

Mapping Meaningful Learning: Turning Wichita into a Living Classroom

In this interactive session, educators will use a map of the Wichita area to brainstorm and design hands-on, real-world learning experiences rooted in the local community.

Participants will explore how to transform everyday places into powerful educational assets, reimagining Wichita as a dynamic classroom that supports authentic, place-based learning for all K–12 students.

Session Flow (1 Hour)

1. Welcome & Framing (5 minutes)

- Briefly introduce the concept of place-based learning.
- Share the session goal: “To reimagine Wichita as a dynamic classroom by identifying local assets and designing authentic learning experiences.”

2. Warm-Up: Personal Connection to Place (10 minutes)

Prompt:

“Think of a place in Wichita that holds meaning for you—where you learned something important, felt inspired, or made a memory. What made that place meaningful?”

Discussion Questions:

- What senses or emotions do you associate with that place?
- Could students experience something similar there?
- How might that place connect to curriculum goals?

3. Mapping Local Learning Assets (15 minutes)

Activity:

Using a large printed or digital map of Wichita, have participants mark:

- Cultural sites (museums, historical landmarks)
- Natural spaces (parks, rivers, trails)
- Community hubs (libraries, markets, local businesses)
- Hidden gems (murals, neighborhoods, local legends)

Prompts:

- “What stories live in this place?”
- “What subjects or standards could this place help teach?”
- “Who in the community could be a co-teacher or guide here?”

4. Designing Learning Experiences (15 minutes)

Small Group Challenge:

Choose one mapped location and design a mini learning experience for a specific grade level or subject.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the essential question or learning goal?
- What will students do, create, or investigate?
- How will this experience be authentic and student-centered?
- How will you ensure equity and access?

5. Overcoming Barriers (10 minutes)

Whole Group Discussion:

“What might prevent educators from using the community as a classroom?”
(e.g., transportation, time, safety, curriculum constraints, admin support)

Challenge Prompts:

- “How might we bring the community into the classroom when we can’t go out?”
- “What partnerships could help remove these barriers?”
- “How can we advocate for place-based learning in our schools?”

Encourage participants to share creative workarounds or success stories.

6. Reflection & Call to Action (5 minutes)

Prompt:

- “What’s one place in Wichita you’re now seeing with new eyes?”
- “What’s one small step you can take this month to connect your students with the community?”

Invite participants to write their commitment on a sticky note or digital board.