Lesson Plan Abstract

LESSON TITLE: Designing Your Perfect Park

LESSON TOPIC: Design, Site Planning

PURPOSE OF LESSON:
This lesson introduces students to the role of landscape architects in shaping a city's green space. After a brief overview of the concepts of map scales and view perspectives, students are presented with a group challenge to plan a new city park. They will have to use critical thinking, communication, and analysis skills to stay within budget, create circulation, arrange programmatic elements, and work as a team.

KEYWORDS: Design, Site Planning, Budgeting, Parks, Scale, Programming, Green Space, Circulation

TARGET GRADES: 8th to 9th Grade

DURATION: 1.5 hours

STUDENT RATIO: 1:5 Teacher to Student Ratio

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT:
- 8.5 x 11 Budget Chart
- 11 x 17 Base Map (1 sheet)
- 11 x 17 Site Features (2 sheets)
- Scissors
- Rulers
- Markers, crayons, color pencils
- Glue
- Smart Board with Internet Access

PREPARATION:
- Read through lesson plan
- Print one 8.5 x 11 budget chart per group
- Print one 11 x 17 base map per group
- Print both 11 x 17 site feature sheets per group
- Have YouTube video queued
Lesson Plan Outline

WARM UP (15 MIN):
• Give a brief overview of the profession of landscape architecture and the types of projects a landscape architect works on.
• Introduce yourself and explain what you do as a landscape architect.
• Explain the term green space
• Go around the room and ask students to say their name and what their favorite green space is

PRACTICE (15 MIN):
• Sort students into groups of 4 or 5
• Pass out one 11 x 17 base map per group
• Show YouTube video on scale: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_YH1AAiKH0
• Have students use rulers to measure out a line on the base map and accurately convert it to its real-life length
• Pull up Google Maps on the Smart Board
• Using Google Maps and Street View, explain plan view vs elevation

THE CHALLENGE (30 - 45 MIN):
• Pass out site feature sheets to each group
• Present students with the challenge:
  o The Mayor has decided to spend $100 on a new park in the city
  o The base map provided is the future site of the park
  o Site features each have a certain cost, so students must decide what they would like to budget for in their plan
  o Each plan must have a minimum of 3 trees and 3 benches
  o Each plan must have a continuous path (drawn in marker) that provides access to and from the park
• Adults will float around to answer any questions the students might have
• Students are encouraged to color in the site features and use any graphic rendering style they wish
• Students are also allowed to brainstorm their own site features they would like to include, but they must barter a price with the Mayor (represented by the landscape architect)

PRESENTATIONS (15 - 20 MIN):
• Have each group present their plan and explain why they chose to spend their budget on certain site features
• Encourage critical thinking regarding the placement of certain features and the circulation of the site
Try to help the students imagine what the space would feel like if they were experiencing it in real life as opposed to plan view.

Have groups discuss what it was like working as a team. Explain that landscape architects often coordinate with professionals in other fields.

Wrap up the discussions with some final thoughts and encourage the students to explore the spatial arrangement of their own favorite green spaces.

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Document the activity with photos and video clips.
WARM UP (15 MIN):
Introduce yourself and explain your relationship to landscape architecture (professional, student, professor, etc.). Ask the students to raise their hands if they know what a landscape architect is. Ask some students to share what they think landscape architects are, even if they are just guessing. Explain the definition and roles of a landscape architect. ASLA gives the following description: “Landscape architects analyze, plan, design, manage, and nurture the built and natural environments. Landscape architects have a significant impact on communities and quality of life. They design parks, campuses, streetscapes, trails, plazas, and other projects that help define a community.” This is a good statement to start with, but feel free to expand on this with your own personal experiences. Show examples of spaces designed by landscape architects, varying from simple to more elaborate.

Explain what the term greenspace means. The EPA defines green space as “land that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs, or other vegetation” that can provide recreational activities. Examples of green space include parks, community gardens, and cemeteries. Go around the room and have each student say their name and their favorite green space. If student are unable to think of a space they like, try asking them what their dream green space would have. You can also go back to your examples of spaces designed by landscape architects and have the students discuss the features they like/dislike.

PRACTICE (15 MIN):
Count students off into groups of 4 or 5, depending on class size. Give each group a copy of the 11 x 17 base map. Point out map scale at bottom of base map. Explain that this map shown on paper, is scaled down from the site in real life. To help explain this, pull up this YouTube video to play for the students: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_YH1AAiKH0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_YH1AAiKH0). Ask the students which kind of map scale they think is used on the base map. After the video ends, ask students to use their ruler to measure out the eastern boundary line of the site. Help any students that are unsure of cardinal directions by explaining the north arrow next to the graphic scale. Once, they have measured the line with their rulers, tell them that they can use the graphic scale to convert the length into real life units. This is a somewhat difficult concept to grasp your first time, so be sure to wrap up the activity by having students follow you through the process and explaining how you got the answer you did. Feel free to show examples of how a scale is shown on drawings.

Next, pull up Google Maps on the smart board. Show the students the building/school that they are in or pick a nearby park/playground they are familiar with. Using the aerial view and Google Street view, explain plan versus elevation view. It is helpful to explain that most landscape architecture plans are shown in plan view. If time allows, students can request certain locations (like the Statue of Liberty or another iconic place) to be shown in plan and elevation view in Google Maps.
THE CHALLENGE (30 - 45 MIN):
Pass out site feature sheets to each group. Explain that these site features are all at the same scale as the base map and that this exercise uses a graphic scale, as opposed to a verbal scale. Present each group with the following challenge:

The Mayor has approached your group of newly licensed landscape architects to design the site plan for a new city park. He has $150 of city funding to spend on the park. The base map provided is the future site of the park. The other hand-outs provided are the possible site features with their associated costs. Each park must have at minimum: 5 trees, 3 benches, and one continuous path (drawn in marker) that provides access to and from the park. Creativity is encouraged. You can color in the site features however you like. Feel free to brainstorm with your group for any additional site features. You may barter with the Mayor to establish a price for the new site feature. You can use the budgeting chart to help keep track of your spending. Think hard about what you think makes a green space successful.

Adults will float around to answer any questions the students have during the challenge. Have fun acting as the Mayor and bartering the prices for new site features. As a design professional, you can help the students:

- Learn basic rendering concepts, such as color theory and line weights
- Understand how different programmatic elements relate to each other
- Establish a circulation to the site and understand how people will move throughout
- Keep budget in mind as they design (A budgeting hand-out is included if students would like to calculate and organize their finances)

PRESENTATIONS (15 - 20 MIN):
Have each group present their plan for the park and explain why they chose to spend their budget on certain site features. Use these talking points to help steer the discussion:

- How do you imagine people walking through the site?
- What is each group member’s favorite feature of the park?
- How did your group work together to decide on what your park would look like? (This is a good time to mention how often landscape architects work on teams with professionals in other fields like civil engineering, planning, and construction).
- Did your group have to make any sacrifices in their design? Was it because of budget or inadequate space? How did it feel to work under a budget?
- Would you want to go to this park? What would you want to do here?

As they present, have students think critically about circulation, programming, spatial awareness, and the decision-making process. Share the few key take-aways from the lesson to
wrap up. Encourage the students to further explore what makes their favorite green spaces such great places to be in. Ask them to think about they would add to their favorite green spaces to make them better.

DOCUMENTATION:
Make sure you are documenting the activity with photos, video clips, or even drawings some of the students may want to leave with you. It is important to see how well the lesson went, but more important to show how the students were able to learn about the profession of landscape architecture and had fun in the process. FLAA encourages teachers and professionals to share their experiences and documents for future uses of the lesson plan.

CREATED BY: Kate Noel
COMPANY/UNIVERSITY: University of Florida
LOCATION: Gainesville, FL

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