

## Lesson Plan Abstract

**LESSON TITLE:** *Designing with Diversity: Intro to Landscape Architecture*

**LESSON TOPIC:** *Landscape Design, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*

**PURPOSE OF LESSON:**

This activity will introduce participants to landscape design through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students will first be asked to freely design a park with no restrictions. They will then be asked to take their designs and retrofit them into a real site that they will visit and will be given a fictional character that they must design their space to accommodate for. Through this activity, students will be given a chance to experience the design process, as well as challenge them to think about the needs of diverse users. By the end of this activity, students will have a base understanding of what landscape architecture is, how to design an outdoor space, and the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion in design. Total time needed for this activity is about 3 hours and 45 minutes.

**KEYWORDS:** *Diversity, Community, Design, Circulation, Context, Drawing, Sketching*

**TARGET GRADES:** *3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

**DURATION:** *About 3 hours and 45 minutes*

**STUDENT RATIO:** *1:5 Teacher to Student Ratio*

**MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT:**

1. *Base Plans of existing site that students will redesign (18x24 inches target)*
  - Provide enough context on the site plan that students can recognize the site, include major streets and landmarks if applicable (make sure to label as much information on the plan as possible)
2. Blank 18x24-inch paper for students to draw initial designs
3. Pencils
4. Erasers
5. Markers
6. Tape
7. Glue
8. Scissors

**PREPARATION:**

1. *Create slideshow presentation on what landscape architecture is*
2. *Research sites that are close by the area that you will be hosting the students – preferably within walking distance. Part of the activity includes taking the students to the site, so proximity would be beneficial. When choosing a site, try to choose one that many of the students would be somewhat familiar with.*
3. *Print off all base maps and any other materials*
4. *Go through the exercise ahead of time to provide students with an example of a design that they can reference*
5. *Become familiar with all the character cards ahead of time and brainstorm ways to help students translate their needs into physical solutions*
6. *If you are able to obtain design drawings of the site, that is strongly encouraged to show the students!*

# Lesson Plan Outline

- 1. Introductions** (15 minutes)
  - Introduce yourself and what your title is. Explain the type of work that you do as a landscape architect, designer, or planner.
  - Have students introduce themselves and have them do an icebreaker
- 2. Presentation** (15 minutes)
  - The purpose of this presentation is to give a very brief overview of landscape architecture and the types of projects that we work on
  - Include a variety of project types (campus, garden design, residential, etc.)
- 3. Free Design** (30 minutes)
  - Instructors will prompt students to freely design a park in plan view without any boundaries or restrictions in order to create a conceptual design
  - Instructors will give a very brief tutorial on how to draw landscape elements
  - As students draw, instructors will circulate to help guide students on drawing techniques
- 4. Site Visit** (45 minutes)
  - Once the students are done drawing out their concepts, instructors will introduce and take students to the site that they will be redesigning and applying their concept to.
  - During this time, students will be encouraged to take note of elements that they like about the space, and elements that they don't.
  - Instructors and students will take pictures of the site for reference.
- 5. Introducing the Design Prompt** (15 minutes)
  - Back at the original location, each student will be assigned a character that has individual criteria based on their cultural, religious, physical, etc. background.
  - Students will then be asked to give their character a name and take their conceptual park design and fit it into the site that they just visited, while addressing the specific needs of their character.
- 6. Design Time** (1 hour)
  - During this time, students will work to draw out their designs for their new space
  - Encourage students to think about circulation, context, and most importantly, their characters' needs.
- 7. Presentations** (40 minutes)
  - Students will display their work and present it to the volunteers and instructors.
  - Instructors will then lead a discussion about what the students learned about landscape architecture, design, and diversity.
- 8. Documentation**
  - Document the activity with photos and video clips

# Lesson Plan

## *Designing with Diversity: Intro to Landscape Architecture*

### **1. Introductions** (15 minutes)

The day has come for the activity to finally begin! Greet your students and their families as they walk in. To begin, introduce yourself as well as any other instructors or volunteers that will be helping throughout the day. Take a few minutes to explain what you do as a design professional (where you work, what type of projects, areas you work in, etc.). Then, have the students introduce themselves. At this point, you can introduce a quick icebreaker that will get them thinking about landscape architecture. Have every student name their favorite outdoor space and why it is their favorite. This can act as a good segue into the next segment.

### **2. Presentation** (15 minutes)

For this presentation, the purpose is to give a very brief overview of landscape architecture and the types of projects that we work on. Begin with asking students if they have ever heard of landscape architecture or have an idea of what it is. Once you have briefly discussed, show examples of the types of work that landscape architects do. It is strongly encouraged to use local examples that the students will recognize. For example, when explaining that one of the types of projects we work on is riverfronts, include an example of a riverfront project in their area (if applicable) and ask students if they are familiar with the project. Project types to include are (and not limited to): Riverfronts, Campus Planning, Small Scale Residential (Yards), Large Scale Residential (Subdivisions and Communities), Ecological Restoration, and Streetscape Design. If students mentioned specific projects during the icebreaker that fit in these categories, make sure to point that out. An important element to note is that landscape architecture is interdisciplinary, and we act as mediators between engineers, scientists, architects, planners and more.



### **3. Free Design** (30 minutes)

During this time, instructors will prompt students to freely design a park in plan view without any boundaries or restrictions in order to create a conceptual design. The purpose here is to let their creative energy run free and uninhibited. In order to help guide the students, the instructors will give a very brief (5 min max) tutorial on how to draw elements in plan view. Explain to students what plan view is and show them how to draw important landscape elements such as trees, benches, paths, and grass in plan view. Show a couple of examples of landscape drawings or pull up Google Maps of a park to get their brains going. Encourage them to think of important elements that want to have in their park such as water features, seating elements, and shade structures. Encourage them to think big and create a sense of wonder in their parks. Maybe they want to put a giant zipline, a rollercoaster, or a massive castle in their park! Let them go crazy!

### **4. Site Visit** (45 minutes)

Once the students are done drawing out their concepts, instructors will introduce students to the site that they will redesign and take them to visit it. Instructors are encouraged to choose a site that is in proximity (preferably within walking distance if conditions allow) to the place that the main activity is being held. Once at the site, encourage students to take pictures and take note of what they experience.

Questions to ask:

- What are the major elements of the site?
- Where are the major paths?
- What are people doing in the space?
- What elements do you enjoy about the space?
- What elements make you feel uneasy or do you not enjoy?
- Are there places to sit and relax?
- Are there places to gather and interact with people?
- How would you improve this space to make it more enjoyable?



##### **5. Introducing the Design Prompt (15 minutes)**

Back at the original location, each student will be assigned a character that has individual criteria based on their cultural, religious, physical, etc. background (see attached). Each of the cards feature a picture of the character as well as a brief description. The characters do not have names, so the instructors will ask the students to give their character a name. This is meant to give them a direct connection to their character and start to envision them in their newly designed space. The characters are all from diverse backgrounds and have unique needs that often are overlooked in the design process. This is the time for instructors and volunteers to check with each student and help them understand their character better if they have questions. For example, if a student is designing for a blind individual, help them put themselves into the mind of a blind person. Ask them what types of senses are they relying on? How can you design a space for a blind person? (Ex. Rely heavily on audio and tactile clues, create long pathways with minimal turns and bends, straightforward circulation, lots of plants with strong aromas to create an enriching experience outside of vision).



## CHARACTER 1

**DESCRIPTION:** 45 year-old woman with disability who works late nights at a marketing firm.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- Accessible paths
- Ample lighting along paths and sidewalks

## 6. Design Time (1 hour)

During this time, students will work to draw out their designs for their new space. To begin, instructors will briefly explain their base drawing, go over scale, context, and materials very briefly to help guide students. This would be a great time to show an example of a finished design that was done ahead of time by an instructor (or if available, a design drawing of the site that they just visited) in order to give the students a visual reference. Talk to the students about their previous concept. Does it make sense in the context of the site? Does it fit their character's needs? How will the configuration and circulation need to be rearranged in order to fit? Encourage students to change up their design. What elements should they take away and what elements should they add? Encourage them to look at photos from the site visit and imagine themselves as their character in that space. What elements would best benefit them? Have the students draw major circulation, vegetation, seating elements, shade structures, water features, and other programmatic elements. Prompt students to name their new park. Let the students reevaluate the context of the site and see if what is around the site now makes sense with their new design. Does their character need a grocery store nearby their park instead of a baseball stadium? A hospital instead of an office building? Whereas the students were very free in the first design activity, they are encouraged to be more practical in this one and seriously consider all the factors that influence their park and their character's needs.



## **7. Presentations** (40 minutes)

Congratulate all your students, they designed a new park! Help the students display all of their work, preferably pinned up (if the space allows), so that all the students and instructors can walk around the gallery of designs and give the students a taste of how designers present their work. Make sure to have the students write the name of their character on the card and the name of their new park on their drawing. Have each student present their work and prompt them to answer the following:

- Walk us through how your character experiences the space?
- How did your previous design change as you redesigned it?
- How did you address your character's specific needs in your park?
- Why did you choose the name that you gave your park?
- What is your favorite element in your park?

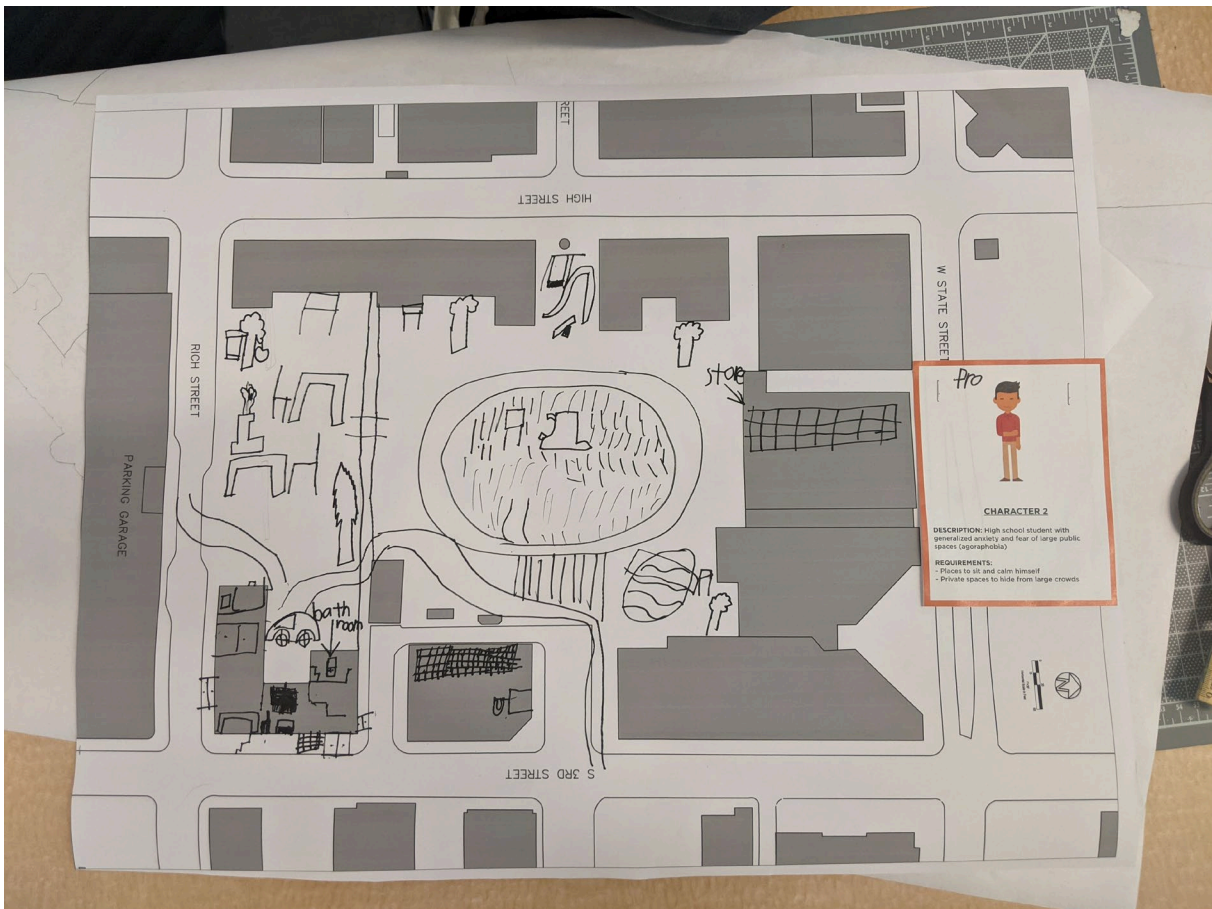
Once all students have presented, gather everyone to reflect on the day's activities. The focus here is to guide the conversation back to why landscape architecture is important and what they learned about it. Ask the students what their biggest challenge was. Was it the site? Was it the character's needs? Was it taking your concept and changing it? Was it drawing your ideas that you have in your head? Encourage students to be honest with themselves and create a space where they can express their emotions.

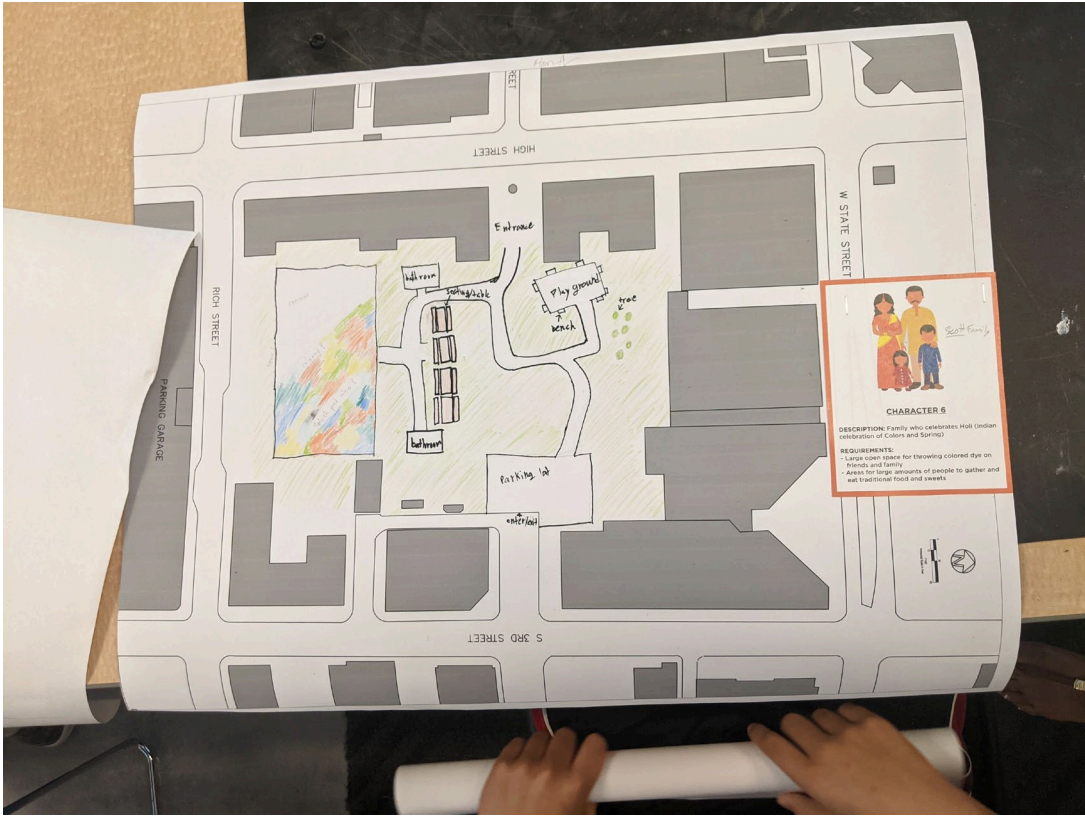
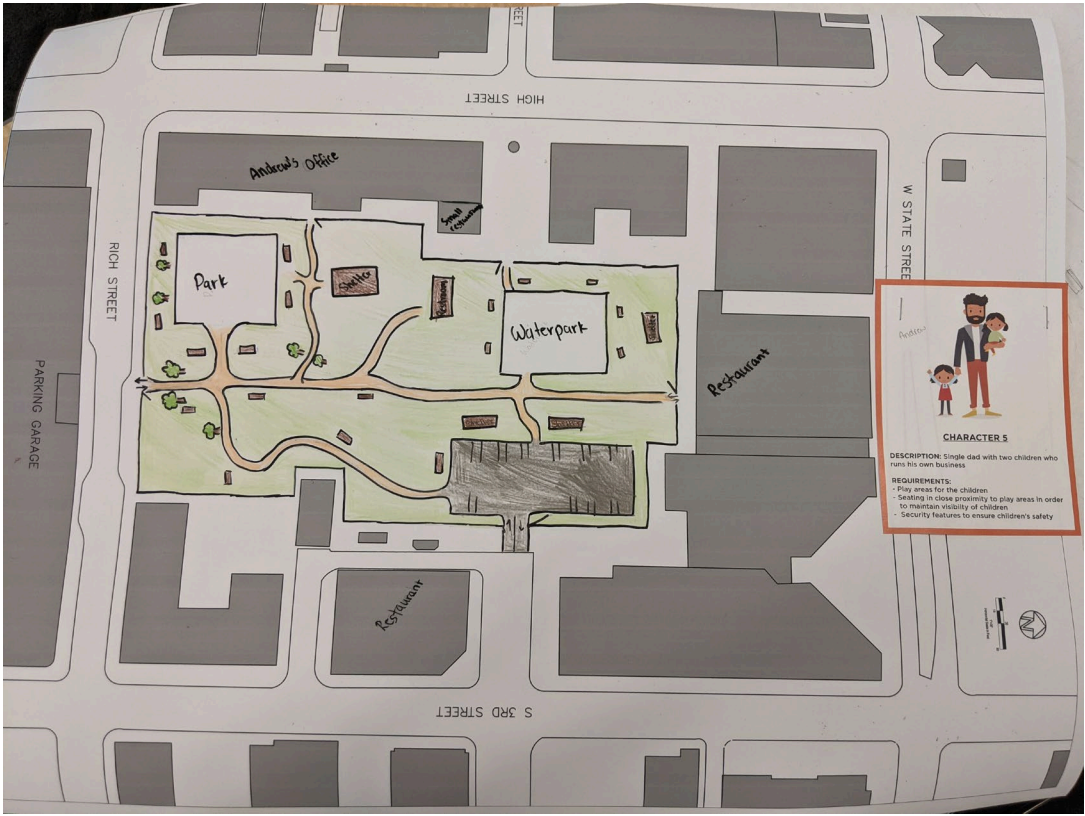
Shift the focus to the characters. Ask students to reflect on if they have ever encountered an individual like their character in real life. Have they ever been to a park that was designed for blind people, or for older people, or for cultural celebrations? Encourage them to answer the following question: Why is it important to design for people like their character? Are spaces that you interact with everyday conducive to what the characters need? Encourage them to think about how spaces should be designed for everyone, and the importance of diverse planning and analysis. Congratulations on all your hard work!



## 8. Documentation

Be sure to take pictures and videos of as much as you can. Document the students design process, sketches, and finished drawings. If students are willing to leave their drawings with you, keep them for reference in future classes. This is also important to analyze after the activity is over and see how well the students understood the design concept.





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