

Becoming Trail Stewards:

Preserving AND Making History
along the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail



Teacher Resource Guide

Introduction to place-based and project based learning
War of 1812 Unit for the Classroom and Beyond

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*Cover images: The students of Patterson Park Public Charter School in Baltimore, Maryland present their Star-Spangled Banner Trail Stewards project at their History Field Day in May 2013, Deborah Costas photographer
Current Page: Students from PPPCS enjoy field trips on the Chesapeake Bay, Washington DC and Antietam NB, Ryan Kaiser photographer*

The Trail Stewards Program

The goal of the Trail Stewards program is to empower local communities to become the caretakers of the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail. The Chesapeake Bay Office of the National Park Service, which manages the Star-Spangled Banner Trail, is currently partnering with a handful of schools in Maryland and Virginia to pilot the Trail Stewards Program, but anyone can be involved.

The Star-Spangled Banner Trail is approximately 560 miles long and can be found on both land and water. Being a steward along this multi-state trail can mean many things, from participating in a clean-up of a local historic park or stream, to creating audio or video tours of your neighborhood's Star-Spangled history for others to use to explore long-ago events. School groups especially have a pivotal role to play in this effort. School projects in which students research, retell and interpret the historical events in their community are at the heart of the Trail Stewards Network.

Students become the historians by teaching their neighbors about what happened in the War of 1812 where they live. In this way, they learn the importance of contributing to their communities while learning the skills they need to succeed. A well-designed Trail Stewards project can bring parents, students and teachers together working toward a common goal in and out of the classroom.

This resource guide will provide an introduction to the concepts of place-based and project-based learning which are the backbone of any hands-on learning experience. Information to assist teachers and administrators in understanding and justifying getting students out of the classroom to experience local history for themselves is also included. A project-based learning module on the War of 1812 was created by the Star-Spangled Banner Trail's 2013 Teacher-Ranger-Teachers and can be used a model for the creation of community specific project or can be used to explore the War of 1812 with any group of students.

NPS staff is also available to help teachers identify projects and community partners who want to be involved in a Trail Stewards project. Please feel free to contact us at 410-260-2488. Our website for more information is www.nps.gov/stsp and the War of 1812 Virtual Resource Center for students and teachers can be accessed at warof1812.thinkport.org.

"I can no longer envision a deep and true teaching of our history without field based study. How is it possible for children to envision a battle when they have never seen a battle site? This is more than a privilege for children and teachers, it is a responsibility for those with geographical access to make history real, to make events more tangible, to truly deliver history as an experience and not rote learning to be discarded when the chapter ends and the test is passed."

*- Melanie Hood-Wilson, Parent of a 5th Grade Student
at Trail Stewards Pilot School*

Place Based and Project Based Learning: What and Why!

What is place based education?

When learning is “place based,” the curriculum is organized around a community's local culture, history or environment. Students learn the content of the core subject areas within a local context. Projects are often outdoors and hands-on, and may also have a community service component. The projects must always connect back to both the curricular standards and the local community. In this guide, we will be discussing how to use the War of 1812 to teach Common Core skills to students in Maryland and Virginia, though the principles of design apply in any context.



Place based education projects can have a profound impact on student achievement and engagement. When place based projects are well-designed, students demonstrate increased learning, leadership, and pride in their work. Read more about the benefits of place based education in the section titled “Why do it?”

What is project based learning?

Project based learning goes hand in hand with place based education. Teachers select an organizing problem around which to structure a unit, or several units. Keep in mind that true project based learning is different than traditional projects. These projects are student-driven, requiring students to think critically to solve real problems, and hands-on. Skills required from the state standards are embedded within the investigation. There is a final product which students work toward producing, and often an audience for the product. The projects should be cross curricular, and so help to promote collaboration between teachers in a school.

Projects have been shown to increase student engagement, teacher satisfaction and leadership, and student achievement.



Images: Top-Student portraying Dolley Madison, Courtesy White House Historical Association, Bottom: Patterson Park Public Charter School Students present their Trail Stewards Project at their History Field Day in May 2013

Why do it?

What do I explain what's going on to my principal?

There are some obvious reasons to start teaching using place-based project design. It's incredibly engaging work for both students and teachers. It promotes creative problem-solving, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. It can also be a lot of fun. Many teachers report that they experience fewer behavioral problems, and feel a new sense of satisfaction in their careers as teachers. But beyond increasing engagement and satisfaction, research supports that place-based education and project-based learning are simply more effective.

... the change to a project-based model "increased participating teachers' beliefs in their ability to teach students of different ability levels, conduct assessments, and use parents and outside experts in the classroom, as well as their confidence in themselves as teachers and learners" (Thomas 2000).

Studies have shown that project-based learning improves long-term retention and skill development (Strobel & van Barneveld 2009). An independent evaluation of project based schools in 1993 showed that 9 out of 10 schools studied showed an increase in standardized test scores after the schools adopted a project based model. In addition, this evaluation revealed that the change to a project-based model "increased participating teachers' beliefs in their ability to teach students of different ability levels, conduct assessments, and use parents and outside experts in the classroom, as well as their confidence in themselves as teachers and learners" (Thomas 2000). The same report discusses another study in which two groups of students at different schools were compared. One group was taught math given a project-based approach, and one was taught traditionally. Overall, more students at the project-based school passed the national examination administered in year three of the study than traditional school students. Three times as many students at the project-based school as those in the traditional school attained the highest possible grade on the national examination (Thomas 2000). Another study noted that projects encourage self-regulation and independent learning, which improved performance in all areas. A self-regulating learner is more able to recognize what they know already, what they need to learn, and determine how they can learn it (Zimmerman 2002). This process results in improved scores.

There is somewhat less research specific to place-based education, but what has been done also supports increased student satisfaction and achievement. According to one study, environmental place based education resulted in increased test scores even when controlling for GPA, gender and ethnicity.

Student improvement in critical thinking skills was attributed to environmental themes, open-ended research projects, student voice and empowerment, and connection to community. Students themselves reported feeling motivated by work that was related to real life problems (Athman & Monroe 2004). Another study examined the difference between first graders with two years in a strong place-based school against first graders with only one year at the same school. The first graders with more in-depth place-based education outperformed peers on all measures (Duffin 2006).

Across several studies, it was noted that students at project based schools tended to do as well or better on tasks that required rote memorization, and did significantly better at complex tasks that required problem solving and critical thinking. It can be difficult to get the whole school on board when designing instruction that is less-than-traditional, but the research clearly supports the choice to make learning project-based. Not only is it more enjoyable for students and teachers, it has a long term impact on information retention and problem solving skills.

What does a place based project look like?

Isn't it a lot of work?

It can be overwhelming to embark on designing a project for the first time. Remember, projects can scale up or down, and can always be adapted to the resources available at your school. To start a project, first think about an end goal or organizing question. What do you want students to be able to do by the end of the unit? What problem are students trying to solve? What will they need to know to solve this problem? What kind of end product will they be responsible for?

Researchers have identified four key components for a project to be successful: a realistic problem or project; structured group work; a multi-faceted assessment; and teacher collaboration with colleagues. W. Hung developed a nine-step approach to project planning in 2008, adapted by Edutopia and reproduced below:

1. Define the Content.

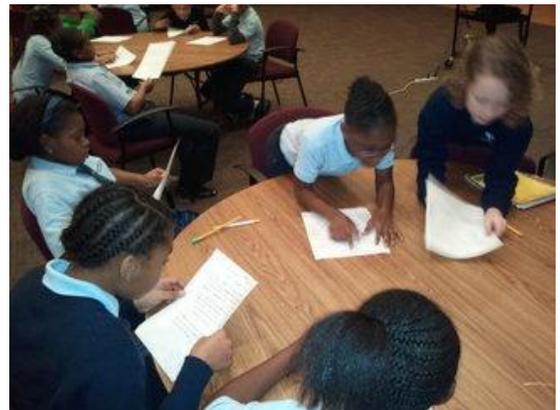
What do you want students to learn by the end of the assignment?

Expectations should correspond with students' current research and reasoning skills.

2. Identify the Context.

Brainstorm a list of real-life activities in which learners could apply the intended content.

Be aware of any time or location constraints in these situations.



3. List Possible Problems.

Create a list of problems or projects that could occur in each context from Step Two.

Select the problem or project that best presents the content objectives and that will be appealing and relevant to learners.

4. Describe Potential Solutions.

Fully describe the most viable solution to the problem or project, as well as possible alternative solutions.

Identify the known and unknown variables. Note the most realistic path of reasoning and the knowledge (concepts, principles, procedures, and facts) that would result from the most viable solution.

Next, identify alternative paths of reasoning and knowledge that would evolve from alternative solutions to the problem. Based on these possible solutions, what researching and reasoning skills will learners need for solving the problem or creating the project? What is the best framework for building students' knowledge? (That is, how do concepts required for solving the problem relate to each other?)

5. Calibrate Your Project.

Using the solutions from Step Four, check to make sure that the knowledge and skills generated by the most viable solution match the intended knowledge and skills from Step One. For instance, you might create a chart comparing the intended knowledge and skills with those necessary to solve the problem. To better match intended content with students' level, add or remove problem conditions. To make a problem easier, focus learners' attention on the target knowledge. To make a problem harder, focus learners' attention on peripheral knowledge. To make the problem more realistic, add time, budget, or location constraints that might occur in an authentic professional situation.

6. Describe the Task.

To create a description of the task, remove information from the most viable problem solution from Step Four. If researching or reasoning a critical piece of information is beyond students' problem-solving skills, this information should be presented to the learners rather than have them struggle to learn it.

7. Reflect on the Learning.

Reflect students' learning by including multiple opportunities to check their progress in the initial assignment and adjust instruction accordingly (for example, let them know they need to keep a journal and report to their supervisor on a weekly basis). The final assessment should also be clearly described in the assignment (for example, a final report, presentation, or follow-up question or problem) and should allow learners to reflect upon their overall learning and problem-solving process.

For more information on how to plan your own place-based education projects, visit the websites listed in the additional resources section.

How do I make these projects accessible to diverse learners?



In our increasingly diverse classrooms, it's always a concern to determine how to include all students in instruction. Planning a place-based project is no different, and provides some unique challenges and opportunities to consider.

When selecting standards that the project will address, keep individual IEP goals in the back of your mind. This way, you will be prepared in advance how to incorporate IEP instruction into the project, and won't accidentally let it fall by the wayside. Also, if you plan

the project in advance, it becomes much easier planning the day-to-day differentiation based on how students have done on the project up until that point. It's also possible to differentiate based on what part of the project different students are responsible for. For example, if the project involves writing a skit, different students can strategically be assigned the roles of script writer, choreographer, or director based on their needs.

Hands-on projects particularly benefit our students with disabilities. Students with attention problems are more easily engaged when the project involves building, acting or moving around. Often, we hear the sentiment, "My students couldn't do that, they're too low." In fact, low students can benefit the most from this type of approach, provided the teacher is strategic about anticipating needs and problems.

That being said, it can be particularly important to be explicit about procedures and expectations during certain types of projects. If students are learning tasks that they would not normally complete in a classroom, the teacher should take time to explain what is expected. Modeling how to work cooperatively in groups, or proper use of different materials, is never a bad idea.

Image: Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Ruth Goodlaxson, a special education teacher in Baltimore City, presents materials in her classroom during National Parks Week.

How do I find resources in my area?

The best person to answer this question is you. What skills do the parents of your students have? Maybe you can find a parent volunteer to make traditional local food, or tell oral histories about the community. What are the natural resources in your area? What makes them important? Check in with local libraries or universities about historical documents they might have about the area.

The National Park Service has been working hard, along with community partners, to make resources available about the history of the War of 1812. The website <http://www.starspangledtrail.net> includes a calendar of events related to the War of 1812 bicentennial, as well as a map that includes important historical trail locations. Use this website to find events and organizations local to your community that you could involve in a project for your students. In addition, many resources have been collected at the Maryland Public Television website <http://warof1812.thinkport.org>. This includes lesson plans, primary source documents, interactives and more.



National Park Staff is available for technical assistance on getting your project started and for help identifying community partners who may be willing to work with your school.

Contact: Abbi Wicklein-Bayne, Interpretive Specialist, Chesapeake Bay Office, Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, 410-260-2483, abbi_wicklein-bayne@nps.gov.

Additional Resources

- 1) Edutopia.org: <http://www.edutopia.org/blogs/beat/project-based-learning>
This website provides articles, examples and supports for designing your own projects. Their articles are easy to read, informative, and research based. There are blog posts by teachers as well as step-by-step guides for project implementation and design.
- 2) Promise of Place: <http://www.promiseofplace.org>
This website provided a wealth of information about place based education for teachers. There are links to organizations all over the country that promote place based learning, as well as information for teachers planning their own projects.
- 2) National Park Service, Conservation Study Institute
<http://www.nps.gov/csi/engagement/research.htm>
The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement is one of 32 research learning centers around the country initiated through the NPS Natural Resource Challenge.

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Pilot Trail Stewards Project Patterson Park Public Charter School 2012-2013

For the 2012/2013 school year, fifth grade students at Patterson Park Public Charter School did a year-long project based around The War of 1812 and the Battle of Baltimore. A portion of the battle took place in the park that the school is named after. Their research was done in various stages as listed below. The first stage was having the students research the various aspects of The War of 1812 itself, and sharing their findings. The second tier was specifically learning more about The Battle of Baltimore and the events on Hampstead Hill by doing thorough site visits. Lastly the students used their own ingenuity and creativity to design and build historically accurate props and reenact the Battle of Baltimore in a film. A "Historic Field Day" held in May allowed them to proudly share their work with their parents and the community. Most importantly the students wanted to leave their imprint on history and give back to the community. The events of Hampstead Hill researched by the students will go on Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail interpretive signage to be placed in the park.

Can you do some of these activities at your school? Is there some aspect of the Chesapeake Campaign that happened near your school that you would like your students to research?



War of 1812 Research

Students spent a month doing research in class on the various causes, key battles and figures of the War of 1812. The research project is attached. Feel free to use as much or as little as you want in your classroom!

Battle of Baltimore's Hampstead Hill Events and Research

The students researched what happened specifically in the Battle of Baltimore and at Hampstead Hill (inside Patterson Park) throughout the year. They did site visits at Ft. McHenry, Flag House, the Smithsonian Museum of American History, Fells Pt. and Hampstead Hill to learn about details of the entire battle. At the Maryland Historical Society students learned what life was like for the different people living in Baltimore at the time. While at the MDHS they were also able to pour over historical documents describing the buildup of the defenses before the Battle of Baltimore. They were able to use what they learned on these trips and researching the documents on the National Park Service historical marker.

Image: Students visit the War of 1812 exhibit at the Maryland Historical Society as part of their research.

Be Creative!

★ Uniforms

Students researched the various types of uniforms worn by the British and Americans during the war. In art class students recreated some of these uniforms using both art and math skills.

★ Muskets

After looking over the different types of muskets used in the war they recreated some of the muskets in science and tech classes. Working together they measured and sawed the specific details of the musket. Then they painted and stained the muskets to look like the originals.

★ Flags

Using the 15 star flag of the US in 1814 and the timeless British flag they recreated the flags in art class using math and art skills.

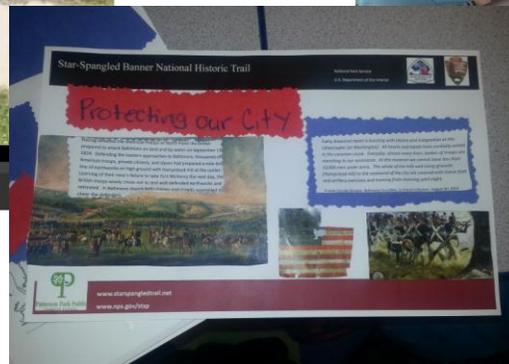
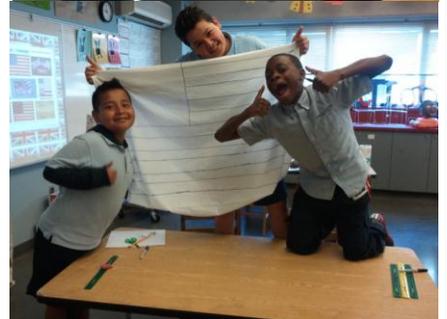
★ Boat

Thanks to a parent volunteer the students built a boat that they then used in their reenactment of the Battle of Baltimore.

★ Film

The students then used all of the props they created into making a “Battle of Baltimore” reenactment film.

[\(Search for PPPCS Battle of Baltimore Video on Youtube.\)](#)



Images: Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Ryan Kaiser (picture top right) led students in a variety of activities in the study of the War of 1812. Clockwise from top right-measuring wood for muskets, making a Star-Spangled Banner Flag, designing Trail interpretive marker, screen shot of final Battle of Baltimore reenactment video.

Parent's Feedback on Students Participation in Project:

"I can no longer envision a deep and true teaching of our history without field based study. How is it possible for children to envision a battle when they have never seen a battle site? In a hyper-sensory world, how is it possible to truly feel the scenes of the writing of the constitution without visiting the site, seeing the rooms in which the document was written, seeing the furniture and smelling the air inside the walls. This is more than a privilege for children and teachers, it is a responsibility for those with geographical access to make history real, to make events more tangible, to truly deliver history as an experience and not rote learning to be discarded when the chapter ends and the test is passed."

- Melanie Hood-Wilson

"These field trips, paired with hands-on projects (such as boat building) makes the lesson more tangible and I believe, helps the child to develop the intellectual ability to weave all these different experiences together and gain a fuller understanding of the subject. The child is better equipped to "look closer" and approach the subject from different angles. This can only enhance the child's ability to rationalize the correct answers on the MSA, as well as their ability to complete thoughtful classwork. "

– Maribel Costa, Parent of a 5th Grade Student at Trail Stewards Pilot School

"The incorporation of an interdisciplinary study of the War of 1812 was very significant to student learning. My daughter Zoey learned so much about history and this region as a result of the creative classroom lessons, their related field trips, research projects, and relevant cross-curricular assessments. She delved into projects with enthusiasm using art, math, and language skills in learning history. The historic field day event showed that all the students were able to grasp the importance of what they were learning as well as their role in history. Students were eager to share their knowledge of history and show off their creative abilities related to constructing muskets, uniforms, the amazing canoe, as well as their fife and drum abilities. I think this curriculum would be important for other Baltimore City students because it would give them the opportunity to learn, explore, and share knowledge resulting from a hands-on and differentiated learning approach that will positively impact them in all areas of their learning. Thanks to the PPPCS 5th grade team for a great 2012-2013 school year."

– Lorna Solomon

"Exposure to community based learning that reinforces the lessons taught in the classroom has had a tremendously positive impact on my daughter. Preparing to enter her Senior year at Baltimore City College High School, she is equipped with the ability to apply much of what she is learning (that to a teenager could easily seem like useless information) to her every day experiences making her educational experience less an exercise in amassing information and more an opportunity to gain knowledge that will prepare her to successfully navigate her world."

– Heidi Paremski, parent of former student of TRT Ryan Kaiser