

Walking Curriculum

Overview: Learners walk with imaginative intention in order to change perspectives, encounter the world differently, seek evidence of human-nature relationships, and/or locate natural or human systems in action. This [interdisciplinary](#) approach to outdoor learning cultivates relationship to place and can deepen understanding of course topics such as those connected to the SDGs. Students can walk in an urban or rural area, or visit a local park, and explore biodiversity, urban planning, health and well-being, or other sustainability issues. Developed by Gillian Judson, A Walking Curriculum has been applied in 15 countries to over 100,000 K-12 students. It is adapted here to be applied in higher education.

Time	Instructor Activities	Learner Activities	Techniques/Equipment
15 min	Gather and attune learners to an outdoor space. Provide handout.	Come prepared to walk and explore	Handout on 1-3 specific Walking Curriculum prompts.
30-60 min	Facilitate one or more Walking Curriculum prompts (examples given at the end)	Engage in walking curriculum prompt, move slowly with senses attuned, and may take notes or photos	Clear walking route
30 min	Lead a debriefing discussion	Discuss their experiences, and (optionally) share photos or other documentation	



Relevance: This holistic approach engages the body, mind, and imagination. Learners increase their attention to detail, connect with a local environment, and can witness real world evidence of sustainability issues in their community.

Objective: Engage in an embodied experience that deepens connections to a specific place with a focus on SDGs or other course themes. From Gillian Judson: “With my adult learners I find a story-focused walk is great for exploring the different ways we understand concepts *and* as a way to engage with the living, meaning-full and evocative aspects of Place.” She asks: *What’s the story here? What engages your emotion? And what could be the back/forward story?*

Pre-assessment: Are students familiar with the SDGs that will be relevant for this intentional walk? Has the instructor considered accessibility options?

Most Relevant SDGs: Good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, life below water, life on land.

Time: 30-90 minutes

Techniques/Equipment: Human bodies.

Location(s): Campus grounds, city streets, KPU Farm, Newton Greenway, other local parks/green spaces.

Accessibility: Check in beforehand with your class regarding any physical or other accessibility needs. Be explicit in your expectations for any walks you do. Are they meant to be reflective and solitary, social and communicative, or something else? Providing clear details can help learners better prepare for this experience and encourage them to raise questions or concerns.

Process:

1. Inform students of the place the walk will occur, terrain, length of walk, if there will be a break, and washroom availability. Make a clear invitation to students for accessibility questions or concerns.
2. Set a conspicuous meeting location for students. If meeting inside the classroom, be sure you can lock their extra belongings inside. If meeting outdoors, be sure everyone knows where to meet and provide a contact phone number or email.
3. Connect your learners to the outdoor place. This may include a territorial acknowledgement, sharing stories of this land, or asking learners what they know about this place or how they feel in this place right now.
4. Provide students with a handout on 1-3 specific Walking Curriculum prompts. Emphasize how they should focus their attention, the importance of slow walking, engaging the imagination, and anything they should document (e.g., writing down reflections or taking photos). As Gillian Judson says: "Let us seek the stories, notice the places we walk, and attune to details."
5. Students engage in A Walking Curriculum.
6. Gather again at a new, or the original, location. Invite students to share their experiences.

Accountability: Students can debrief in a circle with the larger group after their walk. Additionally, they can be asked to take photos during their walk and share these with written reflections on Moodle.

Adapt for your Discipline/Course: A walking activity is applicable to any discipline. Think of this as an opportunity to get learners moving and engaged and focused on a particular topic, while being mindful of accessibility needs. The trick is to make it relevant for your learners and course subject or themes.

For example, if you teach in Design you can have learners look for examples of biomimicry (sustainable communities SDG), or patterns in nature and human-made structures that are (in)efficient for energy use (clean energy SDG). If you teach History you can have learners do a History Walk (see table below) and look for evidence of the past and the stories that live in this place connected to colonization or racism (reduced inequalities) or discrimination based on gender (gender equality). If you teach Creative Writing your walk can focus on imagining what it would be like to encounter this area as a fictional character facing economic hardship (no poverty), facing lack of food (no hunger), or connecting with nature (life on land).

KPU Mentors: Gillian Judson (SFU), Lee Beavington

Post-Assessment: Daring doodle (have students draw a concept or aspect of their walking curriculum experience).

Reflection Questions: 1. How did this engagement (e.g., walking) differ from more conventional instruction such as lecture and note-taking?
2. What new plants/people/places did you discover in this community? How might you connect with them further in the future, especially in relation to one or more SDGs?
3. What did you observe or encounter that surprised you? Imagine this place differently, in regard to an SDG. What would you change in terms of the path, accessibility, the plant species, and/or human-built structures?

Resources:

[Walking Forward: Learning from Place](#)

[imaginED – A Walking Curriculum](#)

[hundrED – The Walking Curriculum](#)

There are 60 walks described in [A Walking Curriculum](#). Six are provided briefly in the table below.

Walking Prompt / Focus	Guiding Questions / What to Notice	SDG Connections
Systems Walk Identify parts of a given system.	What are the different parts of the system? How do the parts connect? If looking at a human-built system, what impacts do you observe of the system on the environment? Engaging imagination: What alternatives to the system can you imagine? How do people impact this system and how could it be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced inequalities • Climate action • Sustainable communities • Life on Land
Water Walk Route with water (pond, stream, culvert, ditch, fountain, downspout)	In what different ways are people using water? Is there evidence of water being wasted or polluted? How could water be used more efficiently without polluting it? How does the look, smell, or feel of the water change at different points in the walk? What might cause these changes? Engaging imagination: Visualize a stream buried in this area, and then this stream being daylighted (restored back to the surface).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean water • Good health • Life below water
History Walk Notice and imagine the past.	What evidence can you find on your walk that something happened at that location in the past or before this moment? Engaging imagination: What mental images emerge as you envision the beings who came before you in this place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life on land • Climate action
Human Impact Walk Industrial area, shopping mall, well-used path.	What might this place be like if people had never been here? What might be here that isn't? What is here now that might not be? Engaging imagination: How might the area have looked 100 years in the past, or 100 years in the future? Write or draw these visions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean water • Responsible consumption • Climate action
Welcome Walk Campus grounds or local area.	What spots (from large to teeny-tiny) do you find <i>inviting</i> ? Which attract your attention? Which are <i>welcoming</i> ? Engaging imagination: Think about the qualities of inviting versus uninviting spaces, and identify these areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced inequalities • Well-being
Borders Walk Notice areas of transition.	Where are the borders to your walk? What borders appear to you within your walking space? Are these human-made or natural borders? Engaging imagination: How do you know it is a 'border'? What are the clues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable communities • No poverty