

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND HEALTH

Lesson Plan 1: What Makes a Community Healthy?

Goal: Participants will learn about what is and isn't healthy in their community and develop some ideas about what they could do to fix the unhealthy problem/s.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson plan, participants will be able to:

- Learn about indicators to measure health at different levels
- Identify healthy and unhealthy locations in your community
- List some ideas on how to improve the unhealthy areas

Materials:

- Colored pencils/pens (green and red)
- Tape for hanging maps
- Optional: Xeroxed maps of your community – one for each student

Time Required: 40-90 minutes (see note below in number 3)

Background:

The mapping part of this exercise was first developed by Paulina Lopez of South Park for a youth project as part of a community-based participatory research effort (Gould & Cummings, *Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis: Seattle, Washington, 2013*). The mapping exercise is useful because it assists the youth in: 1. Identifying community problems; 2. Identifying where the problems are occurring on a map that others can see; and 3. Prioritizing where she/he can see her/himself taking action. It probably comes as no surprise that youth's perspective of a healthy environment focuses on different places than adults. For example, youth want safe, clean places to "chill" and often prioritize parks when considering what constitutes a healthy environment.

Suggested Preparation for the Facilitator/Teacher:

Information about the original exercise can be found at:

Gould, L., & Cummings, B.J. (March 2013). Duwamish Valley Cumulative Health Impacts Analysis. Seattle, WA: Just Health Action and Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition/Technical Advisory Group. <http://justhealthaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Duwamish-Valley-Cumulative-Health-Impacts-Analysis-Seattle-WA.pdf>.

Note: For the full report, a poster, and appendices go to:

<http://justhealthaction.org/resources/jha-publications/>

Word Wall:

Indicator: "a sign that shows the condition or existence of something"

(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indicator>). For example, blood pressure is used as an indicator for individual health.

Activity Instructions:

1) What makes something healthy and how do you measure it? (10 minutes)

Facilitated discussion with a progression of the following questions:

On the board list these ideas in a table with three columns (see below).

	Healthy/unhealthy?	How do you know? (indicators)
Individual		
School		
Neighborhood		

Prompts:

- a) What do you do to make yourself healthy/unhealthy? How do you measure it? From this discussion, the group will say things like diet, exercise, don't do drugs....). The second question (third column) will identify individual-level health indicators such as body weight, blood pressure, heart rate, etc. These are called *indicators*.
- b) What is healthy or unhealthy about your school? How do you measure it? From this discussion, participants will identify indicators such as facility quality, good or bad teachers, graduation rates, amount of graffiti, amount of bullying, etc.
- c) What is healthy or unhealthy about your neighborhood? How do you measure it? From this discussion, participants will identify indicators such as amount of trash, pollution, gangs, places to "chill," etc.

Note: Indicators to measure your individual health versus school health versus neighborhood health are different, although some indicators in the school and community may overlap.

2) Mapping the health of your community (20-30 minutes)

Provide regular, green and red pencils

- a) Community map
 - i) Give each student (or pair of students) a copy of an 8 ½ x 11 map of a community that all are familiar with.
 - ii) If students are from multiple areas, each student can draw a picture/sketch of their community and then proceed as described below
- b) What makes your community healthy/unhealthy?

Ask:

 - i) What makes your community HEALTHY?
 - ii) Using a green pencil, draw a picture and/or write on the map the activities, actions, physical spaces that makes your community healthy and a happy place to live.
 - iii) What makes your community UNHEALTHY?
 - iv) Using a red pencil, draw a picture and/or write on the map the activities, actions, physical spaces that makes your community unhealthy and damages/hurts the community.
- c) Present your community: Students present healthy and unhealthy aspects of their community/ies.

d) What are some similarities and differences?

3) Action (10-50 minutes)

You are the community’s youth ambassadors, and you are going to take action to improve some of the unhealthy problems in your community. Using your maps, make a list of the issues that concern you in column 1, what are possible solutions in column 2, and then rank how easy they would be to fix in Column 3. Star or highlight one or two that you are most interested in working on.

Unhealthy Issue (from maps)	Action What could you do to fix the problem? (there may be several solutions)	Action (easy, medium, hard)

Note: There are two alternatives to doing Part 3. The quick alternative (10 minutes) is intended as a set-up for the rest of the course’s ultimate goal – teaching youth to take action to improve the health of a community. The longer alternative (50 minutes) can be done later in the course when the youth develop an action project *after* Lesson Plan 8.