Schoolyard Report Card

Grades 7 - 8

Schoolyards are places for playing, socializing, learning, and sharing the land with other living things. How would your schoolyard score if you gave it a report card?

We can all have a positive impact on the world around us. The first step is looking closely at what is here now, imagining what it could be, then working together to make positive changes.
Let's get started!

MAPPING THE SCHOOLYARD (need a clipboard, paper and pencil)

⇨ Create a map of your schoolyard using a Google maps satellite image as a template. Include the outline of the school building and the location of paved areas, lawn and the location of any trees or other features. Then go outside and 'ground truth' your map, noting any features that didn't show on the Google maps image. Include as much detail as possible on your map, including anything you know about how the schoolyard is used by students (areas for games, sports etc.)

1. A HABITAT FOR PEOPLE

Different people have different needs. The best schoolyards provide many different kinds of outdoor experiences various ages - places for active play, places for using your imagination, places for exploring, places for quiet talking or reading, and above all, places for everyone to feel safe and included.

⇨ Does your schoolyard have:

a.	space for at least three different kinds of active play or sports?	yes ❑	no ❑
b.	spaces for climbing, jumping or rolling?	yes ❑	no ❑
c.	places for sitting quietly?	yes ❑	no ❑
d.	places for building, drawing or creating things?	yes ❑	no ❑
e.	materials for building, drawing or creating things?	yes ❑	no ❑
f.	places where you can meet and talk with your friends?	yes ❑	no ❑
g.	places where you can explore?	yes ❑	no ❑
h.	places with protection from the sun, wind or rain?	yes ❑	no ❑
i.	places for outdoor learning?	yes ❑	no ❑
j.	a food garden?	yes ❑	no ❑
k.	places where you feel safe and included?	yes ❑	no ❑
l.	other special features (please describe)	yes ❑	no ❑

_____

Score one point for each 'yes.' **TOTAL FOR THIS SECTION: _____ POINTS**

A = 9 to 12 points; **B** = 6 to 8 points; **C** = 4 to 5 points; **D** = 2-3 points; **E** = 0 to 1 point

Schoolyard Grade as a Habitat for People: GRADE _____

What do you think would improve your schoolyard as a habitat for people?

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2. A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

What makes a healthy environment for all living things? Clean water, fresh air, healthy soil, no pollution and lots of different living things (biodiversity) are all important parts of a healthy environment. Is the environment healthy in your schoolyard?

SCORE

⇨ Nature cleans **rainwater** as rain filters down through the soil. If there is too much pavement or roof area, rainwater can't seep into the soil and feed trees and other plants. Using your schoolyard map, estimate how much of the property the rain can seep into.

- more than 50% is not covered by pavement or buildings (score 5 points) ____
- between 25% and 50% has no pavement or buildings (score 2 points) ____
- less than 25% of the school property has no pavement or buildings (0 points) ____

⇨ Mowing green areas uses a lot of **energy**. Are there any green areas in your schoolyard that are not mowed (a forest or natural meadow)?

- yes, we have a large unmowed area in our schoolyard (score 5 points) ____
- yes, we have a small unmowed area in our schoolyard (score 2 points) ____
- no, all of our green areas are mowed (score 0 points) ____

⇨ **Soil** is a precious resource that plants need to grow. Soil can blow away or wash away in the rain if it isn't protected by plants or their leaves and bark. Losing soil is called erosion. Can you find any evidence of soil erosion in your schoolyard?

- no erosion (score 5 points) ____
- a bit of erosion (score 2 points) ____
- lots of erosion (score 0 points) ____

⇨ **Litter** is not only unsightly, it can harm animals if they eat it or get tangled in it. How much litter would you find in your schoolyard on an average day?

- very little litter/almost none (score 5 points) ____
- some litter/ would fill a garbage can (score 2 points) ____
- lots of litter/ more than one garbage can (score 0 points) ____

⇨ Nature loves **diversity**! In the green areas of your schoolyard, can you find:

- 5 or more large trees, as tall as a telephone pole (score 5 points) ____
- 10 or more medium trees, 2 metres or more in height (5 points) ____
- some evergreen as well as deciduous trees (score 3 points) ____
- 3 or more different kinds of trees (score 3 points) ____
- 20 or more shrubs (score 5 points) ____
- 3 or more different kinds of shrubs (score 3 points) ____
- wildflowers or other flowering plants, wild or in gardens (5 points) ____

BONUS POINTS

- does your school have a working composter? (score 5 points) ____
- does your school encourage walking or cycling to school? (score 5 points) ____
- does your school have a bicycle rack that students use? (score 5 points) ____

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS SECTION: _____

A = 50 or more points; **B** = 30-49 points; **C** = 15-29 points; **D** = 5-14 points; **E** = less than 5 points

Schoolyard Grade as a Healthy Environment: GRADE _____

What do you think would improve the environmental health of your schoolyard?

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3. A HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE

While each living thing has its own unique needs, we all need four basic things: food, water, shelter and enough space to live and grow. Since many wildlife populations are declining because of loss of habitat, it makes sense for people to share the land with many living things.

SCORE

Insects: Insects live just about everywhere, and they have many important roles as decomposers, predators, herbivores and pollinators. Is your schoolyard a good habitat for insects?

- are there places where insects can find a drink of water? (score 3 points) ____
- are there many different kinds of plants to provide food through their leaves, seeds or nectar? (score 3 points) ____
- are there lots of places for insects to hide? (score 3 points) ____
- how many different kinds of insects have you seen in your schoolyard that you can name? (score 1 point for each kind) ____

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Birds: Birds bring joy and beauty to our lives, and they also help to control many pests. Is your schoolyard a good habitat for birds?

- are there places where birds can find a drink of water? (score 3 points) ____
- are there many different kinds of foods for birds including seeds, berries and insects? (score 3 points) ____
- are there places for birds to build a nest and raise their young? (score 3 points) ____
- how many different kinds of birds have you seen in your schoolyard that you can name? (score 1 point for each kind) ____

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Mammals: Mammals are animals that usually have fur and feed their babies with their milk. Many mammals live happily close to people. Is your schoolyard a good habitat for mammals?

- are there places where mammals can find a drink of water? (score 3 points) ____
- are there different kinds of foods for mammals including worms, seeds and insects? (score 3 points) ____
- are there places for mammals to hide and raise their young? (score 3 points) ____
- how many different kinds of mammals have you seen in your schoolyard that you can name? (score 1 point for each kind) ____

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Reptiles and Amphibians: Many reptiles and amphibians are at risk in Ontario, and loss of habitat is one of the reasons. Is your schoolyard a habitat for reptiles and amphibians?

- are there places where they can sit in puddles of water? (score 3 points) ____
- are there different kinds of foods including worms and insects? (score 3 points) ____
- are there rocks and logs for basking and hiding? (score 3 points) ____
- have you seen any reptiles and amphibians in your schoolyard? (1 point for each kind) ____

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TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS SECTION: _____

A = 40 or more points; **B** = 30-39 points; **C** = 20-29 points; **D** = 10-19 points; **E** = less than 10 points

Schoolyard Grade as a Habitat for Wildlife: GRADE _____

What do you think would improve your schoolyard as a habitat for wildlife?

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Next Steps

How well did your schoolyard score on its report card? Did all the students in your class give the schoolyard similar grades? You have collected important information. Now, let's use it!

1. Finish drawing individual maps of your schoolyard (or create one big map for the whole class), and include as much information as you can (paved areas, grassy areas, play equipment, habitat areas, location of trees and shrubs etc.).

2. When you have finished your 'report card,' discuss what you found. What do you like about your schoolyard? What could be improved? Discuss everyone's ideas and draw your suggestions of what you'd like to see or change on your maps.

3. Make a plan for making improvements to your schoolyard. What are the most important things to focus on first? What could your class do? What would need the help of other classes, parents or friends of the school? A few ideas for simple things you could try include:
   - getting permission and working with the custodian to leave an area of the schoolyard unmown (perhaps mark a pathway through the centre for people to walk)
   - grow a few wildflowers for pollinators and plant them along a fence (make sure the custodian knows not to mow here)
   - ask a local arborist (perhaps a parent in the school?) to deliver a few logs that students can sit or balance on
   - install a birdfeeder or birdbath (it's okay to bring it indoors for weekends or overnight)
   - your own ideas?

4. Present your ideas to your principal and/or parent council to see what you can do together.

Physical Health

Mental Health

Community Health

Environmental Health

5. Report what you've done on the Pathway website pathwayproject.ca We encourage classes to get outside, explore, and take care of the world we all share. Reporting your 'Landmark' activities helps your class connect Pathway points, and you could win our monthly draw! The Schoolyard Report Card qualifies for these Pathway Landmarks:

   Grade 7-8
   Landmark 20: Plan and conduct a school project.
   Landmark 22: Become a 'Citizen Scientist.'

Pathway to Stewardship & Kinship

   You can collect data on a more regular basis to monitor wildlife visitors to your schoolyard. Try using a program such as **e-Bird** or **i-Naturalist** to add your data to international databases to help scientists track trends in wildlife populations. This helps in planning effective conservation programs. Your school can also help by improving your schoolyard as a habitat not only for people, but for wildlife.