer audience.

There are many additional ways in which interviewing could be incorporated into curricula, and teachers will have plenty of ideas of their own. What is important in designing these activities is that they encourage young people to listen carefully to someone else to try to understand their life experiences, perspectives, or ideas. Students should then be encouraged to reflect on what they learn from the interview experience.

**What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?**

- Fostering students’ listening and reporting skills is, of course, valuable across many aspects of the curriculum, as well as in life more generally.

- Students who have participated in The Open Canopy have appreciated the opportunity to have
personally meaningful conversations they might not otherwise have had with family members or people in their community. Many students have discovered important and interesting information about their family history or have developed an interest in their community’s past.

- Interviewing people can help students develop insights into other people’s life experiences and perspectives. For example, they often report that they have gained a new appreciation for the complexity of the phenomenon of migration by listening closely to someone’s personal experience. Other students have shown interest in reflecting on why people of a different generation may have different perspectives on social issues.

- The opportunity to interview someone can encourage curiosity and an appreciation for what can be learned by listening to adults at different life stages. For instance, students may be interested in finding out what it was like to grow up during a different era or to discover that people who are older now had relatable experiences or challenges when they were young. We have found that young people are often interested in learning about “life lessons” from elders, especially if it is someone they are close to or admire, like a grandparent.

**Tips for teaching this activity-type**

*Spend time designing interview questions.* You can provide students with some interview questions, especially if it is their first experience of interviewing. Alternatively, you could craft the questions together as a class or invite students to develop their own set of questions. Emphasize that students should try to ask open-ended questions that invite people to describe an experience or explain their understanding or point of view, in their own words.

*Emphasize the importance of listening.* Students should be clear that their primary goal is to listen to someone else. They should plan to be patient and give people time to respond to their questions. Some silence is okay. They should also be prepared to ask follow-up questions to clarify their understanding or to seek more detail. You may want to model how to conduct an interview in class.

*Give guidance on the practicalities.* Students can conduct the interview in person, online, or via telephone. Students should make it clear to the person they interview that they will be sharing the content of their interview with their teacher and peers. With the interview participant’s permission, they may want to audio record the conversation. Students can write up highlights of their conversation or retell their interview participant’s story in their own words. They can include a short description of the interview—e.g.,
who they talked with, in what setting, for how long, and how the conversation felt.

**Offer choices for conveying what they learned.** You can offer students different modalities for sharing out about the interview: a written account, an audio recording of the student retelling the story, a visual representation—though students should also offer a written explanation if they opt for a purely visual representation. While apps are always evolving, there are numerous options available for telling stories in ways that can creatively combine images, maps, audio, and text.

**Help students to reflect.** You may want to debrief the overall experience as a class or invite students to write a private reflection. What was the most important insight or idea they learned from the interviewing experience? What did they most enjoy about it, if anything? What was surprising to them? What might they do differently the next time they interview someone, and why? What did they learn from the interview experiences that other students shared?
Looking Closely at Everyday Objects or Practices

This activity-type, which overlaps with the activity-type discussed in Chapter 9, which is also about making connections, asks students to look closely at a familiar object or practice and use their observations as a springboard for deeper exploration. There are two main purposes to this activity-type: to help students uncover the richness and complexity embedded in everyday objects and practices, and to help them explore the systems by which familiar objects and practices connect us to larger worlds of the past, present, or future.

Activities of this type typically have two parts. The first involves having students choose their own object or practice and observe it closely. The second part involves providing students with guidelines for deepening, extending, and sharing their observations.

Examples of this activity-type

**Documenting the Everyday.** This activity, from the learning journey *The Present and the Local*, asks learners to look closely at an everyday practice which may seem familiar to them but could be interesting to others. They are then asked to document and share what they learn. Students may document local customs, everyday sports or fitness practices, how they care for a pet, cooking traditions in their home, and so on.

**Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems.** This activity, from the learning journey *The Past and the Global*, involves a component that asks learners to look closely at an everyday object in their immediate environment, such as a pencil, a water bottle, or a favorite stuffed animal. They then build on their observations to explore the theme of how individual objects connect to bigger systems.

**Personal Ways of Remembering the Past.** From the *Remembering the Past?* learning journey, this activity asks students to look closely at an historical item or ritual of personal or family significance as an entryway to exploring the theme of how the past is publicly remembered or commemorated. They might select a piece of jewelry, a book, a souvenir, or a favorite family tradition or recipe.

What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?

- Looking at the familiar with fresh eyes helps students uncover the richness and complexity embedded in everyday objects and practices.
- In activities that focus on remembering the past, students come to see their personal, family, or community histories as relevant and connected to the larger study of history.
- By starting with everyday objects or experiences
and expanding outwards, students learn to appreciate the web of systems that connect them to the world, and to each other.

- By sharing their work with others, students gain new perspectives on their own lives by discovering both the overlap and difference between what they and other people experience as “the everyday.”

**Tips for teaching this activity-type**

*Review what is possible.* Take a look at the gallery of student work linked to the Open Canopy activities listed above to get a sense of the range of everyday practices and items students have chosen, and the many kinds of connections they make. Also, listen to this [audio](#) to hear an Open Canopy team member model looking closely at an everyday object.

*Encourage slow looking techniques.* To help students slow down and look closely at the object or practice they’ve chosen, consider asking them to use a simple slow looking strategy. For example, ask them to make five observations, and then five more observations. Or ask them to try to notice different kinds of features.

*Weigh up individual vs. group work.* When students are doing an activity that involves a personally meaningful object or memory, it’s usually best for them to work individually. But if they are doing an activity like *Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems*, working in pairs can help them to generate a wider range of ideas. It can also be helpful to build in a research step, to give students an opportunity to find out more about how their object is made and where it comes from, in order to help them think about how the object connects to bigger systems.
Chapter 12: Reimagining the World and Looking Ahead

This activity-type, which is typically the culminating activity of an Open Canopy learning journey, invites students to consider the implications of what they have learned, along with some possible next steps. In some ways, it is the “action” step of this pedagogy. However, while this activity-type might involve some form of civic participation or behavioral change, that isn’t always the case. For example, a realistic action can sometimes include simply reaching out to someone, or planning to explore a topic further.

While this activity-type can take different forms, there are three key design elements. First, the activity encourages students to look back at what they have learned so far—both in terms of participating in the previous learning activities and in terms of looking at and responding to work produced by their peers. In other words, it allows them to consolidate or synthesize their learning. Second, the activity is forward-looking in that it asks students to think about what might be or what actions or next steps could be taken—at either the individual or community level. Oftentimes (but not always) there is an implied audience that extends beyond the other students who are engaged in the learning journey, such as family, community members, or other people that students might be trying to connect with or influence. Third, like other Open Canopy activity-types, it encourages creativity and offers students plenty of choice in terms of both form and content so that they can focus on something that is personally meaningful for them. As a result, there is usually considerable variation in terms of what students produce for this activity-type, and they are likely to feel a sense of ownership or agency over what they create or propose. For example, students might create a brochure, slideshow, short video, or collage to illustrate their ideas.

Examples of this activity-type

Exploring what we can do. This is the final activity in the Introduction to Planetary Health learning journey. This activity invites students to identify a choice-point in their daily lives which has an impact on planetary health and to consider alternative, healthier choices for their communities and the planet. They are then asked to create a resource that could inform other people about the issue and persuade them to make similar changes in their daily lives.

Publicly remembering the past today. This is the culminating activity in the learning journey Remembering The Past?. It asks students to design or redesign a monument or another way of publicly remembering the past in their communities, and to explain their rationale. Students are asked to reflect
on their own relationship to the past and develop different or alternative ideas about how the past could or should be remembered.

**Collecting our thoughts on human migration**

This activity, which features in *Stories of Human Migration* places less emphasis on reimagining the world and more on students consolidating their learning through reflection on what they have learned and what they would like to learn or do next. Students conclude the learning journey by using a medium of their choice to share how and why their ideas about migration have changed or developed as a result of the learning experience.

While the exact activity might vary, the important thing is that students look back at what they have learned so far, look forward to next steps or actions, and choose a topic, issue, or action that is personally meaningful to them or their communities.

**What are the goals of this activity-type, and why are they important?**

- This activity-type is about consolidating learning and helping students to think about the implications or applications of what they have learned. Ideally, it primes students to take their learning forward into their everyday lives and on into other aspects of their education and personal development.

- In keeping with our pedagogical approach, this activity-type seeks to offer opportunities for students to reimagine the world in manageable and personally meaningful ways. For example, the *Exploring what we can do* activity from the *Introduction to Planetary Health* learning journey intentionally tries to shrink the scale of what can be an overwhelming global issue to the scope of something found in students' own lives. While it is important that students be encouraged to consider or admire bold actions, it is also important to support them to see room for small-scale but significant reimaginings of the future or how things might be different in their immediate, everyday contexts.

- This activity-type is also about promoting student voice or agency—broadly defined—including among students who do not usually find that their lived experiences or identities are typically heard or represented in the context of school. Relatedly, it also involves connection-making in that it encourages students to see themselves as potential actors in bigger stories and systems, and to consider what they can or should do given these connections.
Tips for teaching this activity-type

Make sure that the previous activities set students up to do a thoughtful job with this activity-type. We have found it important to not be too ambitious with this type of activity, to avoid students lapsing into stereotypes or sweeping statements. For example, publicly sharing reflections about what they have learned from a learning journey may be a more productive or appropriate activity than rushing to take action on something they are just starting to understand.

Offer a variety of modalities or formats. Students should have as much ownership as possible over this activity-type, and determining format is one choice-point that can be student-directed, particularly if it involves engaging wider audiences. Encourage creativity and consider different digital tools or apps that could enhance what students are trying to do and perhaps help them feel more confident about sharing something publicly. For example, students might have the option to create a slideshow, podcast, short video, collage, 3D sculpture, drawing, comic strip or something text-based like a poem, essay, or brochure.

Offer constructive suggestions. Considering items from the following list might help students to get started with an activity of this type or to think more critically about it, even while giving them considerable latitude.

- New things they have learned about a specific topic they have explored
- New things they have learned about themselves and/or their community
- Similarities and differences across stories that have been shared, and why those similarities and differences exist
- Things they have learned about how the media helps shape their own and other people’s perspectives
- Things they appreciate about the stories that their peers have shared
- Things they are doing differently or would like to do differently based on what they have learned
- Things they would like to learn more about

Offer options for students to take the activity one step further. This activity-type often involves students imagining what they would or could do—for instance, designing a monument or a remembering practice they would like to see in their neighborhood or imagining a change to their daily routine that would be better for the health of the planet. When possible, give students the opportunity to actually enact their ideas or aspirations. For example, students could further develop their ideas for a monument by creating maquettes or public exhibitions about their ideas. Or they could petition their local government to dismantle or add more contextual information to an existing monument, or to build a new one. With
regard to modifying their behavior with an eye to planetary health, students could take part in a 30-day challenge to change their personal behavior, or they could launch campaigns in their schools or local communities to help spread awareness about a climate-change related issue.

**Consider the complexity of doing this work.** You may need to consider what students engaging in peer-to-peer learning will have to navigate and how they might feel when doing this type of activity. For example, they may be worried about offending other students by proposing something too critical or provocative, especially if they are engaging with students located in different parts of the world. The dialogue toolkit, described in Chapter 19, or the Three O’s, described in Chapter 20 can help students to feel more confident about sharing their ideas.
PART III: The Open Canopy Curricula
The Open Canopy Curricula

This section presents five Open Canopy curricula, called “Learning Journeys.” It begins with an overview and an orientation to the typical structure of an Open Canopy activity. Then, each of the five current learning journeys are offered in full.

Chapter 13: Orientation and Sample Activity Structure
Chapter 14: Learning Journey One: The Present and the Local
Chapter 15: Learning Journey Two: The Past and the Global
Chapter 16: An Introduction to Planetary Health
Chapter 17: Stories of Human Migration
Chapter 18: Remembering the Past?
Chapter 13: Orientation and Sample Footstep

At the time of writing, the Open Canopy offers five curricula, called “learning journeys.” Each learning journey consists of four activities, or “footsteps.” The footsteps are written directly for students, and they all follow the same three-part structure. A footstep usually takes students a total of two to three hours to complete, with the time spread across a week or two. We recommend familiarizing yourself with the structure of the footsteps in advance of reading through the curricula, to get a sense of the rhythm of the activities. Here is an overview, using a sample footstep from the learning journey, The Present and the Local.

Part 1: Explore Student Work and Resources

The first part of a footstep gives an overview of the upcoming activity and offers preparatory student resources, including a slideshow of examples of student work created by youth from around the world. The purpose of the slideshow is to give students a sense of the variety of approaches they might take to completing a footstep.

FOOTSTEP 2: TAKING NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you will take a walk in your neighborhood or local area and share what you notice when you slow down and look closely.

To get Started:
- Explore this slideshow of student work from around the world.

Part 2: Do an Activity

The second part of a footstep gives specific, detailed instructions on how to complete the activity.

DO AN ACTIVITY

Now it’s time for you to do a walk of your own. Students have told us that they are surprised by what they notice when they slow down to look with fresh eyes at where they live.
- Plan to take a walk in your neighborhood or local area. It may include places on your sketch map. You can walk by yourself or with a classmate, friend, or family member.
- As you walk in your neighborhood or local area, take photos of things that catch your attention. What do you see, feel, hear, taste, or smell? Try to look at the place and the people who live or work there with fresh eyes. Here are some ideas for different kinds of photos you can take:
  - Photos that capture a whole neighborhood scene and photos that zoom in on a detail you find interesting.
• Photos where you’re pointing the camera up and photos where you’re pointing the camera towards the ground.
• Photos of things that are common or familiar in your neighborhood, and photos of things that might be unexpected or surprising.
• Something special that you’d like to share.
• Choose two photos that you took on your walk to reflect on further. Tell the story of why you took these two photos and why you chose them. What do you like about the photos you took? What would you like other young people to notice or understand about them?
• How, if at all, did taking a walk or taking these photos make you think in new or different ways about your neighborhood or local area?

Part 3: Interact

The third part of a footstep gives students guidelines about how to reflect on and respond to other students’ work. Very often, the Interact step uses “moves” from a resource called the Dialogue Toolkit. These moves consist of specific prompts that help students comment on other students’ posts. Their purpose is to deepen student dialogue. In the example here, the moves are NOTICE, APPRECIATE, and EXTEND. Section IV of this handbook discusses the Dialogue Toolkit in detail, explaining its rationale and learning goals, and offering suggestions for its use beyond the Open Canopy curricula. But the prompts in the Interact steps of the curricula are written to be self-explanatory, and it is not necessary to further familiarize yourself with the Dialogue Toolkit before reading on.

INTERACT WITH YOUR WALKING PARTNERS

And now it’s time to find out what other students saw as they walked through their neighborhoods. We hope you enjoy looking at all the different photos!
• Choose two posts from other students to look at and respond to.
• Write a comment in which you use the following dialogue tools:
  • NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in the photo and story shared here?
  • APPRECIATE: Share what you like, value, or find interesting. Be specific.
  • EXTEND: Did the student’s work extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
• Respond: Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. Try to keep the conversation going or join in on other conversations.
Three ways to use the curricula

If you are an educator, there are three different ways in which you can use the Open Canopy curricula.

1. Use the curricula with a single class that you teach (in person or online).

2. Sign up to participate in Open Canopy's online program which will connect your class with several other classes situated in different geographic locations. (Click the Educators Register button at the top of the Out of Eden Learn website) Organize your own exchange with another classroom—either in your own school or at a different school—using an online platform of your choice and selecting some or all of the activities from our curricula.

3. Design your own learning journey and/or activities based on the principles and activity-types laid out in this handbook.

The Five Open Canopy Learning Journeys

The remainder of this section of the handbook consists of all five learning journeys. What you will read here is very similar to what you will find under the curriculum tab on the program website. The main difference is that the activities here in the handbook have been slightly revised so that they don’t require participation in an online exchange with students in other classrooms, nor do they require any online component. However, as the Interact step of each activity indicates, the activities do require dialogue and exchange among students, even if students are all within the same classroom. Because student dialogue is so essential to the Open Canopy pedagogy, there are tools and guidelines to support it. For the sake of clarity, we include these resources in the following section of this Handbook. But, as you read the curricula here, you will find regular reference to these resources. The references are always accompanied by a link, so you can look at the resources directly whenever you’d like.
Learning Goals

In this curriculum, which was the first curriculum we developed, students are invited to:

- Explore strategies for slowing down to observe the world carefully and listen attentively to others
- Look closely at their neighborhood or local area

and gain fresh perspectives on their everyday lives and communities
- Reflect on the people and processes in their everyday communities
- Explore connections between community members’ stories and their local area

Curriculum

Core Learning Journey 1: The Present and the Local

In this curriculum, students engage in 4 different footsteps to explore their everyday lives and local communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Footstep 1: Creating Neighborhood Maps</th>
<th>Students create visual representations of their local area, as seen through their eyes, and share a related story.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 2: Taking Neighborhood Walks</td>
<td>Students go for a walk in their local area and observe their surroundings carefully; they take photos to share with other participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 3: Listening to Neighbors’ Stories</td>
<td>Students interview an adult to learn about someone else’s experiences and memories of their local area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 4: Documenting the Everyday</td>
<td>Students carefully observe a place they know or something that people in their community do as part of their everyday lives. They create a short video, slideshow, illustrated guide, or vivid description to share with other students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This learning journey invites students to engage in careful looking and listening in their local community and to share stories about their everyday experiences, particularly the stories of places and people that are important to them. It incorporates several resources from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek’s Out of Eden Walk, and the activities were inspired by some of his practices as a writer engaged in “slow journalism.” While students can participate in this journey without learning about Paul Salopek’s walk, you may want to show them this video in which Paul Salopek reflects on his journey so far around the world, and what he has learned from it. You could also invite students to browse the Out of Eden Walk website which features written dispatches from his walk, as well as a plethora of images and maps.

We recommend that you review the following resources with students before they begin the learning journey:

- **Dialogue Toolkit.** The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of commenting tools that supports students to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue, whether in person or online.
- **Models of Respectful Disagreement.** You can use these models to ask students to identify the dialogue tools in action and suggest how the conversation could have been further deepened. [An annotated version](#) of the Models of Respectful Disagreement is also available.
FOOTSTEP 1: CREATING NEIGHBORHOOD MAPS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES
In this footstep, you will create a map of your neighborhood, local area, or another place you know well. To get started:
• Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world

DO AN ACTIVITY
The purpose of this activity is for you to think about your own relationship to a place and to share something about your life with other students.
• Sketch a map of a place you know well, as you see it through your eyes. Your place could be your neighborhood or local area, your school, a place you like to visit, or a route you regularly travel—by foot, by bike, by car, or any other way. This map does not have to be “accurate” or similar to other maps that exist. You can create this map digitally or by hand. Do not use Google Maps or a similar online mapping service to represent your neighborhood.
• Write a true story to go with your map. If you like, you can record yourself telling a story and create an audio file instead of writing it down. Your story could involve:
  • The whole map or one special place that is featured on your map.
  • A memory or something that happened to you when you were younger in one of the places on your map.
  • A typical day in your life that features places marked on your map.
  • A story about your neighborhood that you have heard from someone else—it could be a story that happened before you were born.
  • How your neighborhood has changed over time.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS
Now it’s time to explore other people’s maps and stories!
• Read at least 4 stories from other students.
• Choose one story and map to examine closely.
• Look at the map slowly and carefully. What is interesting or thought provoking about the map and its story? What catches your eye and makes you want to learn more?
• Use the following dialogue tools to comment on the map:
  • NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in this map? What do you notice?
  • APPRECIATE: Share what you like, value, or find interesting in the map and story. Be specific.
  • PROBE: Ask questions that might help you understand more about the student’s map or the story they are trying to tell. Use these “Creative Question Starters” to help you think of interesting questions:
    • Tell me more about...”
    • I wonder if...”
    • Help me understand...”
• Respond: Respond to any comments made by other students about your map. If possible, try to keep the conversation going.
FOOTSTEP 2: TAKING NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES
In this footstep, you will take a walk in your neighborhood or local area and share what you notice when you slow down and look closely.
To get Started:
• Explore this slideshow of student work from around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY
Now it’s time for you to do a walk of your own. Students have told us that they are surprised by what they notice when they slow down to look with fresh eyes at where they live.
• Plan to take a walk in your neighborhood or local area. It may include places on your sketch map. You can walk by yourself or with a classmate, friend, or family member.
• As you walk in your neighborhood or local area, take photos of things that catch your attention. What do you see, feel, hear, taste, or smell? Try to look at the place and the people who live or work there with fresh eyes. Here are some ideas for different kinds of photos you can take:
  • Photos that capture a whole neighborhood scene and photos that zoom in on a detail you find interesting.
  • Photos where you’re pointing the camera up and photos where you’re pointing the camera towards the ground.
  • Photos of things that are common or familiar in your neighborhood, and photos of things that might be unexpected or surprising.
  • Something special that you’d like to share.
• Choose two photos that you took on your walk to reflect on further. Tell the story of why you took these two photos and why you chose them. What do you like about the photos you took? What would you like other young people to notice or understand about them?
• How, if at all, did taking a walk or taking these photos make you think in new or different ways about your neighborhood or local area?

INTERACT WITH YOUR OTHER STUDENTS
And now it’s time to find out what other students saw as they walked through their neighborhoods. We hope you enjoy looking at all the different photos!
• Choose two posts from other students to look at and respond to.
• Write a comment in which you use the following dialogue tools:
  • NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in the photo and story shared here?
  • APPRECIATE: Share what you like, value, or find interesting. Be specific.
  • EXTEND: Did the student’s work extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
• Respond: Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. Try to keep the conversation going or join in on other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 3: LISTENING TO NEIGHBORS’ STORIES

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you will interview an adult who lives or works in your local area and share their story with other students.

To get started:
- **Explore** this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.
- **Listen** to this audio message from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek. In it, he shares advice for talking to and – most importantly – listening to other people.

DO AN ACTIVITY

Now it’s your turn to try out your skills at listening and share a new story with your walking partners.

- Your task is to talk and listen to an adult who lives or works in your local area. This person could be someone you have never spoken to before or someone you already know. It does not need to be someone who has lived in the area for a long time.
- Ask the person for a story or memory about your local area. For example, some questions you might ask are:
  - *How did you come to be in this place?*
  - *How have you seen the area change over time?*
  - *What are some of your memories about the area?*
  - *Do any particular events in the area stand out in your mind?*
  - *Are there things you would like to see more of—or less of—in the future?*
- Write up the highlights of your conversation or recreate a story that they told you. Include a short description of the person you talked with – for example, how you know them, the setting where you talked, etc.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

- Now appreciate someone else’s work – in ways that involve you slowing down to listen carefully to what someone else has shared and then giving them some thoughtful feedback.
- **Read** one reflection from another student.
- Use the following tools to comment on another student’s work:
  - **SNIP:** Copy or cut and paste a phrase or sentence from the student’s reflection into your comment. Ask a question about it or say what you find interesting or important about what’s being said.
  - **EXTEND:** Did the student’s reflection extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
  - **Respond:** Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation or join in on other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 4: DOCUMENTING THE EVERYDAY

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you will document an everyday place or process in your local area.
To get started:
• Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.
• Listen to National Geographic Explorer, Paul Salopek, talking in a special audio about “The River of Culture”.

DO AN ACTIVITY

• There are aspects of our everyday life that might be very interesting to other people but which might seem very “normal” to us. There may also be parts of our everyday lives that we usually don’t find time to notice. This is your chance to notice some new things and to share your observations with other people.
• Choose to focus on one of the following:
  • PLACE: Document everyday life in a place that you know.
  • PROCESS: Document how people in your community do something as part of their everyday lives. For example, you could focus on how a type of food or drink is prepared, how an object is made or repaired, or how someone goes about another kind of daily task or activity.
• Choose one of the following formats:
  • A short video in the style of Paul Salopek’s Glances videos that does not feature your voice. Try to use the camera to draw attention to small details. Write a short description to explain what you were trying to show in the video.
  • A short video that is similar in format to Paul Salopek’s Glances videos but includes you talking about what you observe.
  • A slideshow that includes photos of what you observed. You may add text to annotate your slides.
  • Use drawings, photos, and/or text to create a step-by-step guide to a process you observed.
• Write a story or memory of something you observed that means a lot to you—for example, something that you remember playing or making when you were younger, or a place you know well. Write about the place or process in detail, including sounds, sights, smells, flavors or textures you can remember.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

• We hope you are getting comfortable with our dialogue tools and that you find them useful. Please follow the instructions below.
• Read: Choose one other student’s reflection to read and comment on.
• Write a comment using the following tools.
  • CONNECT: Do you feel a connection with anything the student shared about themselves and their everyday life? Share your thoughts.
  • EXTEND: Did the student’s work extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
• Respond: If you receive a comment, including a question, be sure to respond.
## Learning Goals

In this curriculum, students are invited to:

- Reflect on connections between their own lives and the past or history
- Develop an awareness of systems and global forces in their everyday lives
- Explore connections between everyday objects and bigger systems
- Develop an awareness that people from other generations may have a different relationship to or perspective on the past or history

## Curriculum

### Core Learning Journey 2: The Past and the Local

In this curriculum, students engage in four different footsteps to explore the past and global issues.

| Footstep 1: Connecting Our Own Lives to the Past | Students make a visual representation of how their own lives connect to the human past or history. |
| Footstep 2: Learning From Other Generations | Students ask someone aged 50 or over to represent how their lives connect to the past or talk with them about an “old” object that is important to them. |
| Footstep 3: Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems | Students closely observe an everyday object, generate questions about it, and then represent how that object connects to a bigger system. |
| Footstep 4: Connecting Everyday Objects to Bigger Systems | Students take a walk in their local area, looking for evidence that we live in a globally connected world, take pictures or a video of what they see, and share related ideas and questions. |
This learning journey invites students to engage in careful looking and listening and asks them to consider how their lives connect to the past, to everyday systems and global forces, and to the rest of the world. It incorporates several resources from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek’s Out of Eden Walk, and the activities were inspired by some of his practices as a writer engaged in “slow journalism.” While students can participate in this journey without learning about Paul Salopek’s walk, you may want to show them this video in which Paul Salopek reflects on his journey so far around the world, and what he has learned from it. You could also invite students to browse the Out of Eden Walk website which features written dispatches from his walk, as well as a plethora of images and maps.

We recommend that you review the following resources with students before they begin the learning journey:

- **Dialogue Toolkit**. The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of commenting tools that supports students to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue, whether in person or online.
- **Models of Respectful Disagreement**. You can use these models to ask students to identify the dialogue tools in action and suggest how the conversation could have been further deepened. An annotated version of the Models of Respectful Disagreement is also available.
DO AN ACTIVITY

The aim of this activity is to invite you to think about how your own life connects to the past or history. Do the following:

• BRAINSTORM. Make a list of the ways in which you think our human past or history is connected to who you are and the life you are living or expect to live. You can include events, individuals or groups of people, trends, developments, places that you’ve visited or lived, or themes that extend over a few or many years. You do not need to turn in this list.

• DIAGRAM. Now use this list to help you to draw a diagram or picture to explain how our human past or history is connected to who you are and the life you are living or expect to live. Organize your diagram in any way you want. If you like, you can use lines or arrows to show connections or influences among the different parts of your diagram. You can draw your diagram by hand and then photograph or scan it, or you can draw the diagram electronically in any application you like. Remember not to include your real name in the diagram.

  Note: We have made the activity very open-ended so please feel free to tackle it in any way you want. However, we do ask that you try to make some connections to the past, including before you were born. You can go back to very early human history or stick to more recent history if you like.

• DESCRIBE. Please write a “placard” to help other people understand what your diagram is about and why you made it the way you did. A placard is a short, written description that you would find in a museum or gallery next to an exhibit. You can also give your diagram a title.

• REFLECT. What new ideas do you have about your connection to history that you didn’t have before?

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Follow these instructions to respond thoughtfully to other students’ work.

• Explore diagrams created by other students.
• Choose one diagram to look closely at.
• Look at the diagram slowly and carefully. What is interesting or thought-provoking about the diagram and its story?
• Use the following dialogue tools to comment on the diagram:
  • NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in this diagram? What do you notice?
  • NAME: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that may be affecting what you notice or find interesting.
  • EXTEND: Share how this diagram and its story extend your thinking or give you a new perspective. Did looking at this diagram help you to think about your own diagram in a new way?
  • RESPOND: Return to your own diagram and respond to any comments left for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 2: LEARNING FROM OTHER GENERATIONS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you will explore what you can learn by talking to people who belong to a different generation from your own.

To get started:

• Explore this [slideshow] of student work from other students around the world
• Listen to (or read) [Grandpa The Gardener Helped Nurture His Seedling Grandson]. What did Santiago learn from his grandfather?
• Watch [Marie’s Dictionary], which shares the story of the last native speaker of the Wukchumni language. Notice how the video shares the stories and perspectives of different members of Marie’s family.

DO AN ACTIVITY

For this footstep, you will talk with someone from an older generation so that you can learn about the connections they make between their own lives and the past.

• Ask the person to talk to you about an object that is important to them. Encourage the person to choose an object that is at least 30 years old. Maybe it is something that meant a lot to the person when they were young; maybe it is something that has been passed down through their family.

  Look at the object slowly together, using the See, Wonder, Connect routine.
  • See: What do you both notice about the object?
  • Wonder: What do you wonder about it?
  • Connect: What connections does the person you are interviewing make to this object?
    Can they tell you a story connected to the object?
• Write a reflection in which you share the highlights of your conversation with other students. If possible, please share a photo of the object you looked at together.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Now it’s time to find out how other students’ interviews went and what they learned.

• Choose two photos/stories to look at and respond to.
• Write: Choose a dialogue tool to respond thoughtfully to these photos and stories.
  • SNIP: In your comment, reference a specific phrase or sentence from another student’s reflection. Then, use another dialogue tool (such as Probe or Appreciate) to comment on it.
  • PROBE: Ask a question about the phrase you snipped.
  • APPRECIATE: Share what you like, value, or find interesting.
• Respond: Return to your own reflection. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 3: CONNECTING EVERYDAY OBJECTS TO BIGGER SYSTEMS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

For this footstep, you will continue to practice careful looking and to think about how everyday objects connect to bigger systems. To get started:

• Listen to this audio of Shari from The Open Canopy team looking closely at an object and describing all the features she sees.
• Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to invite you to look closely at an everyday object and then make connections between what you notice and bigger systems that the object might be part of.

SYSTEM: A group of interacting parts that move or work together to make something happen.

• Choose an object in your home, classroom, or neighborhood.
• Look closely at the object for at least five minutes and note down as many features as you can.
• Write a list of questions or “wonders” that you now have about your object. For example, here are some of Shari’s questions about the pencil she looked at:
  • How are pencils made, and who makes them?
  • How do you get the lead inside the pencil? (Is it really lead?)
  • What kind of wood are pencils made of, and where does it come from?
  • What is the history of the pencil? Where was it invented?
  • What is the impact on the environment of making pencils?
  • Why does your handwriting get messier when the tip is newly sharpened?
• Think about some different systems that your object might be part of. Here are some examples for Shari’s pencil.
  • Pencils are probably made in a factory that has a system for making them.
  • The factory may also have a system of purchasing and transporting the raw materials from which pencils are made.
  • The factory likely also has a system for hiring and paying workers. They may have systems to protect worker safety and well-being. These systems may be linked to larger economic systems that include labor laws and unions that regulate working conditions and wages.
  • Pencils are connected to a bigger system of writing, that includes other things like paper, people’s hands (to write with), notepads, erasers.
  • Pencils are connected to a system of trade because they are sold around the world.
  • Pencils are connected to a system of human communication because we write notes to other people.
• Choose one of the systems connected to the object and try to imagine the system in action.
• Draw a diagram that shows the different parts of the system and how they might interact. If you want, you can do some research about the object, or the system it’s a part of, before drawing your diagram.
• Share your diagram with other students. If you can, include a picture of your object.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

• Look closely and slowly at one diagram created by another student
• Use at least these two dialogue tools to comment on another student’s diagram:
  ○ CONNECT: Can you identify a connection with the object or one of the systems in the diagram? Explain what that connection is. For example, the object might be something that you use in your own life, or you might be connected to one of the parts of the system.
  ○ EXTEND: Did the diagram extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
• Respond: Return to your own diagram. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 4: NOTICING GLOBAL FORCES IN THE EVERYDAY

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES
In the last footstep, you explored how everyday objects are part of larger systems. Sometimes those systems are part of even larger systems and forces that connect people and places far away from one another. In this footstep you will explore how three of these global forces might be present in your everyday surroundings. The three forces are:
1. Global economic forces. These have to do with how trade, manufacture, employment, and money affect and connect people around the world.
2. Global environmental forces. These have to do with how climate, nature, and earth-related events and systems affect and connect people around the world.
3. Global communication forces. These have to do with how people across geographic, social, and cultural settings are connected through the exchange of information and ideas.

Begin this footstep by doing the following:
• Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world
• Watch this video. It was made to tell people about the problem of microfiber pollution. It also does a good job of showing how interconnected different aspects of our lives can be.
• Optional: Have a discussion about the three global forces in your classroom. As a class, look around at your classroom (or whatever environment you are in). Imagine how the everyday objects you see might be influenced by or connected to each of the three global forces.

DO AN ACTIVITY
Watch this video that shows what The Open Canopy team member, Shari, sees when she takes a walk in Harvard Square (home of The Open Canopy office). Notice what global forces she discovers on her walk.

After watching the video, take a walk in your own neighborhood or near your school. As you walk, do the following:
• Notice. Find a place where you can imagine taking a picture or making a short video that captures the feel and activity of that place. Try not to make a video or take a picture right away. First, find a spot and stand in it quietly for a full minute, using your senses to notice everything around you. What do you see, hear, taste, and smell?
• Look for global forces. Look at the scene again and try to see signs of at least two of the three global forces. You can look for signs of all three forces if you want to. You may also notice other global forces. Once you start to notice global forces, you might start to see how one force is connected to another. For example, you might notice an object that connects to global economic trade because its parts are produced in different parts of the world. You could also see the object as an example of global communication because of all the people involved in making the object who have to communicate with one another in order to produce it. Do not worry about the overlap between global forces. Just look for examples of objects or activities that involve global forces and write down at least two ideas and two questions.
  • Ideas: What idea do you have about how anything in the scene might be affected by or connected to global forces?
  • Questions: What question do you have about how any part of the scene might be connected to the global forces?
• Capture an image from the scene that is related to any of your ideas or questions. You can make a very short video, take a photograph, make an audio recording, make a drawing, or write a short description.
• Create and share. Share with other students an image you captured with the ideas and questions you have that are related to this image.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS
Now it’s time to find out about the global forces other students noticed along their walks.
• Choose at least one student’s work to look at closely and respond to.
• Use the following dialogue tools to comment on this student’s work:
  • CONNECT: Make a connection between something in the post and your own experiences, feelings, or interests. For example, how is your own life connected to any of the ideas or questions about global forces mentioned?
  • POV: Express your point of view (POV), position or opinion on a global issue or theme raised in this person’s work.
  • NAME: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that are influencing the way you see things.
  • Respond: Return to your own image and reflections. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.


Learning Goals

In this curriculum, students are invited to:

- Develop an awareness of human and environmental health in their neighborhood or local area
- Explore connections between human health and the health of the environment
- Learn about the big idea of planetary health
- Choose a topic related to planetary health that interests them personally, and investigate it
- Explore possibilities for how they might make changes in their own lives, and encourage others to make changes, to better support planetary health

Curriculum

Special Learning Journey:
Introduction to Planetary Health

In this curriculum of 4 footsteps, students explore the topic of planetary health, which has to do with the complex connections between environmental changes and human health.

| Footstep 1: Walking with Health in Mind | Students take a slow walk in their own neighborhoods, noticing things that may have an impact on their own health, the health of people in their community, and/or the health of the environment. |
| Footstep 2: Uncovering the Big Idea of Planetary Health | Students read and view resources related to planetary health. Then, they draw on their work from Footstep 1 to choose one human health impact and one environmental change, and make a concept web connecting the two. |
| Footstep 3: Zooming in, Reporting out | Students identify an issue or topic related to planetary health that particularly interests them, then investigate it and share their findings. |
| Footstep 4: Exploring What We Can Do | Students identify a few choice-points in their everyday routines where they make choices that might impact planetary health. Then, they select one choice-point and consider alternative choices that would be healthier for their communities and the planet. Finally, they create a resource that informs others about the issue and persuades them to adopt similar changes. |

We thank the Planetary Health Alliance for their collaboration on this curriculum, along with the teachers who piloted the original version of this learning journey: Natalie Belli, Rob Martin, Mike McPharlin, Hollis Scott, and Kristin Tarnas.
This learning journey invites students to engage in careful looking and listening and to explore the topic of planetary health, which has to do with the complex connections between environmental changes and human health. It incorporates several resources from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek’s Out of Eden Walk, and the activities were inspired by some of his practices as a writer engaged in "slow journalism." While students can participate in this journey without learning about Paul Salopek’s walk, you may want to show them this video in which Paul Salopek reflects on his journey so far around the world, and what he has learned from it. You could also invite students to browse the Out of Eden Walk website which features written dispatches from his walk, as well as a plethora of images and maps.

We recommend that you review the following resources with students before they begin the learning journey:

- **Dialogue Toolkit.** The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of commenting tools that supports students to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue, whether in person or online.
- **Models of Respectful Disagreement.** You can use these models to ask students to identify the dialogue tools in action and suggest how the conversation could have been further deepened. An annotated version of the Models of Respectful Disagreement is also available.
FOOTSTEP 1: WALKING WITH HEALTH IN MIND

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you will observe and document things in your neighborhood or local area that may have an impact on human or environmental health.

To get started, explore one or more of the following resources:

- Watch this Bill Nye video about changes in biodiversity (which connects to Planetary Health, a topic you will learn more about later in this learning journey).
- Watch How does climate affect our bodies?
- Watch this slideshow and learn about the connections between human health and the environment that Paul Salopek has observed along his walk.
- Read and Explore this article by Paul Salopek about a “hotspot of biodiversity” in China—the Gaoligong Mountains.
- Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY

Take a walk in your own neighborhood, local area, or in or near your school. Notice things that may have an impact on human and environmental health. In other words, notice things that may have an impact on your health, on the health of people in your community, or on the health of the environment.

Things that impact health can make people and the environment healthier, or less healthy.

As you walk, think about:

- different kinds of human health, such as illness, injury, diet and nutrition, and mental health
- different aspects of environmental health, such as air, water, land, animals, plants, and ecosystems

Try to stop and notice at least four things. Each time you stop, sketch, describe, or take pictures of what you see. Write down your ideas and questions:

- Ideas: How does the thing you have noticed impact or connect to health?
- Questions: What questions do you have? What do you want to learn more about?

Once you have completed the activity, share your work with your peers, including any pictures, sketches, and writing you choose to include.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Now it’s time to find out what other students saw.

- Choose two photos from other students to look at and respond to. Comment on other students’ photos using the following dialogue tools:
  - NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in the photo and story shared?
  - APPRECIATE: Share what you like, value, or found interesting. Be specific.
  - EXTEND: Did the photo or story extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
  - NAME: How does your personal experience or the place you live influence your perspective on another student’s photo or story?
- Respond: Return to your own reflection. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 2: UNCOVERING THE BIG IDEA OF PLANETARY HEALTH

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In the last activity, you took a walk in your neighborhood and noticed things that may have an impact on your health, the health of people in your community, and the health of the environment. Now it's time to explore how the observations you made on your walk are connected to a big topic called planetary health.

To get started, watch Uncovering the Big Idea of Planetary Health.

After watching the video, explore the following resources:

- Read "Introduction to Planetary Health" to learn about planetary health
- Watch "Big Changes in the Big Apple"
- Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world
- Do the following activity:

Class Activity

As a whole class, choose one health impact and one environmental change from the document, “Introduction to Planetary Health.” Put them in two separate circles on a board or a large piece of paper. As a whole class, practice creating a web.

- Begin with the health impact. Brainstorm ideas by thinking about the examples and causes of the health impact. Write down any questions that come up along the way.
- After you’ve captured several ideas, move to the environmental change. Brainstorm ideas by thinking about the features of the environmental change—examples or characteristics of what it looks like in action.
- After you’ve captured several ideas, stand back and look at both webs. How could they be related? Using a different colored marker, draw any connections you see. As always, continue to document any questions.

DO AN ACTIVITY

This activity invites you to explore the connections between human health impacts and environmental changes.

Revisit your reflections from Footstep 1. Look closely at your pictures and what you wrote. Choose one health impact that is related to something you noticed during your walk.

Now that you have chosen a health impact to focus on, choose from the following environmental changes:

1. Changes in land use
2. Changes in biodiversity
3. Pollution

Once you have chosen a health impact and an environmental change, do the following:

On a piece of paper or screen, write your health impact and environmental change in two separate circles. Make sure to leave space around them and between them for all the connections you’ll uncover.

- Step 1: Begin with the health impact circle. Start your web by thinking of examples and causes of this health impact.
- Step 2: Move to your environmental change circle. Begin this side of the web by thinking of features of the environmental change you chose. As you are creating your web, note any questions that you have. You can either include your questions in your web or make a separate list of questions. As you explore your environmental change, you might find that you have new ideas about the health impact that you chose. Feel free to add them to your web.
- Step 3: Now look at the two sides of your web. Just as you did as a whole class, begin to draw connections between the two sides. As you think about connections, you may ask yourself the following questions: What are some obvious connections? What are some surprising or hidden connections?

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

- Explore the webs that other students created.
- Comment on at least two other students’ work. Use one or more of the following dialogue tools:
  - NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye in this person’s web? In other words, what did you notice in particular? Be specific.
  - PROBE: Probe for more details. Do you see any connections in this person’s web that you don’t understand? Ask questions that will help give you a better sense of another person’s perspective.
  - EXTEND: Share how the student’s web extends your thinking or gives you a new perspective. Did it help you to think about your own web in new ways?
- If you are participating online, respond to any comments or questions your walking partners have left for you, or join in other conversations about other students’ webs
FOOTSTEP 3: ZOOMING IN, REPORTING OUT

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In the last footstep, you began to look through a Planetary Health Lens. You chose one kind of environmental change and one kind of health impact, and you made a web that explored connections between the two. In this footstep, you will continue to look through a Planetary Health Lens, but now you will zoom in on one topic or idea. Get inspired by exploring one or more of these resources:

- Watch The Story of Microfibers
- Watch Do Cities Need More Green Roofs?
- Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world

DO AN ACTIVITY

Now that you have learned a little bit about the big idea of planetary health, choose a topic related to it that you would like to investigate on your own. Make sure to choose a topic that you can look at through a planetary health lens. In other words, pick a topic that relates to the interactions between humans and the environment. Below is a list of a few questions other students have chosen to explore:

- What are the effects of cars on the environment and on health?
- What happens to all the food we throw away?
- What is my community doing to help the environment?
- What are the main causes of deforestation, and what are the impacts?
- What are “green roofs” and how do they help cities?
- Do four-lane highways affect biodiversity?
- Are there certain kinds of plants that can help clean polluted soil?

But don’t feel limited by this list: find a topic that really interests you!

Here are some ways you can investigate your topic:

- Explore resources in the library or online.
- Interview an expert, or someone else connected to your question in some way.
- Make your own observations related to some aspect of your question. For example, take a walk in your own community or visit a specific place related to your question.
- Use information from books or articles you are currently reading or have already read.

You are not expected to be able to learn everything about your topic, but that is okay: scientists and researchers are still learning about planetary health topics too.

Present your research in the form of a short essay or a diagram. If you choose to share a diagram, please include text that helps other students understand what you have discovered in your investigation. Along with the essay or diagram, you are also welcome to share a photo from your neighborhood that you think might relate to the issue you are investigating.

End your research report by asking a question that other students can respond to. The question will help others to comment on your work. Below are some examples of questions you could ask, or feel free to make up your own question.

- Is there anything in your life that connects to this topic?
- What questions do you have about this topic?
- What parts of this topic would you like to learn more about?

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

- Choose at least one student’s work to respond to. Try to choose work from another student that is about a different topic than yours.
- Respond to the question the student asked.
- Comment using at least one of these two tools:
  - **APPRECIATE**: Share what you like, value, or find interesting. Be specific.
  - **EXTEND**: Describe how the piece of student work extended your thoughts in new directions or gave you a new perspective.
- Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are participating online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 4: EXPLORING WHAT WE CAN DO

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

In this footstep, you'll get the chance to look closely at your own life, to see how your own daily choices and routine can have an impact on environmental changes and human health.

To get started, watch Uncovering the Big Idea of Planetary Health.

After watching the video, explore the following resources:

- Review "Introduction to Planetary Health: Exploring What we Can Do"
- Remind yourself of the environmental changes discussed in the previous footsteps:
  1. Urbanization
  2. Pollution
  3. Changes in Biodiversity
- Watch the following videos:
  - Man vs. Earth: What is your initial reaction to this spoken word poem? Why do you think the poet chose to create and share this piece?
  - Let's Ban the Bead: As you watch the animation, think about how the story relates to your life. For instance, do you or anyone you know use products with microbeads?
  - Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world

DO AN ACTIVITY

In this activity, you will be using your Planetary Health Lens to explore how your daily choices connect to environmental change and human health, both in your community and in the wider world.

Step 1:
Make a list of four or more choices you make throughout your day that you could look at through a planetary health lens. In other words, what choices do you make that may affect the environment and human health?

Here are some areas where you might make choices:
- Where you go and how you get there
- What you eat
- What you purchase
- What you throw away or recycle
- What you do for fun

Step 2:
Pick one choice from your list that you think might have a negative effect on the environment and, in turn, have a negative impact on human health. Try to pick a choice that you have the power to make differently. Keep in mind that some of the choices we make we may have less control over—for example, we can choose to turn off the water while we brush our teeth. Other choices we make we may have more control over—for example, whether our families live in an urban or rural area, or where we get our food.

Identify alternative choices that you, and people like you, could make that would have a more positive impact on planetary health.

Step 3:
Create a resource that convinces others of the importance of the issue you have identified, and an alternative choice or choices that could be made.

Your resource should:
- Show how your choice is connected to planetary health.
- Explain to others why the alternative choice you have identified is important.
- Persuade and inspire others to make similar changes.

Use any method you like to create your resource: slideshow, brochure, poem, spoken word, video, etc.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

- Look at some resources created by other students.
- Write comments and questions on at least two resources created by other students that stand out to you.
  - CONNECT: Does their resource have a connection to you, your daily life, or the resource you created?
  - EXTEND: Were you convinced? Did the resource inspire you to consider making similar changes? Tell the students whether or not you have been convinced and share any changes you hope to make.
  - PROBE: Do you have any questions for the other students about the resource they created?
  - NAME: How does your personal experience or the place you live influence your perspective on the resource?
- Return to your own resource. If you are participating online, respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you.
  Try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
### Learning Goals

In this curriculum, students are invited to:

- Explore connections and stories from their own and other people's lives related to the broad theme of human migration
- Develop a more nuanced understanding of human migration, including complex and interconnected factors involved in migration and the diverse and multi-faceted nature of individual migration experiences
- Develop a critical awareness of their own perspectives on human migration, including the role of the media and socio-political contexts in shaping perspectives
- Engage with the topic of migration through discussion with other students and/or by taking action or engaging beyond this learning journey

### Curriculum

**Special Learning Journey: Stories of Human Migration**

In this curriculum of four footsteps, students explore stories of human migration and reflect on their own relationship to the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Footstep 1: Our Own Stories of Migration</th>
<th>Students listen to and retell the migration story of someone who is close to them, or they create a map or diagram to depict a migration story within their family or community.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 2: Everyday Borders</td>
<td>Students take a slow walk in their neighborhoods or everyday contexts, paying specific attention to both visible and invisible borders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 3: Migration in the Media</td>
<td>Students compare three different media reports on human migration, critically attending to the ways in which the authors represent migration and migrants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footstep 4: Collecting Our Thoughts on Migration</td>
<td>Using a medium of their choice, students share how their ideas about migration have changed or developed by taking part in this learning journey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emi Kane, formerly at the Abundance Foundation, helped to develop this curriculum, along with the following educators who piloted it: Brenda Ball, Sharonne Blum, Oliver Brown, Chris Sloan, and Sandra Teng.

This learning journey invites students to engage in careful looking and listening and to explore the topic of human migration in an expansive and nuanced way. It incorporates several resources from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek's Out of Eden Walk, and the activities were inspired by some of his practices as a writer engaged in “slow journalism.” While students can participate in this journey without learning about Paul Salopek's walk, you may want to show them this video in which Paul Salopek reflects on his journey so far around the world, and what he has learned from it. You could also invite students to browse the Out of Eden Walk website which features written dispatches from his walk, as well as a wide range of images and maps.

We recommend that you review the following resources with students before they begin the learning journey:

- **Models of Respectful Disagreement.** You can use these models to ask students to identify the dialogue tools in action and suggest how the conversation could have been further deepened. An annotated version of the Models of Respectful Disagreement is also available.

- **Dialogue Toolkit.** The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of commenting tools that supports students to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue, whether in person or online.
FOOTSTEP 1: OUR OWN STORIES OF MIGRATION

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

Welcome to Stories of Human Migration. We invite you to begin thinking about your own connections to the theme of human migration. Explore the following materials:

- Watch this introductory message from National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek, recorded from the Out of Eden Walk trail in Myanmar in 2020.
- Watch this TED Talk about The Walk, a theatrical story following nine-year old Amal through her experience as a refugee traveling from Turkey to England.
- Watch Between Borders, a documentary by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting that shares interviews with several teen migrants during their journey from Central America to the United States. *SENSITIVITY WARNING: Please note there are some potentially disturbing violent images in this video.*
- Look closely at this artwork by Reena Saini Kallat which explores the complexity of the ways in which humans are both connected and divided in the modern world.
- You may also find it helpful to refer to this glossary of terms compiled by the Reimagining Migration project.
- Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY

This footstep invites you to investigate migration or journey stories that belong to your family, local community, or a group to which you feel attached. Note that migration stories do not have to involve moving from one country or region to another; they can involve very short distances or frequent journeys you make, such as going to work or school. Migrations can also be forced by governments, wars, or other circumstances such as natural disasters, lack of resources, or changes in the environment.

Choose one of the following activities.

- **Option 1:** Listen carefully to someone you know well as they share their migration stories from their own lives or their family's history. You might ask your interviewee:
  - How did they come to live where they do?
  - Have they ever lived anywhere else?
  - Why did they move?
  - What did they experience when they moved?
  - How did they feel about moving from one place to another?
  - What are some journeys or migrations that they make on a regular basis and why?

Retell their story in your own words, either in the form of an audio recording, a written piece, or a visual art work. If you choose to create a visual art work, please be sure to include an explanation of your piece to help other students understand the story. Regardless of what format you choose, we encourage you to include visuals or other creative tools to help you tell the story.

Before sharing your work, we strongly recommend that you share the finished piece with the person whose story you are trying to tell. Doing so is respectful and gives the person a chance to correct or clarify details about their story. If you are unable to do so, it is very important that you consider how the person might feel about your storytelling.

- **Option 2:** Create a map or diagram or another type of visual image that depicts a story of migration connected to your family or community. You may want to start with a map that's freely available on the Internet and add text, arrows, and pictures to tell a migration story. Be sure to write an accompanying explanation to help others understand your map.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Explore other students’ stories of migration.

- Use one or more of the following dialogue tools to comment on others’ work:
  - **APPRECIATE:** Share what you like, value, or find interesting. Be specific.
  - **EXTEND:** Share how the story/visual extends your thinking or gives you a new perspective. Did it help you to think about your interviewee’s or your own story of migration in new ways?
  - **CONNECT:** Do you feel a connection with anything another student shared, either about themselves or about the person they interviewed? If yes, comment on what the student shared.
  - **Respond** to any comments or questions other students have left for you if you are participating online or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 2: EVERYDAY BORDERS

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

This footstep invites you to consider borders or boundaries in your community. To get started, we invite you to ponder the following questions:

- Have you ever been stopped from entering or visiting a place? If so, what did it feel like? If not, how do you think it might feel to be prohibited from entering a place or crossing a border? These could range from country or state borders to more everyday borders like fences, gates, walls, or even social borders that are invisible.
- How, if at all, is your movement restricted in your everyday life?

With the above questions in mind:

- Listen to journalist Paul Salopek's audio on Borders, recorded from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in December 2016. You can read a transcript of the audio here.
- Explore this extensive multimedia article by The Seattle Times on Tijuana, a town on the Mexico-US border. If you have limited time, we particularly recommend the video Tan cerca y tan lejos/So close, yet so far which is embedded in the piece.
- Watch I trekked across Europe so I could go to school safely, a video in a series on migrants' stories by the BBC.
- Explore Jacob Lawrence's series of paintings on The Great Migration.
- Read this annotated excerpt from Camille Bromley's article Women Trailblazers about gender and the Out of Eden Walk. Notice the stories and perspectives Camille shares. Who is Camille listening to? Why might this be important?
- Also explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

*Please note that these questions are adapted from Voice of Witness' Palestine Speaks curriculum.

DO AN ACTIVITY

Before taking a walk, consider the following questions:

1. Why do boundaries exist?
2. Who do you think sets up or controls boundaries?
3. Do you ever set your own boundaries? Why or why not?

- Take a slow walk* in the area where you live and/or go to school. As you walk, ask yourself: what kinds of borders and boundaries do you notice? How is your movement restricted or enabled? Are there any “invisible” borders: places where not everyone feels able to go even if there is not an explicit sign blocking their entry? Are there places where you don’t feel welcome or feel othered? Refer to the Three O’s infographic to reflect on ideas about othering.
- Photograph or sketch some of the borders or boundaries that you notice; or, produce a map that features different kinds of borders in your neighborhood.
- Reflect. Be sure to write an explanation of your choices and/or a story of your own experiences with borders. You may want to share your answers to some of these questions: Why do you think borders exist? Who do you think sets and controls them and why? Do any boundaries make you feel a certain way?
- Please note: We are not asking you to consider whether borders and boundaries are good or bad, but rather to consider their complexity and the different ways in which they can be experienced.
- Share your photos, sketches, or map, and story, with other students.

*Please note that Out of Eden Learn uses the term “walk” in a very broad sense and is not meant to exclude individuals with limited mobility.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Follow these instructions to respond thoughtfully to a person of your choice.

- Explore work by other students.
- Choose two pieces of work that catch your attention.
- Write comments in which you use the following dialogue tools:
  - CONNECT: Do you feel a connection with another student’s photographs, sketches, or reflection? If so, explain how.
  - PROBE for more details. Ask questions that will help you learn about their ideas and interests.

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FOOTSTEP 3: MIGRATION IN THE MEDIA

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

This footstep invites you to take a critical look at the ways in which migration stories are reported in the media. In doing so, we hope you will develop analytical skills that will help you to engage more thoughtfully with media reportings.

- **Watch** The *Danger of a Single Story*, Chimamanda Adichie's TED talk.
- **Read** Facing History and Ourselves' article, *Little Boxes* by Anthony Wright.
- **Watch** What is the most problematic area of migration coverage? in which journalists discuss how the media often reports on human migration.
- **Read** this article on media coverage of migrants and refugees.
- **Watch** this short video which shows how one Rohingya boy uses social media to share his perspective and experience with the world.
- **Explore** this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY

For this task, you are going to look for recent migration stories in the media and analyze how they are told or represented.

- **Choose** two different reports from the media (one can be by Paul Salopek, for example *The things they left behind, The wars of autumn*, or *This is not a life*) and compare and contrast them. You may also choose to analyze reports that are multimedia in format, for example a photo essay, a short video, or perhaps another visual format.
- **Consider** the following questions as you compare the two reports:
  - What is the date of publication? Has this report been written or produced in response to a particular event related to migration and if so, what was the event?
  - Who is likely to be the intended audience?
  - What do you think the attitude of the author is towards modern day migration and/or migrants? Pay careful attention to the author's word choices.
  - What is the headline or title of the report and why do you think that is?
  - If there is an image, look closely at it. Why do you think it was chosen?
  - Whose voices and perspectives are represented and whose are missing? What's been left out and why do you think that is?
  - What, if any, evidence are you seeing of the Three O's—overgeneralization, overconfidence, and othering—in this report?
  - What questions or wonders do you have?
- **Share** your main findings and reflect on any insights you gained by looking closely at the media reports. How do you think the reports seek to influence our opinions about migration and migrants? If possible, provide links to the reports. Feel free to be creative in how you present your ideas. For example, you could:
  - Write a short essay that compares and contrasts the two reports.
  - Create a summary table that compares and contrasts the two reports. (You would have to scan, screenshot or photograph your table to upload it to the platform.)
  - Write a "two voice poem" that juxtaposes or weaves together lines from each of the two reports. Here are some examples from Mr Brown’s class in Beaverton, Oregon, USA who developed this idea.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Explore other students’ stories of migration.

Now it's time to find out what kinds of migration stories your walking partners found in the media and what they learned from them.

- **Choose** two pieces of work from other students to look at and respond to.
- **Use** two or more dialogue tools to respond thoughtfully to these students:
  - **SNIP**: Cut and paste a phrase or sentence from the student’s reflection into your comment. Then, use the following dialogue tools to comment on it:
  - **POV**: Express your point of view (POV), position or opinion.
  - **CHALLENGE**: Pose a question or a challenge to a point of view (POV) or idea someone else has shared. This could be the POV of an author of one of the stories you read or a POV shared by another student. Use these Sentence Starters to help:
    - "I appreciate your point of view. I see it a little differently. I think that...”
    - “Another way of looking at it is...”
    - “I don't necessarily agree with that opinion...One reason I say this is...Another reason I disagree is...”
  - **NAME**: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that are influencing the way you see things.
  - **Respond**: Return to your own work for this footstep. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
FOOTSTEP 4: COLLECTING OUR THOUGHTS ON MIGRATION

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

This footstep is an opportunity to reflect on your learning experience and share your learning with other students. To get started:

- **Watch** this [video](#) which charts how humans migrated across the globe from the start of recorded history.
- **Read** [Climate Change is Already Causing Mass Human Migration](#).
- **View** [Uprooted](#), a set of interactive narrative maps of the global migrant crisis from 2017.
- **Watch** [The Displaced](#), a documentary by the New York Times.
- **Watch** [Afghanistan by Choice](#), a documentary by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.
- **Explore** this [slideshow](#) of student work from other students around the world.

Optional Resources:

- **Watch** this [video](#) which explores the complexity of stories of human migration in Chile.

*Please note that this video is filmed using Google's 360-degree technology, meaning that if viewed on a desktop computer (not a tablet or other small electronic device), you can see a full 360-degree view of every scene. Click and drag on the video to explore each scene. Use Google Chrome or Firefox to watch this video to ensure the 360-degree technology is fully functional.*

DO AN ACTIVITY

This footstep is an opportunity to reflect on your learning experience and share your learning with other students.

We invite you to create something that demonstrates what you’ve learned from this learning journey so far. What would you most like to share with other young people? Consider how your ideas about migration have changed or developed from reading the resources, doing the activities, and/or interacting with other students.

We encourage you to share your learning in creative ways, ideally in a way that combines text and images. Formats to consider: a slideshow of images or a collage; an illustration, painting or cartoon; a blog post or short essay; a piece of spoken-word or written poetry; a short video.

Consider how this learning journey has given you new insights into your connection to human migration. For example, you might share the following:

- New things you learned about migration
- New things you learned about yourself and/or your community
- Similarities and differences across migration stories, and why those similarities and differences exist
- Things you learned about how the media helps shape your own and other people's perspectives
- Things you appreciate about the stories of migration you have learned about
- Things you are doing differently or would like to do differently
- Things you’d like to learn more about

Please note that your teacher may want to specify how you approach this activity so that it ties in with your class.

INTERACT WITH YOUR WALKING PARTNERS

- **Look** closely and slowly at several reflections from other students.
- **Write** comments and questions on at least reflections that stand out to you
  - **EXTEND**: Do any of the reflections you are looking at extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
  - **CONNECT**: Do you feel a connection with another student’s reflection? If so, explain how.
  - **NAME**: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that are influencing the way you see things.
- **Respond**: Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.

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## Learning Goals

In this curriculum, students are invited to:

- Explore how and why the past is remembered—or not remembered—in their local environments, paying particular attention to how the past is represented in public space and who or what is honored.
- Consider the ways in which individuals or groups of people remember the past and how their remembering compares to public commemorations of the past.
- Reflect on the different ways in which the past is remembered at the local level.
- Explore their own relationship and connections to the past.
- Think critically about current debates related to public remembering of the past and develop opinions about how they think the past should or could be remembered at this moment in history.

## Curriculum

### Special Learning Journey: Remembering the Past?

In this curriculum of four footsteps, students consider how the past is remembered, and who or what is included in this remembering and why.

| Footstep 1: Personal Ways of Remembering the Past | Students explore their own ways of remembering the past, focusing on objects, practices, or traditions from before they were born that have special meaning for them, their families, or their communities. |
| Footstep 2: Public Remembering in Our Neighborhoods | Students take a walk in their local neighborhoods, looking for ways in which the past is publicly remembered where they live. |
| Footstep 3: Intergenerational Perspectives on the Past and Public Remembering | Students interview an adult who is familiar with their neighborhood. They will learn about this person's perspective on the past and how this person thinks the past should be publicly remembered where they live. |
| Footstep 4: Publicly Remembering the Past Today | Students create a new or adapted way of publicly remembering the past where they live. |
We thank the teachers who piloted the original version of this learning journey: Nora Crespo, Chris DiFranco, Yazmin Hernandez, Charlotte Leech, Veronica López, Luis Enrique Ramos Lanza, Kim Young. Thank you especially to Harvard Graduate School of Education visiting scholar Everardo Perez-Manjarrez for his work co-developing this learning journey with members of the Out of Eden Learn team.

This learning journey invites students to explore how the past is remembered in their homes and their communities, and to consider who or what is included in this remembering and why.

We recommend that you review the following resources with students before they begin the learning journey:

- [Dialogue Toolkit](#). The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of commenting tools that supports students to engage in thoughtful and respectful dialogue, whether in person or online.

- [Models of Respectful Disagreement](#). You can use these models to ask students to identify the dialogue tools in action and suggest how the conversation could have been further deepened. An [annotated version](#) of the Models of Respectful Disagreement is also available.
FOOTSTEP 1: PERSONAL WAYS OF REMEMBERING THE PAST?

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

Welcome to the Remembering the Past? learning journey! As you get started:

- **Read** this piece, which reports on a competition that invites people to identify “monuments” to their cultural heritage.
- **Read** these pieces about how kitchenware or a family clock can connect people with stories from their past.
- **Explore** this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

DO AN ACTIVITY

Before beginning the learning journey, consider the following question: How is the past or history personally meaningful to you? What historical movements, events, people, or places do you feel personally connected to?

Now it is time for the main activity. In this learning journey, we will be exploring how the past is remembered or commemorated in public places. We begin by thinking about more personal ways of remembering the past. For example, how is the past, before you were born, remembered in your own family or home? Ways of remembering the past might include objects or traditions such as a family photo or painting hanging on the wall, a piece of jewelry, an anniversary, a special recipe, a piece of furniture, a book, or a family tradition. Ways of remembering might also involve traditions or practices in your wider community that are important to you such as special festivals, storytelling or musical traditions, or handicrafts or industries.

- **Look** around your home for objects or other evidence of a tradition or practice that is connected to your family or community's ways of remembering the past.
- **Photograph or draw** one or more objects or practices that reflect a personal connection to a time before you were born or a way of remembering the past. Feel free to be creative in what you choose to share.
- **Share with others** your photograph or drawing of the object or practice that shows a personal connection to a time before you were born or a way of remembering the past. Provide a written explanation of your choice - what is the story behind your chosen object or practice? How do you feel connected to it?

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

- **Read** other students’ reflections on personal ways of remembering the past.
- **Write** detailed comments and questions for two walking partners, including one who is not in your class or program. Use one or more of the following dialogue tools:
  - **NOTICE:** What caught your attention or interested you in someone’s reflection?
  - **APPRECIATE:** What’s something you like, appreciate, or value in what you have read? Be specific.
  - **CONNECT:** Make a connection between something in another student’s work and your own experiences, feelings, or interests.
  - **PROBE:** Ask questions that will help give you a better sense of another person’s perspective.
- **Respond** to any comments or questions others have left for you or, if you are posting online, join in other conversations.

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EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

This footstep invites you to take a walk* in your neighborhood to explore how the past is publicly remembered where you live. To get started:

- **Explore** this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.
- **Explore** the following maps, which convey how names of some places in some parts of the world have shifted over time. Even if your own location is not included on the map, consider the following questions: Why do the names of places change over time? Who decides to change them? Why might this be important?
  - [An interactive map](#) of our world heritage (archeological sites, historical buildings and monuments, sacred places, etc).
  - [An interactive map](#) that shows indigenous lands and place names as well as the intersections of indigenous nations’ borders and boundaries.
- **Watch** this short [video](#) (2 minutes) from Brown University’s Choices program, in which Professor Christy Clark-Pujara, discussing United States history, emphasizes the importance of considering different perspectives on the past.

Optional resources to explore:

- **Watch** this [video](#) (9 minutes) in which an art expert explains the history and definition of murals.
- **Watch** this [video](#) about Hawaiian hula dancing (3.5 minutes).

Note: Monuments or memorials may serve a variety of purposes, including:

- Remembering a military victory or an achievement
- Remembering those who were victims or who made a sacrifice for their community or country
- Representing a community’s past or heritage or values—at least as imagined by the people or group of people in control of building and installing them
- Sharing something about the event or person they are designed to remember

They also reveal something about the people who chose to create them and what was important to them. In this way, monuments themselves can be considered historical artifacts.

Communities also remember the past in ways beyond physical memorials and monuments, such as marking specific dates on the calendar, holding holidays or celebrations that remember the past, or maintaining practices or rituals to continue certain traditions.
FOOTSTEP 2: PUBLIC REMEMBERING IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

DO AN ACTIVITY

This footstep invites you to explore how the past is publicly remembered in your neighborhood, local area, or where you go to school.

- **Take a slow walk** in the area where you live and/or go to school, though only if it is safe and possible for you to do so. As you walk, ask yourself: How is history remembered in my neighborhood? Which people or events from the past are commemorated and how? You might look at street signs or place names; commemorative plaques, statues, monuments or memorials; murals; or other forms of remembering including natural monuments or features of the landscape. The history being remembered may have happened recently or a long time ago. Refer to the Three O’s infographic to refresh your memory about overgeneralizing, overconfidence, and othering. If you cannot find ways in which the past is actively remembered in your neighborhood, can you at least find some traces of the past or history?

Note: If you cannot go outside, look carefully at a map of your local neighborhood instead of taking a slow walk. You may consider street names or even try taking a virtual walk via street view on a virtual map to see what you notice. Alternatively, you could find a picture of a monument and follow the instructions below.

- **Photograph or sketch** some of the ways in which the past is remembered that you notice or create a map that features some of the different ways in which the past is remembered. If you cannot find ways in which the past is remembered, photograph or sketch traces of the past or history that you find.

- **Reflect/research.** Be sure to include a written explanation of what you noticed. What questions do you have? If possible, do some additional research. Some questions to consider:
  - When and why was the monument, memorial, statue or other form of commemoration installed?
  - Who designed the monument, memorial, statue, etc.? Why might this be important?
  - Whose perspectives do you think are represented? Whose perspectives do you think are missing?
  - If you are learning a place or street, how did it get its name? What can you learn about the people or events that the street or place names refer to?
  - What do your observations and research suggest about who or what society valued at that time?
  - Do you think this memorial, monument, street name, etc., has the potential to upset or offend some people or communities? If so, how?
  - **Share** your reflections with other students.

*Please note that The Open Canopy uses the term “walk” in a very broad sense, and it is not meant to exclude individuals with limited mobility.*

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Follow these instructions to respond thoughtfully to a person of your choice.

- **Explore** other students’ reflections on their walks
- **Write** comments for at least two students using the following dialogue tools:
  - NOTICE: What stands out to you or catches your eye about another student’s work? What do you notice?
  - NAME: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or the place you live that may be affecting what you noticed in another person’s reflection.
  - EXTEND: Share how this piece of work extends your thinking or gives you a new perspective. Did it help you to think about your own walk in a new way?
  - Respond: Return to your own work and respond to any comments left for you by other participants. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in on other conversations.

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FOOTSTEP 3: INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE PAST AND PUBLIC REMEMBERING

EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

To get started with this footstep:

- Explore this slideshow of student work from other students around the world
- Look at this entry in the Canadian Encyclopedia about oral history and read this brief piece about an example of oral history being conducted in the US territory of Guam in the Pacific.
- Explore these podcasts in which youth in the San Francisco area of the United States conducted interviews with people about their lived experiences and insights. This class project involved a collaboration with the Voice of Witness program.

DO AN ACTIVITY

- Interview an adult who has a connection to your town or neighborhood. This person might be a family member, friend, or neighbor. You can do the interview online or over the phone if it is difficult to talk to them in person. With the person’s permission, you might want to audio record the interview.
  - First, ask them to say a little bit about themselves, such as their family background or things they think are important to know about who they are and their life. How long have they lived in your town or neighborhood?
  - What do they think about the way in which history is publicly remembered in your town or neighborhood? Maybe you could show them photos or sketches of things you noticed in your town or neighborhood and ask them to share their thoughts.
  - Do they feel personally connected in any way to these ways of remembering the past? If so, why? Which aspects of the past, if any, do they think remain invisible within your neighborhood? Why do they think that is? Which people or events from the past would they like to see commemorated and how?
  - Do they have any opinions about recent campaigns around the world to take down certain monuments?
- Retell what you learn from this person in your own words, either in the form of an audio recording, a written piece, or a visual art work. If you create a visual art work, please be sure to include a written explanation of your piece to help other students understand what you learned about the perspective(s) of the person you interviewed.
- Review: Before sharing your work with other students, we strongly recommend that you share what you make with the person you interviewed. This way, the person has a chance to correct or clarify details about their story. If you are unable to share your work with them, it is very important that you consider how the person might feel about how you represent them. Consider what you know about the Three O’s. Maybe revisit the Three O’s infographic.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

Now it’s time to find out what other students shared for this footstep.

- Choose at least two reflections from other students to respond to.
- Write thoughtful responses, using two or more dialogue tools:
  - SNIP: Cut and paste a phrase or sentence from the other student’s reflection into your comment. Then, use one or more of the following dialogue tools to comment on it:
  - CONNECT: What connections can you make to what you learned in your own interview or your own experiences or perspectives?
  - EXTEND: How did this student’s work extend your thinking or give you a new perspective?
  - PROBE for more details. Ask questions that will help you learn about the interview or what was learned from it.
- Respond: Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.
EXPLORE STUDENT WORK AND RESOURCES

This footstep is an opportunity to reimagine how the past is publicly remembered where you live today. It is also an opportunity to consider how decisions around public remembering are often sensitive, and even political. Look carefully at the following resources:

- **Explore** this piece, which shows ways in which people in different parts of the world recently protested against monuments they found offensive, especially in light of the Black Lives Matter movement.
- **Watch** the first seven minutes of this video, which explores different perspectives on the Theodore Roosevelt statue at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, USA.
- **Watch** this TED Talk by Titus Kaphar on Can Art Amend History?
- **Explore** this slideshow of student work from other students around the world.

Optional resources to explore:

- **Read** this piece about Kindred Spirits, a monument commemorating empathy and kindness. In 1847, the Choctaw tribe helped the Irish Famine victims, despite undergoing their own hardships as they were moved off their native lands by the US government.
- **Watch** this video and explore the website of the organization Monument Lab. You may want to click on the Projects tab to see some examples of their work.
- **Read** this piece to learn how several countries are dealing with controversial colonial monuments by “letting them rot.”
- **Read** this piece about how students in the United States led protests against the name of their school, named after a leader of the Confederate army who fought to preserve slavery during the US Civil War.
- **Read** this piece by National Geographic about current debates in the United States surrounding monuments.
- **Watch** this video of a legendary black singer, Marian Anderson, performing in front of the Lincoln Memorial in the United States after she was banned from performing in a famous concert hall. This video makes the point that monuments are also sites where other events or protests have taken place.
- **Read** this piece about a creative and ironic way of redesigning a statue by Banksy, the famous urban artist. Here is his original post.
FOOTSTEP 4: REMEMBERING THE PAST TODAY

DO AN ACTIVITY

For this footstep, we invite you to imagine that you have been asked to propose a new memorial or monument—or redesign an existing memorial or monument—in your city/town/neighborhood/community. Consider how your monument or memorial might publicly remember the past of this place.

Consider the following questions as you think about creating a monument/memorial:

• Who will be represented in your monument/memorial? Whose perspectives will it include? Be specific.
• What are one or two main ideas you hope to convey with your monument/memorial?
• What kinds of insights or questions do you hope your monument might inspire or provoke?
• How does this new monument or redesign of an existing monument connect to your own view of history or your family’s history or heritage?
• What objections might some people in your neighborhood have to your monument, street or place name, or other way of remembering and why?
• What economic or environmental factors should you take into account? For example, what materials will you use, and how will you make sure they don’t have a negative impact on the local environment?

We encourage you to be creative and propose something that combines text and images. Formats to consider: a slideshow of images or a collage; an illustration, painting or cartoon; a blog post, pamphlet or short essay; a piece of spoken-word or written poetry; a short video; or any other format you choose.

Choose one of the following options:

OPTION 1:
Design a new monument, street or place name, or other way of remembering the past for your neighborhood, or redesign something that already exists. Provide some kind of visual representation of your idea and a written explanation.

OPTION 2:
As an alternative to a physical or material way of remembering the past, consider a practice, public celebration, event, or exhibition that you might design to help people in your neighborhood remember the past in new ways. What would it involve? Where would the event or exhibition occur? Why would it occur in this place? Create a visual or audio representation of your idea as well as writing about it.

INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS

• Look closely and slowly at several reflections shared by other students.
• Write comments and questions on at least two reflections that stand out to you using the following dialogue moves:
  • EXTEND: Does the work by other student’s extend your thinking or give you a new perspective? If so, share how.
  • CONNECT: Do you feel a connection with another student’s ideas? If so, explain how.
  • NAME: Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that are influencing the way you see things.
  • POV: Explain your point of view (POV), position or opinion about someone’s idea.
• Respond: Return to your own work. Respond to anyone who left comments or questions for you. If you are posting online, try to keep the conversation going or join in other conversations.

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PART IV: Resources to Support Student Interaction
Resources to Support Student Interaction

Our world is complex and interconnected. Ongoing waves of movement and migration over human history mean that cultures and societies are perpetually evolving and influenced by one another. Sharing stories and making connections—especially across differences of experience, context and culture—are two of the foundational principles of the Open Canopy pedagogy, and student interaction is where these principles often come to life. This section offers two concrete resources that are widely used in Open Canopy curricula to help support thoughtful student interaction, both online and in person.

Chapter 19: The Dialogue Toolkit
Chapter 20: The Three O's
The Dialogue Toolkit is a set of moves intended to support students to thoughtfully interact with one another, in person or online.

In the early years of running the Out of Eden Learn program—now called The Open Canopy—we discovered a puzzle. When we looked at students’ online interactions in the form of the comments they made on one another’s posts, the interactions were generally quite sparse. Students would “like” another student’s post, and occasionally leave a one-sentence compliment about a photo (wow, that’s a cool picture of a sunset), but they would rarely say more. Yet when we followed up with students to ask them about their experience with the program, they clearly had plenty of thoughts about other students’ posts. They just hadn’t found a way to shape their thoughts into a post-able comment.

To address this issue, we enlisted the help of Chris Sloan, a participating educator in the program and co-founder of the youth platform Youth Voices. Together, we developed a tool called the Dialogue Toolkit. It consists of a set of commenting prompts that help students pay careful attention to other students’ posts and respond thoughtfully and with curiosity. Originally there were six moves in the Dialogue Toolkit; over the years, we have added three more. The toolkit appears as a set of icons in the comment box whenever students do the part of an Open Canopy activity that asks them to interact with other students. The instructions usually suggest a subset of two or three moves that are particularly relevant to the activity at hand.

When students click on an icon, a one-sentence prompt appears that gives a specific suggestion for writing a comment. For example, students might comment on another student’s work with the Appreciate “move”—by which we mean a strategy or action. This move is meant to go deeper than the “Like” button often found on social media platforms. The Appreciate move encourages learners to be specific and detailed about what they appreciate in other students’ work. Similarly, other moves encourage students to Notice details and even Snip (and paste) thoughts that interest them and explain why. Other tools invite them to describe Connections, Probe with thoughtful questions, and share when and how their thoughts Extend in new directions.

Some of the dialogue moves encourage even deeper commenting. Students might use the POV move to express their point of view (POV), position, or opinion on a topic, while the Challenge move encourages them to ask questions about or challenge a point of view that someone else shared. They may also use the Name move to name the aspects of their identity, experiences, or place where they live that might be influencing the ways in which they see things. Follow these links to see examples of how
students have used the *Appreciate and Probe, Notice, Connect, Extend, and Snip* or the *POV, Challenge and Name* tools in their comments on the Open Canopy platform (previously known as Out of Eden Learn).

The Dialogue Toolkit has turned out to be quite effective, especially if educators support its use. Students generally like using it, and educators appreciate the deep thinking and thoughtful exchange it can support. In fact, educators quickly adapted the toolkit for in-person use in their regular classrooms, as a way to encourage thoughtful student dialogue in real time. We, the authors of this handbook, use it ourselves in our own teaching in graduate classes and professional development settings.

Below is an image of the Dialogue Toolkit as it appears online. Following that are the prompts that accompany each of the nine dialogue moves. Here is a downloadable PDF version of the Dialogue Toolkit. The toolkit also includes thinking routines that were previously developed at Project Zero as a supplement to the nine dialogue moves that we focus on here. The image below shows what students see on the platform when they come to write a comment for another student. When they mouse over the icons on the upper left of the black box, instructions for each tool pop up, as outlined below.
**DIALOGUE TOOLS**

**Notice:** What stands out to you or catches your eye in this person’s post? In other words, what do you notice in particular? Be specific.

**Appreciate:** Share what you like, appreciate, or value in the post you’ve read. Be specific.

**Snip:** Cut and paste a phrase or sentence from the original post into your comment. Ask a question about it or say what you find interesting or important about what is being said.

**Probe:** Probe for more details. Ask questions that will help give you a better sense of another person’s perspective.

**Connect:** Make a connection between something in the post and your own experiences, feelings, or interests.

**Extend:** Describe how the post extended your thoughts in new directions or gave you a new perspective.

**POV:** Express your point of view (POV), position, or opinion.

Possible sentence starters:

- “From my perspective/In my opinion... [state your P.O.V.] For example, [provide evidence to support your P.O.V.]”
- “Some argue that... Others say... In my opinion...”

**Challenge:** Question or challenge a point of view (POV) or idea someone else has shared.

Possible sentence starters:

- “Although I see where you are coming from, I see it differently. I think that...”
- “Another way of looking at it is...”

**Name:** Name the aspects of your identity, experiences, or place you live that are influencing the way you see things.

Possible sentence starters:

- “I am thinking of [the topic] from the point of view of someone who... [name the particular identity/experience that is influencing your perspective on the topic]”

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Making the most out of the Dialogue Toolkit

Here are some tips for making the Dialogue Toolkit a regular part of classroom culture. These tips apply to both online and in-person use of the toolkit, and they are applicable to any kind of classroom dialogue in which students are exchanging ideas about one another's work.

Make the Dialogue Toolkit visible.

Make the dialogue toolkit a visible presence in your classroom or teaching context. Many educators like to print each icon and its corresponding move on a single sheet of paper and post all the icons together someplace in the classroom where students can easily reference them. They also find it helpful to distribute one-page copies of the dialogue toolkit to all students and encourage them to point to an icon when using the tools as part of classroom discussion.

Model the dialogue moves when responding to student work.

Use the Dialogue Toolkit yourself when responding to student work. For example, in providing feedback on a student essay, use the Appreciate tool to note something you value in the work; the Probe tool to ask a question; the Extend tool to note how the essay gives you a new idea.

Practice using the Dialogue Toolkit together with the whole class.

A good way to introduce the Dialogue Toolkit is to choose three or four tools that you'd like students to learn about, along with a piece of student work to use them on, but not necessarily work from a student in the class. For instance, you could choose a piece of work from the student work slideshows that accompany the Open Canopy curricula (see Section III of this handbook). Display the work so all can see it and invite students to consider how to respond using the tools that you've selected. For example, point to the Notice tool and ask students: What's one thing about this post that stands out to you? Point to the Probe tool and ask: What questions does this work raise for you? Point to the Connect tool and ask students to make a connection between something in the post and their own experience. Again, if you'd like to get a feel for what it looks like when students use some of these tools, you can click these links to see examples of the Appreciate and Probe, Notice, Connect, Extend, and Snip or the POV, Challenge and Name tools in action.
Use it in real-time classroom conversations.

The Dialogue Toolkit was initially designed to support online, asynchronous exchange, but it has become a go-to resource for many educators in the classroom, particularly when it's important for students to thoughtfully explore their own and others’ perspectives. For example, when leaning into controversial topics, educators have found it helpful to use the Name tool to invite students to name aspects of their identities and experiences that influence their perspectives, and to use the Probe tool to respectfully inquire about another student’s perspective. These tools can help students slow down, think critically and carefully, and challenge one another’s ideas and perspectives with care.

Display and comment on student work in the physical classroom.

The following suggestions are especially relevant for educators who are not using an online format.

• Choose a handful of pieces of student work—or invite students to volunteer their work—and post the work to the walls of your classroom or lay the work out on tables. Alternatively, you could display one or more pieces of student work using a projector or smartboard.

• Suggest one or more dialogue tools for students to try out as they engage in a commenting exercise. Remember to reference the visual icons of the Dialogue Toolkit that are hanging in the room.

• Have students circulate the room in the style of a gallery walk, or sit around a table in a small group looking at one or two pieces of student work. Provide them with pieces of paper or sticky notes so they can “post” their comments to the work they’re looking at. Once students have posted their comments, they can move around the room and review others’ comments, and then have a discussion about the experience.

Maintain a safe space for dialogue

When inviting young people to dialogue with one another, it is important to keep the experience safe, brave, and respectful, whether students are physically together in the same room or behind their screens and in different places. The Open Canopy pedagogy offers community guidelines that can help create and maintain a safe space. These guidelines work equally well for in-person and online communities. You can find a full description of the Community Guidelines here. In brief, their basic tenets are: Be yourself; be respectful; listen carefully; be reflective; speak up; be compassionate; be brave.

Even when being mindful of community guidelines, there are certain missteps any of us—adults and young people alike—can make, especially when dialoguing with people who come from very different contexts to our own. The Three O’s is an Open Canopy tool that can help address these particular challenges. We turn to that tool now.
Chapter 20: The Three O’s

The Three O’s is a tool to help students thoughtfully interpret and navigate the world and avoid common pitfalls when engaging with difference.

Young people are naturally curious. They like learning about other people their age who have different life experiences to their own, and, over the years, Open Canopy curricula have shown positive learning outcomes in this area. For instance, in conversing across difference, students tend to show great interest in and concern for one another’s stories; they develop more nuanced understandings about their own and other people’s cultures, and they exhibit greater self-awareness regarding their own identities and perspectives on the world. However, our analyses of student dialogue have also revealed some subtle and occasionally not-so-subtle conversational behaviors that can stand in the way of thoughtful discourse. These behaviors are fairly persistent across age groups and cultural contexts. We call them the Three O’s: overgeneralization, overconfidence, and othering. Overgeneralization takes the form of making comments about whole groups of people as if everyone’s experience or perspective were the same. Overconfidence involves overestimating how much one knows or understands about a phenomenon or group of people, leading to a lack of appropriate humility about the limits of one’s knowledge. Othering involves implicitly or explicitly conveying that one does not consider people from another group to be quite one’s equal, perhaps through a dismissive or pitying tone or an exaggerated focus on difference.

If these missteps sound familiar to you, it may be because it’s not just young people who make them: Overgeneralizing, overconfidence, and othering are all too common in adult discourse as well.

Below is an infographic of the Three O’s that can be shared with students approximately aged ten years old and above. It explains what the Three O’s are, and how they work in everyday conversation. This resource is often referenced in Open Canopy curricula, and educators also find it useful in their regular classroom instruction. Following the infographic are some tips and resources for how to make the most of the Three O’s tool.
**Overgeneralization:** Stereotyping; Making assumptions; Applying a single characteristic to a whole group of people; using single stories. Can involve:

- Taking one person’s perspective or experience or one piece of information and assuming it’s true for a whole group.
- Starting with a stereotype or the big picture and applying it to individuals.

**Overconfidence:** Overestimating your own understanding of other people or the world; underestimating complexity or variation; assuming your own perspective to be the default. Can involve:

- Assuming your own perspective or experience to be universal or the default.
- Underestimating the complexity of the world or viewing things simplistically.
- Being closed to or uninterested in other perspectives.

**Othering:** Overemphasizing differences among humans; viewing oneself as “more than” or exhibiting pity or disrespect toward others.
Making the most of the Three O’s Tool

Here are some tips and resources for sharing the Three O's tool with your students and helping them be alert to the pitfalls it identifies. Like those for the Dialogue Toolkit, these tips apply to both online and in-person dialogue.

Ideas for navigating and avoiding the Three O’s

- Ask [the other person or people] a lot of questions
- Use cautious and thoughtful wording to avoid making sweeping or definite statements
- Seek out more and different information
- Consider others’ perspectives or where someone might be coming from; be generous when trying to interpret their intent
- Learn more about the Three O’s so you can recognize and name them
- Keep calm and be generous in your interactions, even if you think someone is engaging in the Three O’s

Questions to consider

- How might people from the communities or places I am referring to feel about what I am saying?
- How would I feel if someone said this to me?
- Am I speaking on behalf of other people?
- In what ways can I connect while acknowledging differences?
- What other perspectives could I account for?
- What information or assumptions am I relying on? Where did they come from? Are they credible and reliable? How do I know?
### The Three O’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Use</strong></th>
<th><strong>Avoid</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that... From my perspective...</td>
<td>It’s true that... You should know that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned from your story that you...</td>
<td>I learned from your story that people in the United States...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned from [this story] that [this person]...</td>
<td>I learned from [this story] that people in the United States...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What I think I’m hearing/reading is...</td>
<td>People in this community...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I notice that some members of this community seem to...</td>
<td>Those poor people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many people in this community are experiencing...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you please tell me more about...?</td>
<td>Now I know all about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not certain about...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I still have questions about...</td>
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</tbody>
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A printable version of the infographic and associated tips and practices can be found in the free, online [Three O’s infographic](#). This five-minute [video](#) explains the Three O’s in more detail. While the video makes some specific references to the Out of Eden Learn program (the former name of The Open Canopy), the descriptions of the O’s are applicable across different learning contexts. Indeed, we have found that the Three O’s tool is easily taken up by students: As they apply their knowledge of the Three O’s, they begin to recognize the presence—and absence—of the O’s in many of their everyday lives and interactions. In their neighborhoods, the school cafeteria, their classes, extracurricular clubs, online spaces, and at the dinner table, learners increasingly notice instances of overgeneralizing, overconfidence, and othering, and become more alert to opportunities to shift their behaviors or better understand the behavior of others.
Conclusion
Our goal in writing the Open Canopy Handbook has been to present a flexible and adaptable approach to teaching and learning that can be incorporated into many different classroom contexts. We began in Part I by discussing five foundational principles in which the Open Canopy approach is grounded, offering a chapter on each one. The first three principles—slowing down, sharing stories, and making connections—are framed as broad learning goals that can be enacted in very different ways, depending on the educational setting and the students involved. For example, slowing down to observe the world closely may feel very different to a six-year-old in a small village setting than it does to a 17-year-old in an urban environment. Similarly, the stories shared by these students, and the connections they make between their own lives and the wider world, may vary widely as well.

The breadth of these three principles is intentional, and the fact that they can be enacted in such a wide variety of ways contributes, we believe, to the flexibility of the Open Canopy approach. We hope the varied examples of student work in the handbook, which are drawn from around the world and from across age groups and subject areas, serve as evidence of this flexibility.

The fourth and fifth Open Canopy principles—learner-generated content and thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange—speak to instructional design more specifically. While they, too, can be enacted in various ways, they do set out certain requirements. The principle of learner-generated content argues for the necessity of giving students the opportunity to find and explore themes that are personally relevant to them, and to learn from content that their peers have similarly produced. The principle of thoughtful peer-to-peer exchange emphasizes the importance of in-person or online dialogue that allows students to share and discuss, on their own terms, their understandings of the world and themselves. Prolonged learning experiences that entirely lack these two elements are incompatible with the Open Canopy approach. However, educators may choose to select or emphasize each of the first three principles at different moments in an arc of learning or curriculum.

Following Part I, the rest of the handbook is dedicated to a range of tools and resources designed to support the five principles. Part II laid out different activity-types that help promote the five principles: taking slow walks; mapping meaningful geographies, making and mapping connections to larger forces, stories, or systems; interviewing family and community members, looking closely at everyday objects or practices; and reimagining the world and looking ahead. These brief chapters explained what the activity-types look like in practice, what the learning benefits for students can be, and how teachers might adapt
the activity-types to suit their specific contexts. Part III comprised the various curricula that have been developed for the Open Canopy platform thus far: They were presented in full, but slightly edited to be useful in both online and offline scenarios. Finally, Part IV put forth specific tools to support thoughtful and respectful student-to-student interactions—namely, the Dialogue Toolkit and the Three O’s.

Our hope is that the Open Canopy approach can help bring greater joy into everyday classroom practice, while at the same time helping to equip students to navigate and thrive in the complex and interconnected world in which we all live. We welcome the diversity of ways the Open Canopy approach can be enacted, and our goal has been to design an approach that is open and invitational—one that honors students’ individual lived experiences and makes the most of teachers’ and students’ unique contexts. That said, we are keen to avoid being overconfident about what the approach can do, and about what teachers and students need. In the spirit of the Three O’s tool described in the previous chapter, we recognize that our own educational values shape the way we see the needs of students and teachers, and that others may have good reasons for seeing things differently. We hope to continue to learn from the views of others, and, in doing so, we imagine that Open Canopy practices will evolve over time.

At the time of writing, the online program and research project from which this handbook emerged is at a crossroads. Many readers will know the program by its original and longstanding name of Out of Eden Learn, as well as its genesis as an experimental learning community to accompany Paul Salopek’s uniquely ambitious project, the Out of Eden Walk. We are currently transitioning the entire project to the new name of The Open Canopy, both to reflect the ways in which it has evolved over the years and to offer an educational vision for the future.

A canopy—in English at least—has two primary meanings. First, it means a protective covering intended to shade people or bring them together. In this spirit, The Open Canopy promotes teaching and learning that offers a nurturing environment for students, one where they feel welcomed and recognized as individuals while engaging with diverse peers who feel similarly welcomed and recognized.

The second meaning of canopy refers to the treetop layer of a forest, be it the dense canopy of the Amazonian jungle, the light-dappled branches of a temperate deciduous forest, or the snow-encrusted caps of conifers on a mountainside. In forest science, the term open canopy refers to a specific type of treetop covering: one that allows shafts of light to penetrate through to the forest floor, creating a conducive environment for new growth. What began as a collaboration with a solo journalist—Paul Salopek—has expanded over the
years to include new partners and diverse projects. For example, The Open Canopy’s Planetary Health learning journey was a result of a collaboration with The Planetary Health Alliance. A partnership with our peer organization, Global Cities, has enabled us to think more rigorously and expansively about how to evaluate the learning outcomes of intercultural exchange programs. In Greece, under the direction of Kiriaki Melliou, a version of The Open Canopy has evolved into both a program of professional development and a component of the Greek national curriculum.

As we look ahead to the future, we embrace the many forms of new growth implied by our new name. We hope that more students from around the world will gather under Open Canopy’s welcoming practices. For those readers who are teachers and administrators, we hope that you feel encouraged to innovate with the ideas presented in this handbook and to make them your own. We know that the world does not stand still, but we hope that the ideas are flexible and adaptable enough to help meet new demands and circumstances for teachers and students as they inevitably arise. And we look forward to our own growth as an organization in the coming years through our invigorating work with our current partners and through new partnerships and projects. Together, let’s imagine new possibilities for making education relevant, engaging, and deeply human for young people today.
About the Authors

The Open Canopy program (formerly known as Out of Eden Learn) and its associated resources were developed by all four of us: Liz Dawes Duraisingh, Shari Tishman, Carrie James, and Sarah Sheya. This book—a result of our partnership—has been a long-held dream: For several years, we envisioned a volume that would crystallize and share all that we’ve learned. In the end, the authorial work was taken up by Liz and Shari. But the ideas represented here for the most part are the fruit of a collective intellectual and practical effort that took place over many years.

Liz Dawes Duraisingh co-directs The Open Canopy and is Co-Director of Project Zero. She also leads research projects that involve collaborating closely with teachers and school leaders to promote professional learning and pedagogic change in different contexts—work which led to the co-authored book *Inquiry-Driven Innovation*. In addition, Liz serves on the core faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, teaching courses on qualitative research methods and designing intercultural learning experiences. She was formerly a middle and high school history teacher, working in both England and Australia.

Shari Tishman is a co-director of The Open Canopy. She is also a Senior Research Associate and Principal Investigator at Harvard Project Zero, where she formerly served as Director. Her research focuses on the development and teaching of thinking, the role of close observation in learning, and learning in and through the arts. Shari is the author of numerous books and articles, including the recent book, *Slow Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation*. Along with Project Zero colleague David Perkins, she is also a co-host of the *Thinkability* podcast.

Carrie James is Co-Director of Project Zero and Managing Director of the Center for Digital Thriving at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. A sociologist by training, for over a decade, James has led research and educational initiatives focused on young people’s civic participation and well-being in a tech-filled world. With Emily Weinstein, Carrie is co-author of the book, *Behind Their Screens: What Teens are Facing (and Adults are Missing)* (MIT Press, 2022). She has a doctorate in Sociology from NYU.

Sarah Sheya is the Project Manager of The Open Canopy at Project Zero. Formerly, Sheya was the Project Manager and Media Specialist on Making Across the Curriculum, an Agency by Design project that applies maker-centered learning across a variety of contexts and content areas. In addition to her role on The Open Canopy, Sheya founded and directs the JusticexDesign (JxD) project, exploring how young people engage critically with—and understand the relationships between—design, representation, power, and participation. Sheya formerly worked in the nonprofit sector as a youth program director and teaching artist.
The Open Canopy Handbook offers an approach to teaching and learning that encourages young people to slow down and observe the world closely, share stories and perspectives with one another, and make connections between their own lives and bigger human stories. The book draws on a long-running online intercultural exchange program for youth around the world, as well as decades of research carried out by Project Zero, a research center based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It is intended for all educators who are interested in making education more personally meaningful for young people, and in cultivating curiosity and connection among students within and across a wide variety of contexts. Throughout, the book uses a range of original student work from around the world to show how The Open Canopy principles, practices, and resources support meaningful learning for students of all ages.