

Communities Grow Greener When Young People Have a Voice: Building Alliances for Place-Based Learning and Civic Action

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When we talk about civic engagement for young people who are too young to vote, what do we mean?

considering
social and
environmental
responsibility
when making
decisions



© Lynn M. Lickteig

Whittier Elementary School, Boulder, CO – planning ' playgrounds with nature for children of all abilities '

investigating how
community
spaces and local
environments
function, and
problem-solving
issues



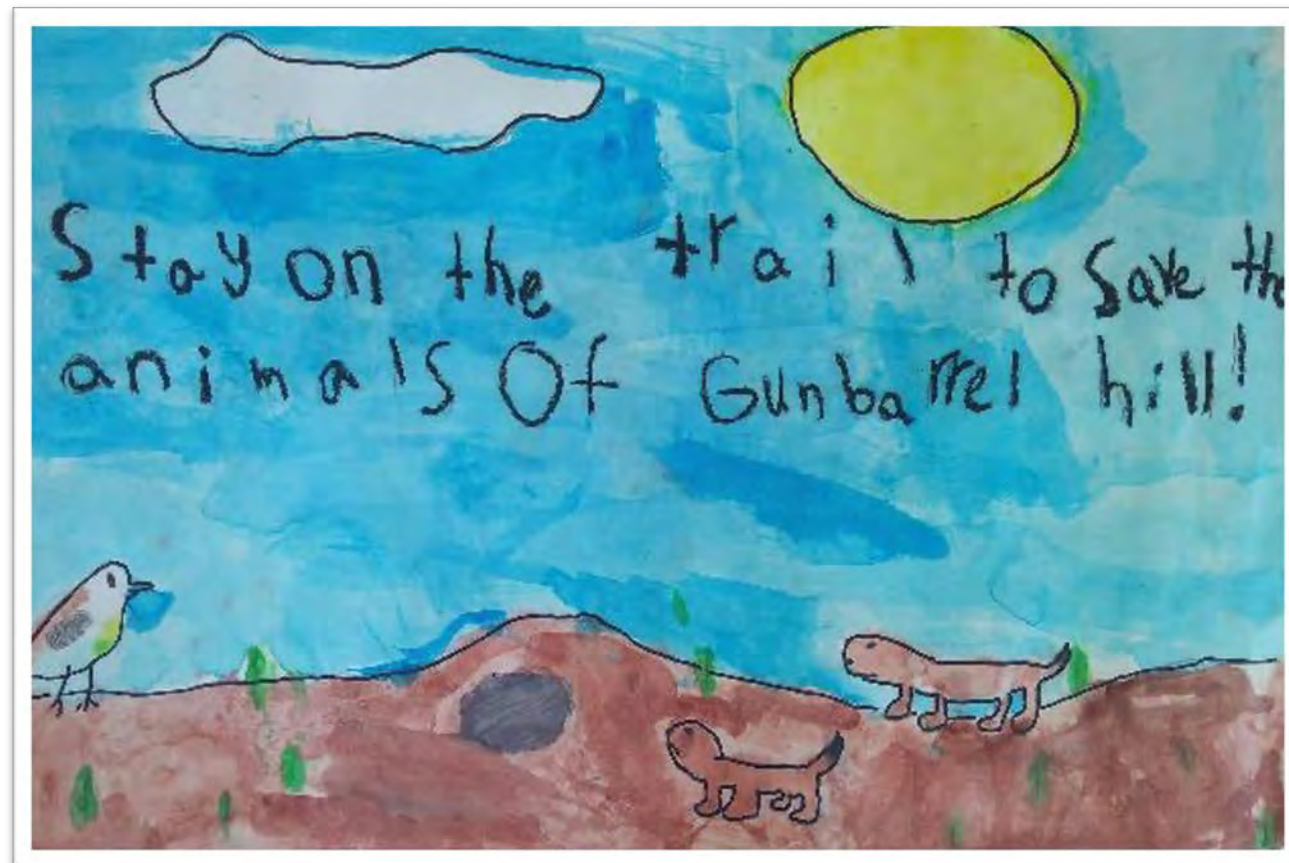
Students in applied science elective at Casey Middle School, Boulder, CO study creek ecology before making recommendations for redesign of the Boulder Civic Area, which includes the creek.

voicing ideas to
decision-makers and
other people in the
community through
speaking, writing or
the arts



painting murals depicting child-friendly communities - artist in the Society for Creative Aging, environmental design student, and students at Columbine Elementary School, Boulder, CO

educating others
so they can make
choices that
benefit their
communities and
the environment



drawing by fourth grader in Heatherwood Elementary School, Boulder, CO for the Department of Open Space & Mountain Parks website and trail signage

offering
community
service



a family nature club, Columbia Families in Nature, on a Chesapeake Bay Trust watershed exploration and education service outing



raising funds for
environmental
causes

Cleveland Metro Parks Zoo – Zoo Crew

Bark-a-palooza Dog Walk

to raise funds for livestock guard dogs for native people in a nature reserve in Tanzania



© Community Ecology Institute

participating in
groups that
improve
communities or
natural areas

Columbia Families in Nature planting trees for
Howard County Recreation & Parks, MD



Placemaking with Children and Youth

Participatory Practices For Planning Sustainable Communities



Victoria Derr, Louise Chawla, and Mara Mintzer

Victoria Derr,
Louise Chawla &
Mara Mintzer

New Village Press, 2018

416 pages

*winner of the Environmental &
Design Research Association &
Achievement Award in 2019 &*

<https://nyupress.org/9781613321003/placemaking-with-children-and-youth/>



Guidelines for Excellence
Community Engagement



NAAEE, 2017

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[https://naaee.org/eepro/publication/
community-engagement-guidelines](https://naaee.org/eepro/publication/community-engagement-guidelines)

Key Steps in Involving Young People in Local Investigations and Action to Improve Community Environments

1. Building relationships with community partners, including partnerships with under-represented communities
2. Identifying projects that serve all partners

3. Identifying and implementing participatory practices to engage young people in:

- investigating and evaluating local places and environmental issues
- sharing what they discover
- developing ideas for action
- taking action

4. Evaluating outcomes

Why is it important to invest in building partnerships that enable young people to experience civic engagement?

It is difficult for teachers to do civic projects alone— they need allies.



Environmental agencies and organizations want to connect with young people—schools and out-of-school programs are places to find them.

English-language learning classes head out with their teachers, Growing Up Boulder staff, and staff " from the Boulder, CO planning department to identify key resources for 15-minute neighborhoods "

When environmental organizations and local governments form partnerships with schools and out-of-school programs, they can better serve the diversity of their communities.



© Growing Up Boulder

Retired residents of senior housing mentored fourth graders at Flatirons Elementary School, Boulder, CO as they developed ideas to share with the city to revitalize a commercial corridor in their neighborhood.

Local, regional and global environmental problems can't be solved by individual action alone—
young people need opportunities to gain skills in collective action.



Climate strike, Denver, 2019, organized by high school students

THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations
on 20 November 1989

Text

PREAMBLE

The States Parties to the present Convention,

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations on 20 November 1959 and recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialized agencies and international organizations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth",

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("The Beijing Rules"); and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict,

Recognizing that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration,

Unofficial summary of main provisions

PREAMBLE

The preamble recalls the basic principles of the United Nations and specific provisions of certain relevant human rights treaties and proclamations. It reaffirms the fact that children, because of their vulnerability, need special care and protection, and it places special emphasis on the primary caring and protective responsibility of the family. It also reaffirms the need for legal and other protection of the child before and after birth, the importance of respect for the cultural values of the child's community, and the vital role of international cooperation in securing children's rights.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child includes civic rights.

Article 12:

The right to express views freely in all matters that affect them '

Article 13:

The right to seek, receive, and impart information of all kinds, in writing or print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice

Article 14:

The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 15:

The right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly

Young people learn how environmental decisions are made, how to work in intergenerational groups, and that their ideas can matter and make a difference.



photo by Willem van Vliet

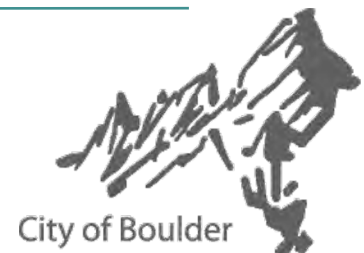
elementary school students presenting their Civic Area ideas to Boulder City Council

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is Boulder's (child and youth-friendly city initiative (



Vision: To inspire communities around the US and the world to adopt a child-friendly lens while planning and developing communities for all

Mission: To empower young people with opportunities for inclusion, influence and deliberation on local issues that affect their lives



About Growing Up Boulder



- Founded in 2009
- Serves ages 0-18, mentored by university students
- Engaged 6,500 children and youth on 100+ projects locally
- 50% or more of young people from historically marginalized groups
- Reached 2.5 million people globally
- Designed the US's first child-friendly city map with kids

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

A treaty ratified in 1989 by all countries except the United States



Child Friendly Cities Initiative

Today, the initiative reaches approximately 30 million children in 40 countries worldwide.

Austria



© Christian Schwier / Fotolia

Korea



© UNICEF Korea

United Arab Emirates

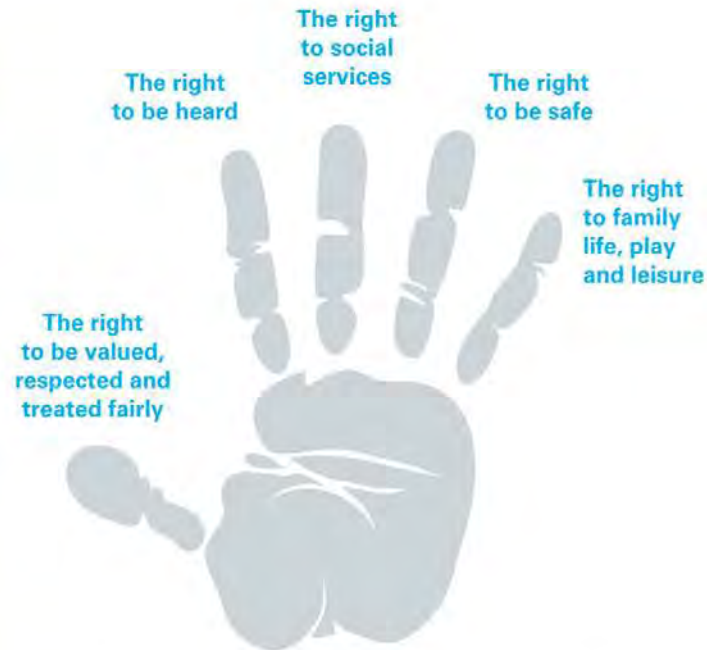


© Sharjah Girl Guides

Mozambique



© UNICEF Mozambique



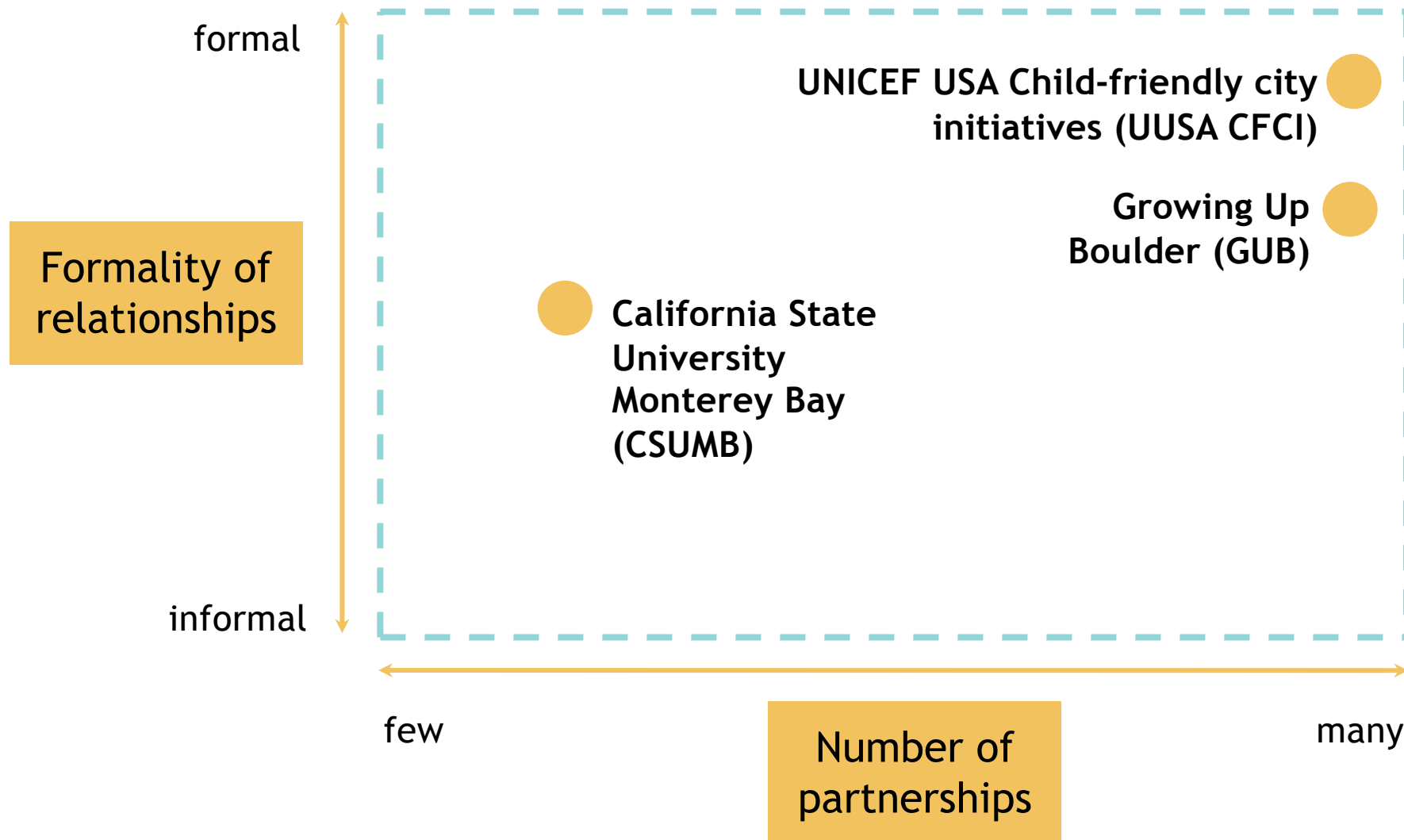
© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Growing Up Boulder - Structure

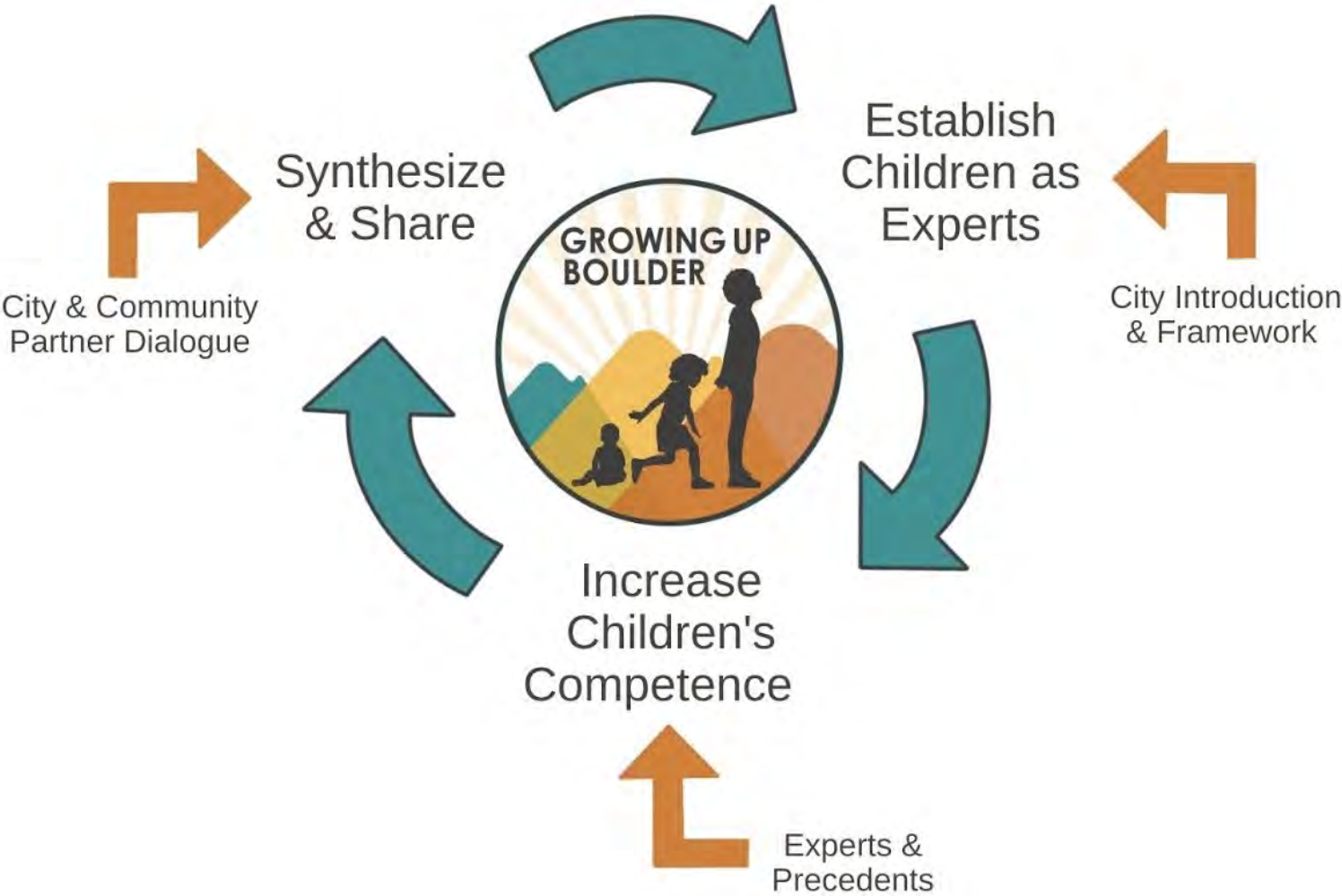
- Four primary partners with an MOU: Growing Up Boulder, University of Colorado, City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District
- Steering Committee: ~15 organizations per year, 60 partners overall
- Executive committee → board
- *Small start to established initiative*



Child and youth participatory planning initiatives:

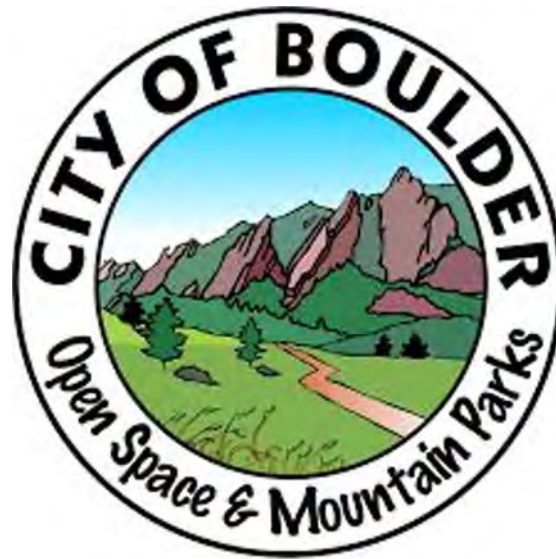


Growing Up Boulder - Model



Gunbarrel Hill integrated site project (with a GUB focus on the Woods Brothers property)

2020-21



Why this project for a case study?

- Built upon old and new partnerships
- Children became ecostewards
- Employed place-based learning
- Elevated children's voices and led to civic action
- Occurred during the pandemic

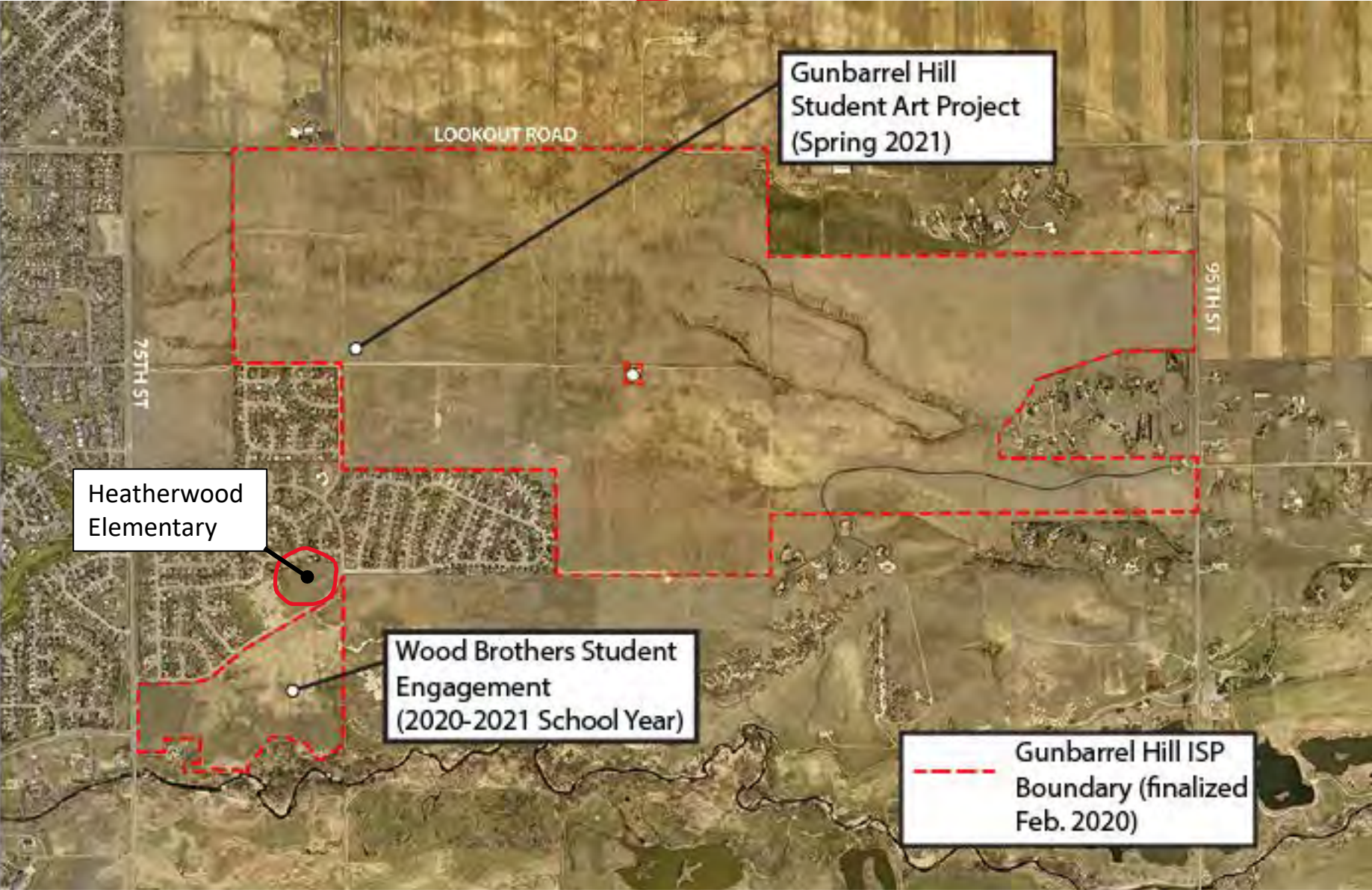


A three-part, year-long inquiry

- OSMP/GUB Wood Brothers
 - Small-scale. “This is your backyard; how do you want to discover nature in this area?”
 - Larger-scale. “What kind of outdoor learning/outdoor classroom experiences would you like to have?”
- OSMP Gunbarrel Hill: Site specific. The idea: Trail signage for land restoration
- Indigenous peoples of Colorado unit in 4th grade curriculum



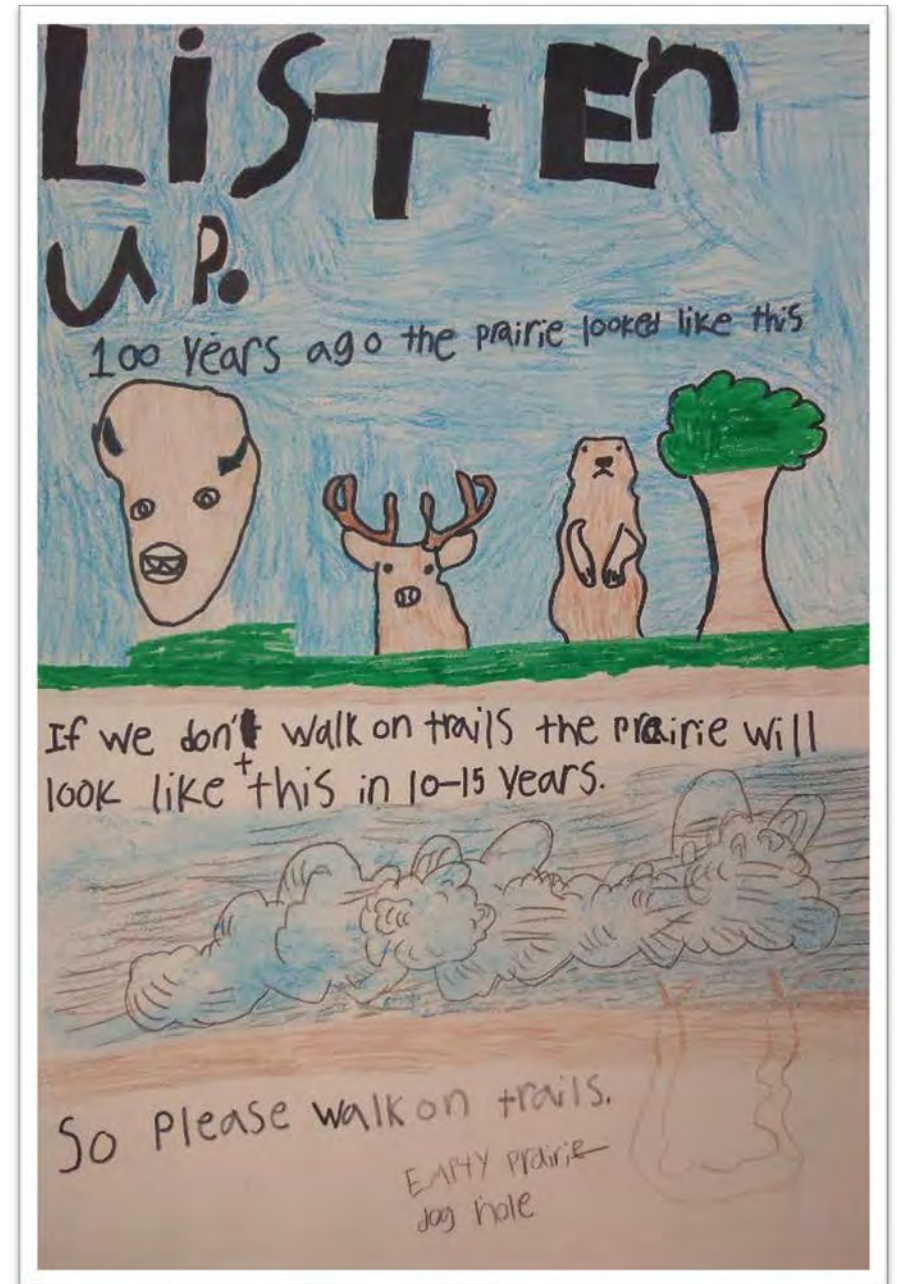
Woods Brothers Project



Methods used from our book:

Placemaking with Children and Youth: Participatory Practices for Planning Sustainable Communities

- Site visit and PEP
- Research
- Art
- Video production
- Essay writing
- Interviewing experts
- Sharing out to decision-makers



What kinds of nature discovery experiences do you want to have on the Wood Brothers property?



- Wildlife Viewing Stations/Treehouse Observation Tower
- Designated Trails to Preserve & Protect with Interpretive Signage
- Opportunities to Explore – Structured and Unstructured
- Opportunities to Play and Build
- Picnic Tables, Shelters & Benches
- Maintain Sledding Hill

What kind of outdoor learning/outdoor classroom experiences would you like to have?



**NATURALIST
PROGRAMMING**



**TAKE OUR CLASSROOM
OUTDOORS (OUTDOOR
CLASSROOM)**



**NATURAL
AMPHITHEATER**



**WILDLIFE VIEWING
STATIONS/TREEHOUSE
OBSERVATION TOWER**



**AMENITIES FOR
OUTDOOR LEARNING**

Educational Video by Eden



Qualitative evaluation

What was your favorite part of working with Open Space and Mountain Parks and Growing Up Boulder and learning about Indigenous Peoples?



Kids' answers:

- “Going to the sites - it was easier to learn when you are actually there”
- “Everything!!!” (multiple kids)

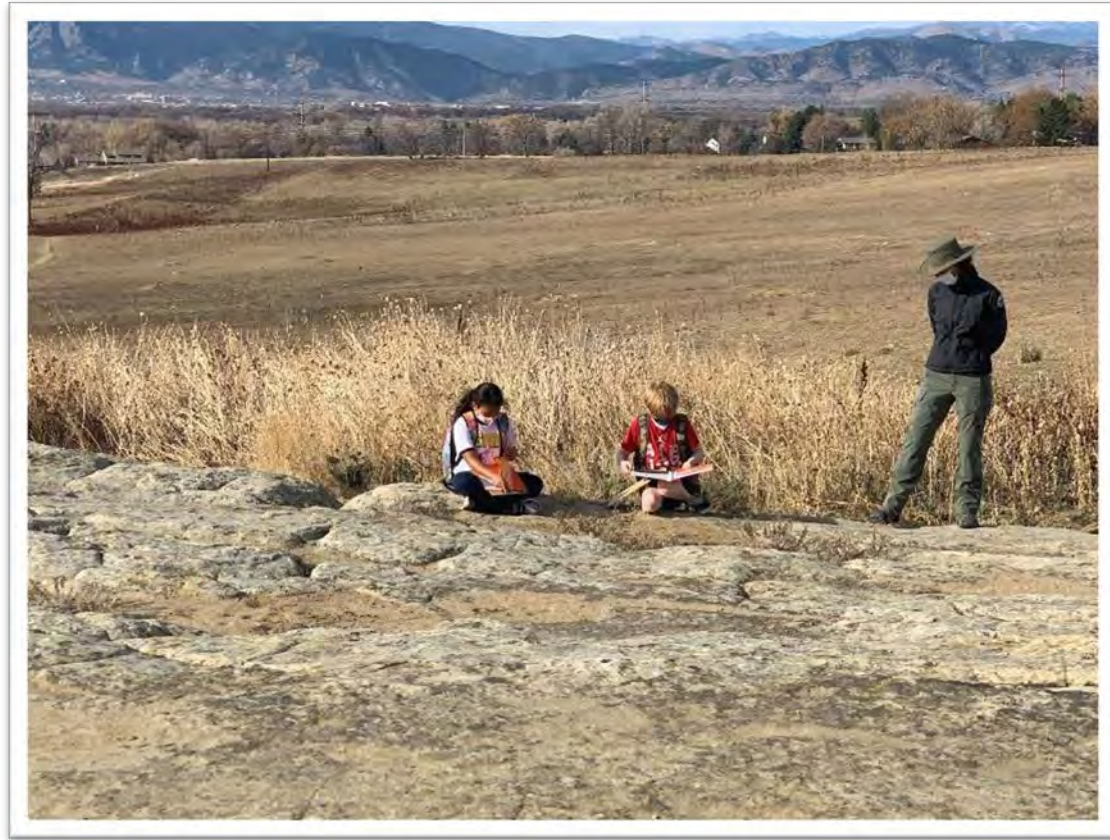
How did it make you feel to give your input to OSMP about Wood Brothers and Gunbarrel Hill?

Kids' answers:

- “I felt like I was saving the world.”
- “I felt like people really listened to me and respected my opinion - it was cherished.”



4th grade student reflection



One of my greatest lessons I learned was that you can learn outside of school AND without using any electronics! All you need are your eyes, ears, and skin.

Teacher evaluation



“...the help that [Growing Up Boulder gave] connecting us to resources was beyond any program we have ever worked with. Staff was also helpful in connecting the project to our curriculum...”

-Cathy Z.

OSMP partner evaluation



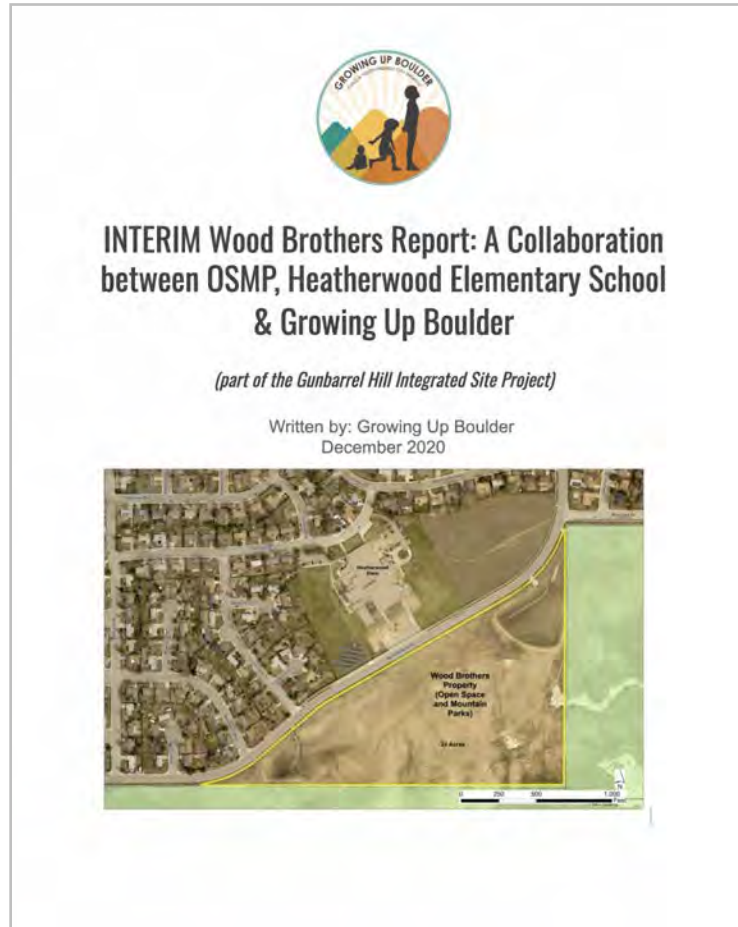
“...Your work is SO influential to getting youth voices involved in city projects; I will be forever changed as a professional...[I] am excited to figure out how to make the students’ ideas come to fruition on the ground. Thank you!!”

How will the children's input be used?



Signs created from kids' art

Impact at individual level & site-specific level



Report used for city planning

Impact at systems level



Website and video

Impact at global level: supports United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Growing Up Boulder - Trainings

- Participatory Planning with Young People
- A child-friendly city map: how and why to make one in your community

Visit www.growingupboulder.org/services or contact info@growingupboulder.org





Building Partnerships

Elkhorn Slough Foundation, Hall District Elementary School,
California State University Monterey Bay



Elkhorn Slough: Wetland of International Importance

Photo: Elkhorn Slough Foundation



Elkhorn Slough: Wetland of International Importance

Photo: Elkhorn Slough Foundation

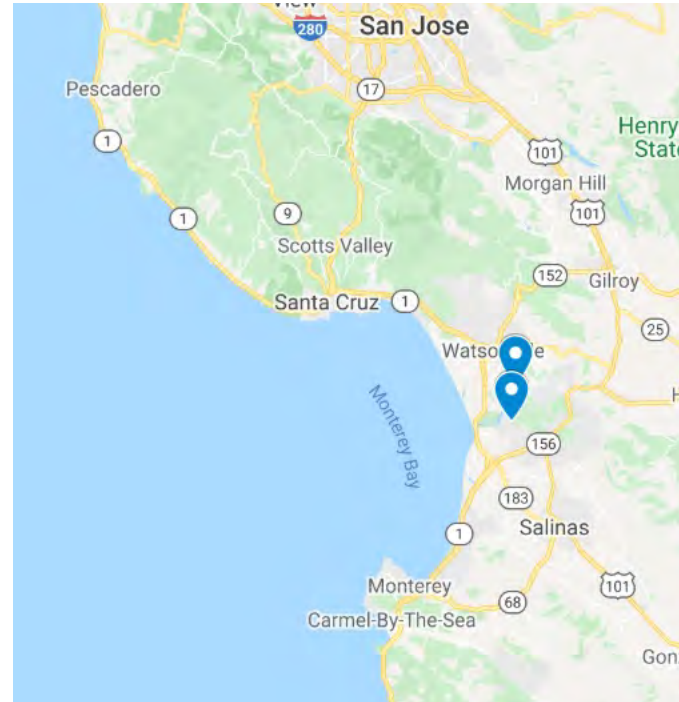




Photo Credit - Wyatt Henry

Phase 1

Two CSUMB student capstone projects



Photo Credit - Mason Fernandez

Junior Rangers



5. What does a ranger do?

It tells us about the ~~area~~ habitat

6. I feel like a ranger of Carneros Creek when I:

give a tour to kids.

My favorite memory from the outdoor classroom is: seen the bees
because it was cool seen them come in and out.

Draw your memory here:

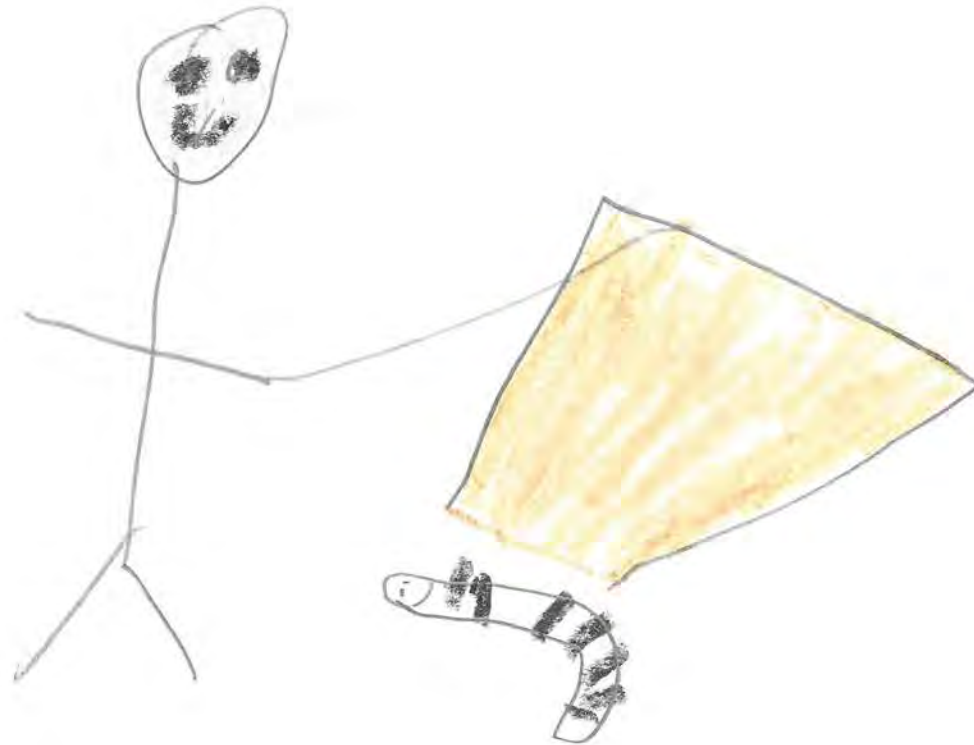


First Name: Daniela

Grade: 4th

My favorite memory from the outdoor classroom is: When I saw a snake
because It was black and yellow and it was my first

Draw your memory here: ^{Time seeing one.}



First Name: Raymon

Grade: 3rd



My favorite memory from the outdoor classroom is: Sitting on the log
because it was fun
Draw your memory here:

The drawing shows a log with a sun and two figures. The log is drawn with brown scribbles, the sun is yellow and orange, and the figures are simple line drawings. The background is blue and white, suggesting a sky or water.

First Name: Daniel Grade: 4





Space for Dreaming

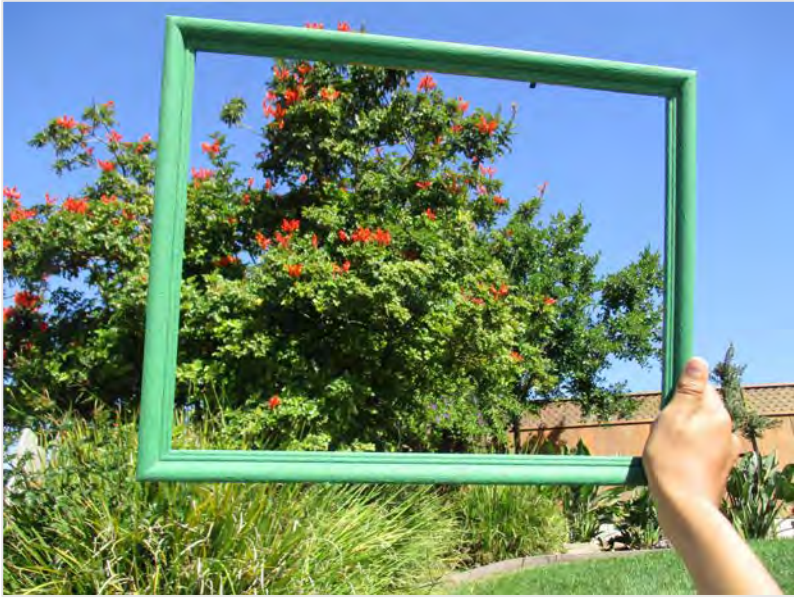


California State University
MONTEREY BAY

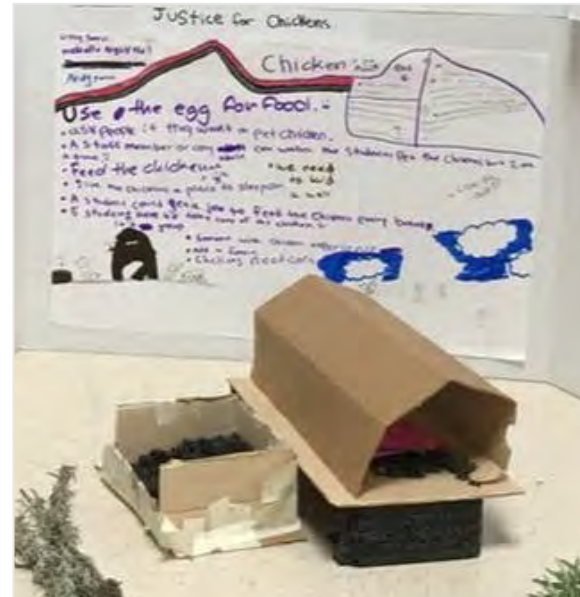


Building Partnerships

California State University Monterey Bay and Los Arboles Middle School



An elective class – with 3 student assistants



An elective class – with 3 student assistants

A capstone class – with 24 undergraduates



Teach with physical activities



Make Connections



Students in charge of learning





Which Idea Do You Like?

1. Think about where our water goes. 2. Litter in storm drain = litter in the bay.

1. Think about where our water goes.

2. Litter in storm drain = litter in the bay.

3. All drains lead to the bay.

3. All drains lead to the bay.

Pick 1, 2, 3, or None	Your Name	What is 1 thing you like about the idea?



Student-Led Tours

“We like to hang out in this area with our friends before breaking out into groups.”

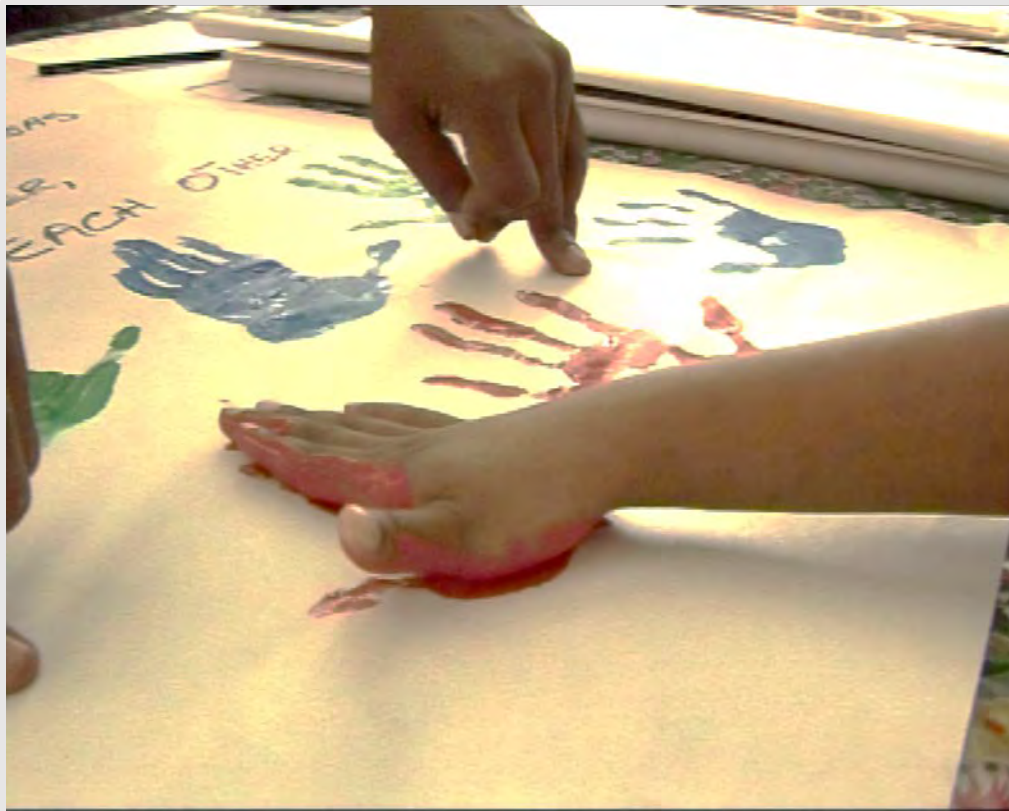
This is a nice place and would like to see more like these around campus”



“We are really proud of our trophies and our painted lockers.”

Inside those windows is our library.”

Collaborative Agreements & Planning



"I'm so proud of myself!"

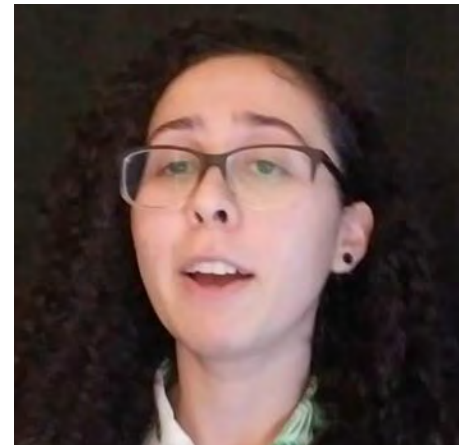


"I feel connected to my community"



"Helped me learn how to use all types of techniques that will help me later on in life"

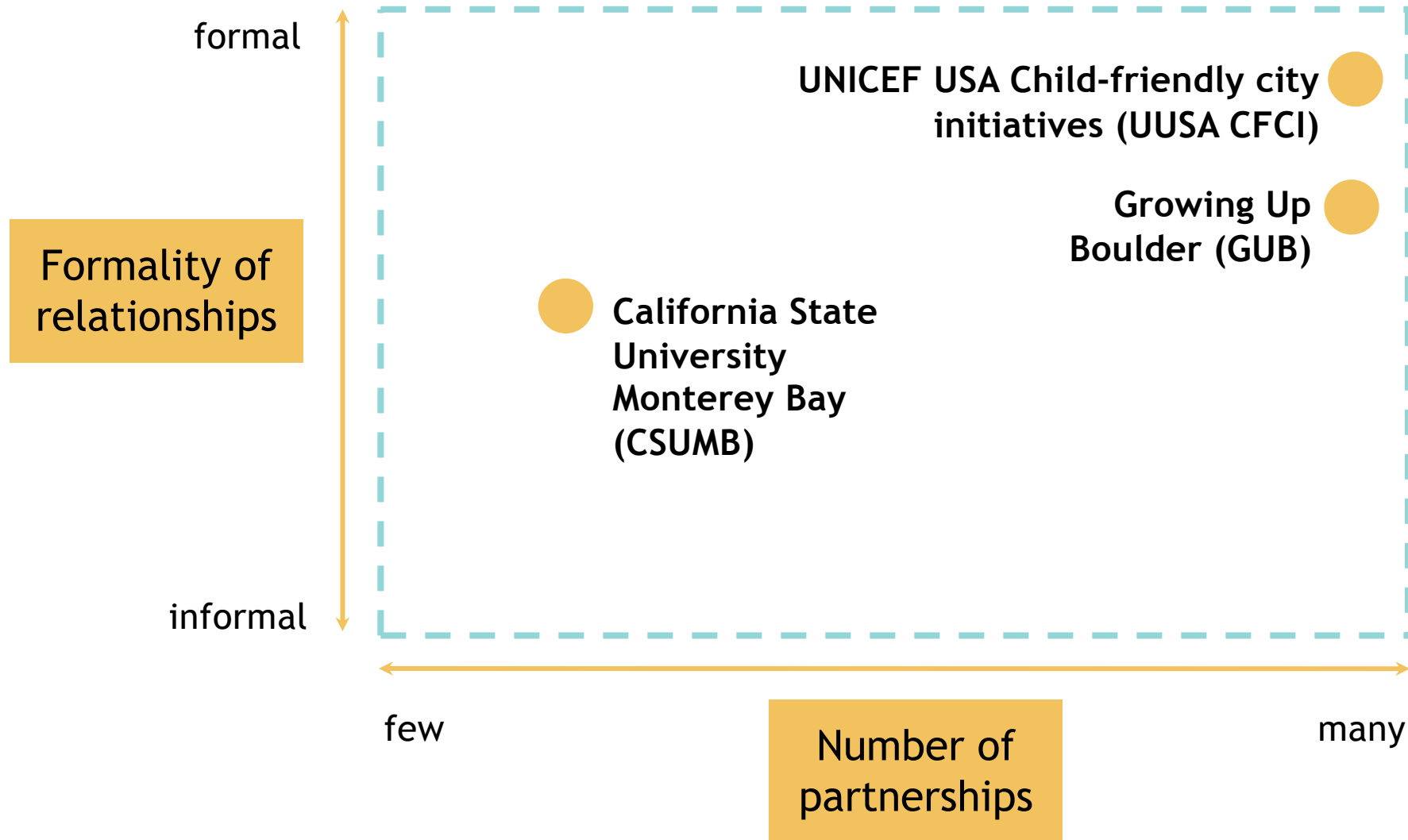




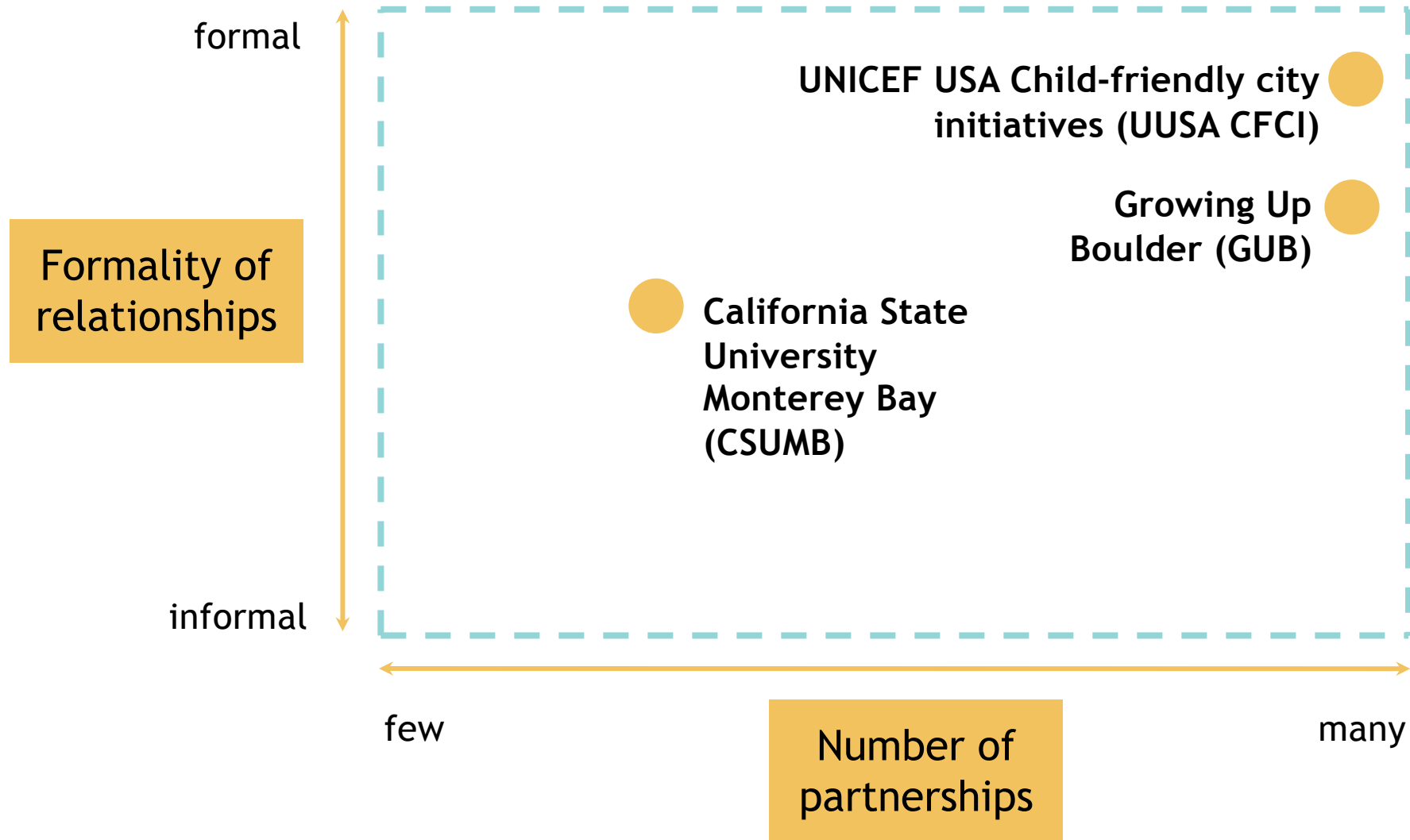
Kianni's
Reflections



Child and youth participatory planning initiatives



Child and youth participatory planning initiatives



EE in the
1980s



EE in the
2020s

- intensified threats to the planet's life systems
- opportunities to learn collective action are urgent
- new emphasis on social justice and inclusion

planetary
conditions under
which humans
evolved



an uncertain future

constructive hope—

hope that looks risks in the face and finds meaning in action, escaping denial, paralyzing despair and apathy

Chawla, L. (2020). Childhood nature connection and constructive hope: A review of research on connecting with nature and coping with environmental loss. *People and Nature*, 2, 619-642. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10128>

Ways to help young people build constructive hope—

- Create safe spaces where young people can share environmental emotions and ideas
- Enable young people to learn what they can do as individuals that can have positive impacts
- Show young people that they are not alone, that other people share their concerns and they are taking action too
- Enable young people to take collective action together