



# Walking and Web Surfing Waterloo Park

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Term project in partial fulfillment  
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PSY680W Language Development  
and Social Inequity.

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Good evening, everyone. My name is Olivia, and my partner Taylor and I will be presenting some of our ideas to improve Waterloo Park's appeal and benefit to families. Our ideas aim to transform a simple walk through the park into an adventure and expand the Waterloo Park website to include a section for kids.

**Photo Sources:**

PowerPoint Stock Images [all photos above]

## Waterloo Park

- ✓ Connects families
- ✓ Offers access to a variety of resources, equipment, and activities
- + Facilitate language and other forms of development
- + Improve accessibility



Public places, like parks and libraries, serve many important functions for children. They bring families together, and offer free access to a variety of resources, equipment, and activities. It is therefore important to maximize the use and impact of these public places by making them accessible, relevant, and rich with opportunities for development.

Waterloo Park is a beautiful location in our community that is filled with many unique attractions and activities for families. We propose making use of all that the park already has to offer by introducing some new and exciting ways for children to engage with this beloved space.

### Photo Sources:

Daniela's photo [Waterloo Park]

# Agenda

## 1. Adventure Paths

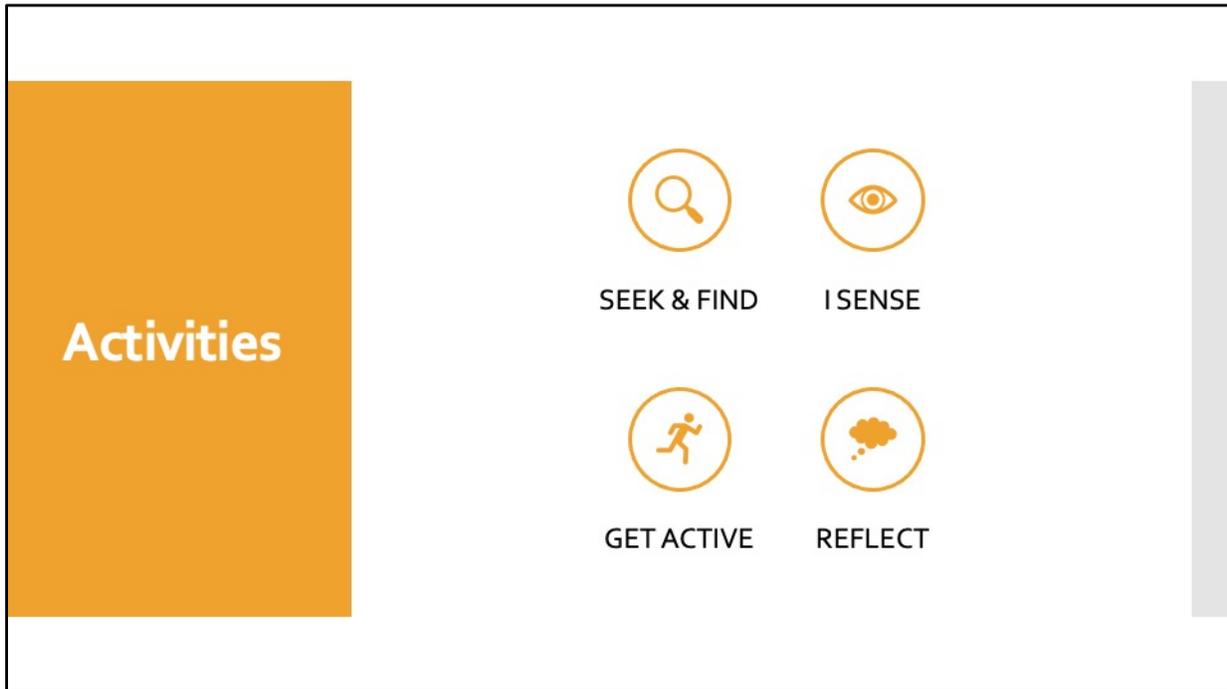
- Seek & Find
- I Sense
- Get Active
- Reflect



## 2. Expanding the Park Website

- Child-friendly Map
- Handouts & Souvenirs
- Letters to the Mascot

Our first idea, called the adventure paths, involves adding accessible signage that outline developmentally appropriate activities along existing paths in the park to make a simple walk a bit more exciting for families.



We propose four different types of activities to be implemented along different walking paths that already exist in the park. Importantly, the paths will also be fun for children and present opportunities for families to connect with one another in unique ways. In addition, the activities will also be feasible at all times of year and require little to no equipment.

The overarching goal of these activities is to facilitate conversations between families. We know that the quality and quantity of conversations between parents and children are very important predictors of language development (Rowe, 2012). Even for infants, these exchanges can also have a significant effect on social, emotional, and cognitive development (Gómez & Strasser, 2021). However, we know that language exposure and use varies substantially based on a number of factors, including the age of the child and parent, parental mental health, and the presence of financial concerns (Ellwood-Lowe et al., 2022; Kurkul & Corriveau, 2017; Rowe et al., 2005). So, finding ways to support parents to have conversations with their children in stimulating but non-formal settings is crucial. Mealtimes have been demonstrated to be ideal for these conversations because they often allow for extended discussion on a multitude of topics (Snow & Beals, 2006). Going for a walk through the park also presents this opportunity. Therefore, we have designed these activities to promote

rich but effortless conversations that naturally encourage parents to use language stimulation techniques (e.g., prompting, expanding, narrating, and modeling) that will support children's development in multiple domains (Wing et al., 2007).

**Photo Sources:**

PowerPoint Stock Images [all photos above]



Our first activity proposal is the “Seek & Find.” This is a great activity for children to actively explore their surroundings and pay special attention to the nature around them.

To play “Seek & Find”, families will see small signs displaying images of animals (such as the one illustrated here) spread out around a small area of the park. The goal for the children is to find the animal figure corresponding to the sign. For example, this sign shows a picture of a blue bird, indicating that somewhere in this area, a blue bird figurine is hidden.

This activity can be a way for children to learn about new animals and some of their behaviours. For example, parents might hint at the blue bird’s location by saying, “Where could the bird be? Since birds can fly, lets look high up in the sky or search in the trees!”. This activity would not only be a fun game for the kids, but a great opportunity for them to learn new things through active discussion.

**Photo Sources:**

Daniela’s photo [Waterloo Park]

<https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/illustration-blank-sign->

[vector\\_2583560.htm#query=wooden%20sign&position=44&from\\_view=search](#) [sign]

<https://toppng.com/uploads/preview/free-bird-cartoon-11549932462ii56sbv8wt.png>  
[bird]

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[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]



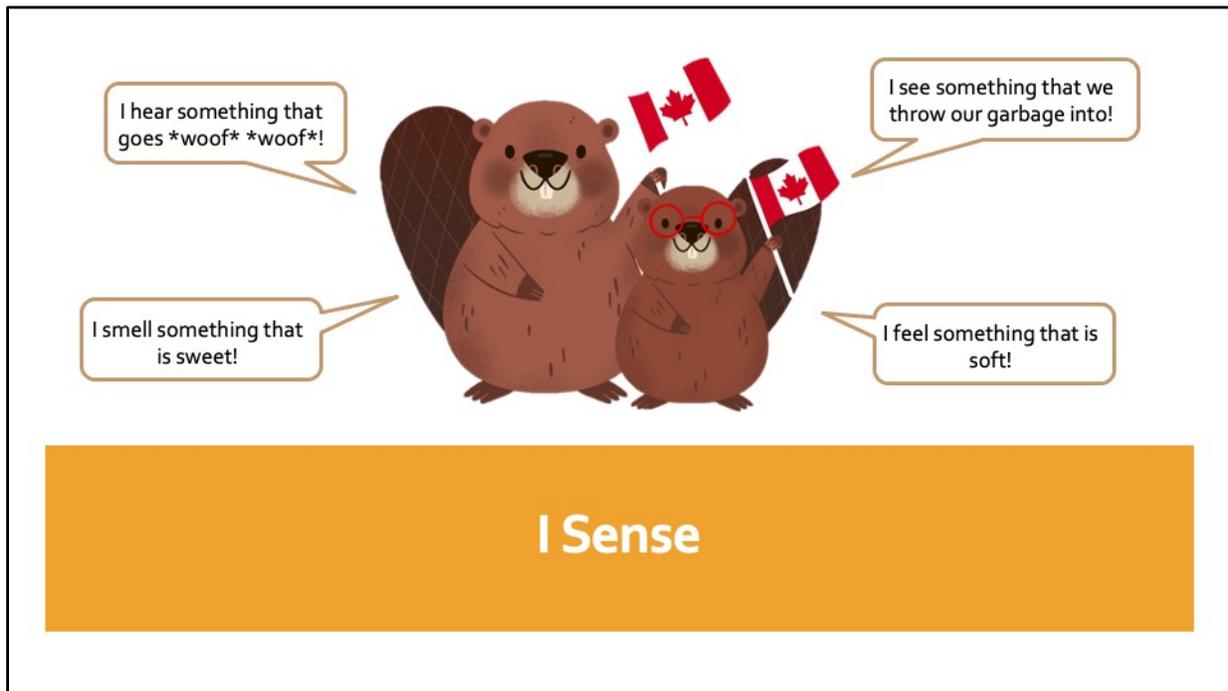
The next adventure path would encourage kids to get active, which is associated with a variety of physical and mental health outcomes (Chekroud et al., 2018) and helps support motor development. The “Get Active” path is inspired by a European fitness concept, called Vitaparcours, which refers to a trail with designated “exercise stations.” As families walk through the path, they would encounter signs with instructions and pictures challenging them to complete simple exercises like running, jumping, and balancing on one leg. Although most of the activities would not necessarily require equipment, the park could choose to install a few natural pieces of equipment like an agility ladder or benches for planking as shown in the photos on the slide here.

Parental support and modeling of physical activity predicts activity levels in children (Heitzler et al., 2006; Yao & Rhodes, 2015), so families could be encouraged to discuss and engage in the activities along this path together. This would also promote language development. Signs throughout this trail could suggest that parents and children discuss which activities are easy or difficult for them, what sensations they feel in their body before and after moving (e.g., heart rate, breathing, sweating), and what body parts they are working out when completing certain exercises.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://www.martigny.com/en/activities/parcours-vita-fitness-8045/> [agility ladder and benches]

<https://foursquare.com/v/vitaparcoursalbisg%C3%BCetli/5030d3cae4b0260c92871773?openPhotoid=54d204e6498e1aed976300ae> [wooden poles]



Another activity proposal is “I Sense”. This activity is a spin-off of the classic “I Spy” game, but instead of just asking children what can be seen with the eyes, it also asks them what they can smell with their nose, feel with their hands, and hear with their ears.

Here is an example of how this activity might be presented to the park visitors. Some of the prompts can be very specific, for instance, “I see something that we throw our garbage into!”, hinting that the children should look for a garbage can or recycling bin. The prompts can also be very general, for instance, “I feel something that is soft!”. This would require children to explore and be creative, as there are many things that could fit the description of being soft. Using different breadths for the prompts will alter the difficulty of the activity and suggest to children that they should go on a scavenger hunt to find items that could fit each prompt.

**Photo Sources:**

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]

<p>What did we do first?</p> <p>What did we do last?</p>	<p>What was the most challenging part?</p> <p>What was the most fun part?</p>	<p>[CREATED BY AINA RIVAS]</p>
<p>How did you feel along the way?</p> <p>How are you feeling now?</p>	<p>What do you want to do again?</p> <p>Would you do anything differently?</p>	

What did we do first on the I Sense path?

We saw a fish in the lake. I was really excited!

Reflect

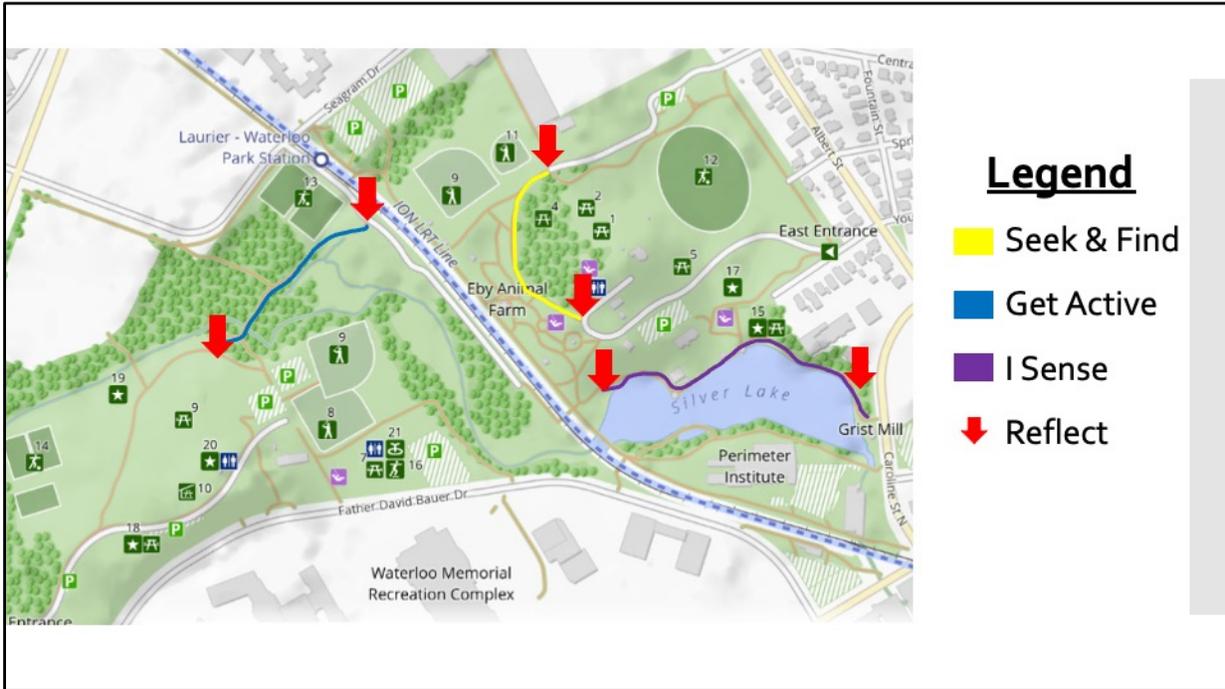
So far, we have highlighted the importance of back and forth conversations, but we know that is only one way to acquire language skills (Wang et al. , 2021). We must also consider other ways in which language development is fostered that may be more applicable to families from diverse backgrounds to highlight different ways of knowing and learning (Wang et al., 2021). Storytelling is popular across cultures and it is therefore accessible to many families (Miller et al., 2005).

At the ends of each of the other adventure paths described so far, parents and their children would be encouraged to spend some time answering questions like the ones outlined above. The questions are worded to encourage children to think back to particular points along the path to assist them in connecting memorable events or activities to one another in a story format. Stories can also incorporate internal information (e.g., how someone felt or what they thought) (Nelson & Fivush, 2020). Including an emotion wheel on the “Reflect” signs which lists and shows pictures of a variety of emotions could be used to help children draw connections between events and their feelings. This would also help to expand children’s emotional vocabularies and support their emotional development. Finally, perspective taking could be promoted by encouraging parents to answer these questions alongside their children.

**Picture Sources:**

<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/561472278548240484/> [emotion wheel]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]



Here are some suggestions as to which existing paths might work best as adventure paths. “Seek & Find” and “I Sense” could be placed in areas where there are a lot of stimuli, such as the farmstead and Silver Lake, so children have many things to view and explore. Since we suggest using natural equipment for the “Get Active” path, designing this path through the forested area would blend the activity features and environment together nicely. Finally, as mentioned, the “Reflect” signs would be placed at each end of the other paths to encourage children to reflect on the activities they completed. Any path throughout the park could be turned into an adventure path, so there is a lot of flexibility with these ideas.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/resources/Documents/Parksandfacilities/Waterloo-Park-amenity-map.pdf>  
 [Waterloo Park map]

# Agenda

## 1. Adventure Paths

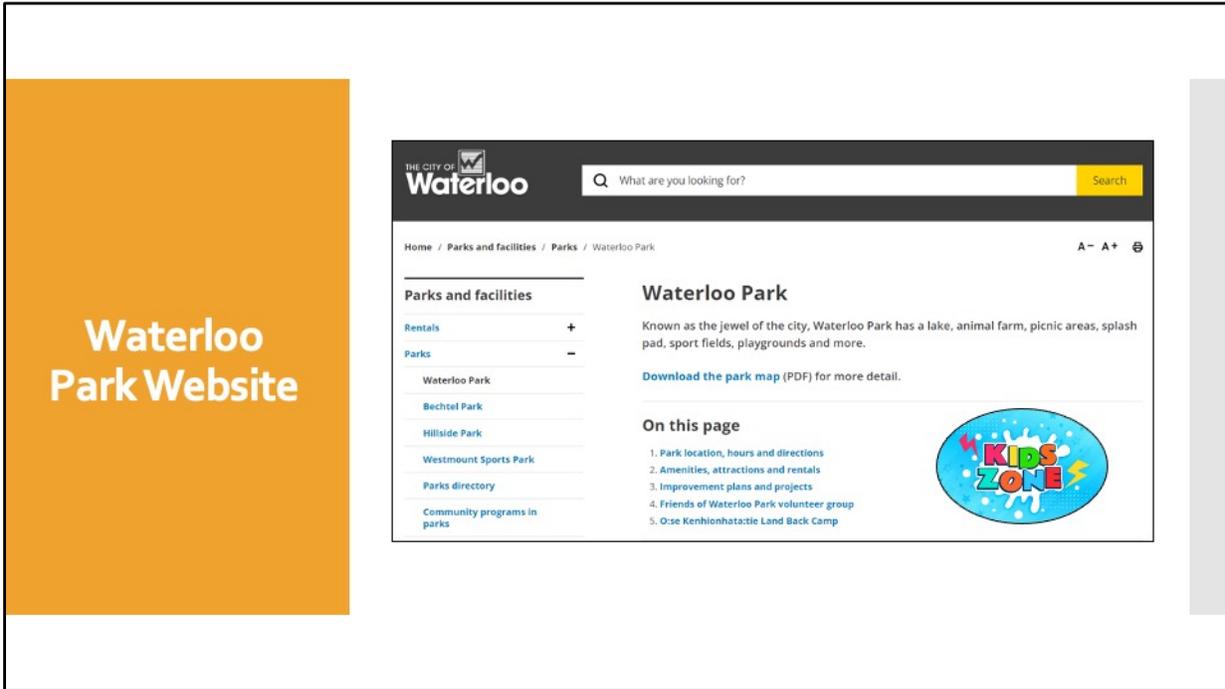
- Seek & Find
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## 2. Expanding the Park Website

- Child-friendly Map
- Handouts & Souvenirs
- Letters to the Mascot



In the second part of our presentation, we will be discussing ways that the Waterloo park website could be expanded so that it is more accessible for children and offers more content that would allow them to connect with the park from home.



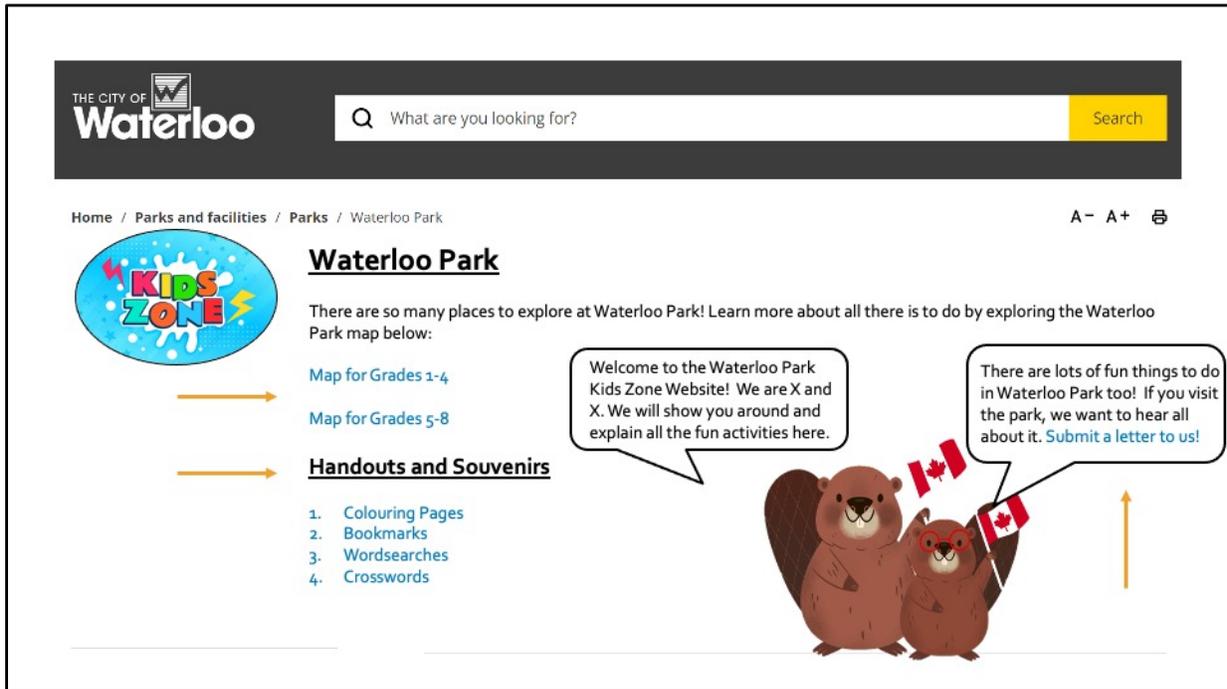
The City of Waterloo website contains a lot of useful information about the park (such as park hours, amenities and attractions, improvement plans); however, this information is mainly targeted towards adults. Children are clearly interested in using technology and in our increasingly digital society, building skills in using technology is crucial. Technology also presents new opportunities to contribute to child language and literacy development (Mayer, 2003; Shamir & Korat, 2013).

We see great potential for Waterloo Park to make their online space more accessible to children, thereby providing youth in our community with a safe, educational, and relevant website to visit.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/waterloo-park.aspx> [Waterloo Park website]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design\\_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from_view=search) [kids zone]



Rather than reinventing the entire existing website, we propose adding a “child-friendly” section to the website, which could be called the Waterloo Park Kids Zone, and could include developmentally appropriate information about the park to get children excited about visiting. Park mascots, such as the beavers that have been appearing throughout our presentation and are shown again here, would appear throughout the website to show kids around.

For the remainder of our presentation, we will highlight a few potential ideas of what might be incorporated in the Kids Zone. Our ideas include \*creating child-friendly versions of the Waterloo Park map, \*offering a variety of other handouts and activities, and \*giving children opportunities to submit letters about their day in the park.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/waterloo-park.aspx> [Waterloo Park website]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design\\_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from_view=search) [kids zone]

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## Waterloo Park Map



The current park map was obviously designed to be used by adults. While it is simple and clear for that audience, it is not easily accessible to children, and it lacks bright colours and pictures that would be of interest to youth. Learning how to read and analyze maps is explicitly included in the Ontario curriculum from Grade 1 onward (Ministry of Education, 2013). Having access to a map of a beloved spot in the community would certainly be advantageous for learning. In fact, expectations in the curriculum clearly state that youth should be exposed to maps that are “significant to them” or to their community (Ministry of Education, 2013, pg 67).

### Photo Sources:

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/resources/Documents/Parksandfacilities/Waterloo-Park-amenity-map.pdf>  
[Waterloo Park map]

## Child Friendly Map for Grades 1-4



Here is basic example of what a child friendly map of Waterloo Park might look like. This particular map example would be aimed at younger children (Grades 1-4). It includes attractions in the park that are most interesting and relevant to children (e.g., playgrounds, farmstead, splashpad) in addition to integral features like the Ion tracks and Silver Lake. It also includes the various trails and walkways that span throughout the park. Each of the adventure paths (e.g., Seek & Find, Get Active) from the first part of our presentation could be outlined and represented in different colours on the map too.

### **Photo Sources:**

Taylor's image [map]

PowerPoint icons [map icons (e.g., barn, playground)]

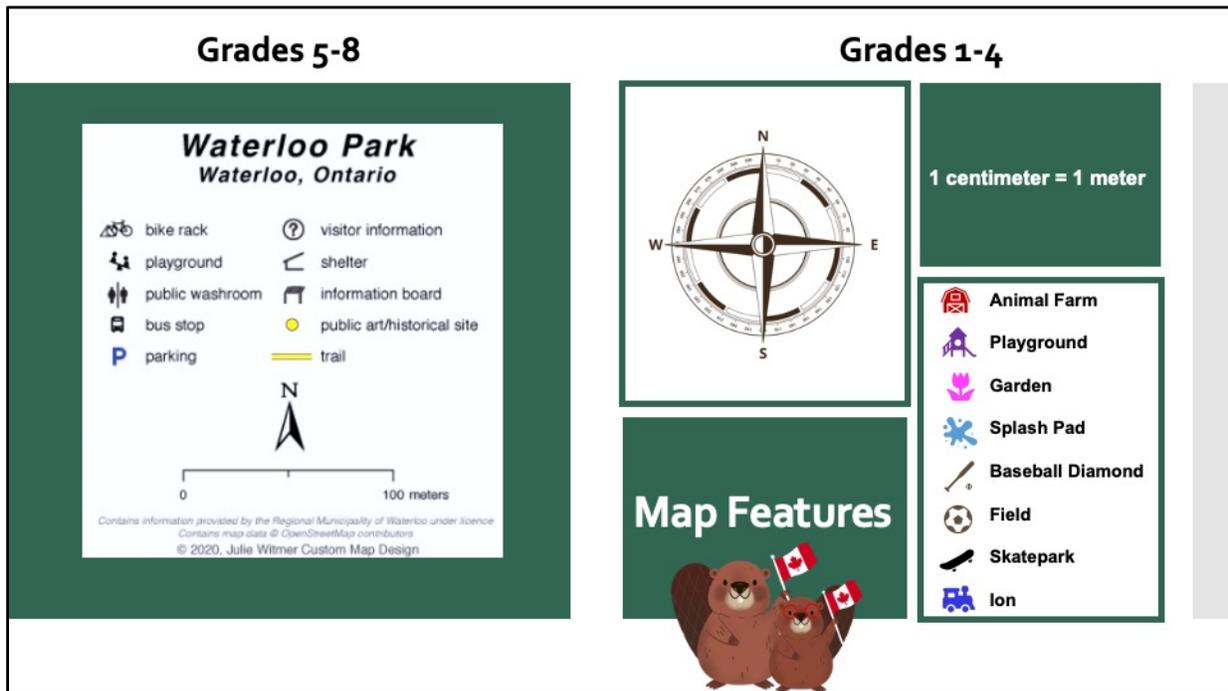
## Child Friendly Map for Grades 5-8



Here is an example of a more intricate and developmentally appropriate version of the map for older children (Grades 5-8). This map includes all of the same features as the version of the map meant for younger children in addition to some other features that are perhaps less exciting for kids but still important and useful (e.g., information boards).

### **Photo Sources:**

Waterloo Park map created by Julie Witmer on the Avenza map app [map]



The child friendly maps would incorporate a variety of features that the park mascots could explain. First, a legend could be included on the maps to allow children to identify different amenities while learning new words (e.g., skatepark and splashpad). A compass rose on the younger child map and a north arrow on the older child map would also be incorporated to promote conversations about direction and navigation. Finally, a scale on the map could show children what a certain distance on the map is equal to at the park itself. The map components therefore extend beyond the social studies curriculum and support the development of mathematical skills in addition to language abilities. Given that these features relate to multiple aspects of the curriculum, the maps could easily be used by teachers in their classrooms which would also promote field trips to the park.

**Photo Sources:**

Waterloo Park map legend created by Julie Witmer on the Avenza map app [legend on the left]

PowerPoint Icons [legend icons on the right]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/vector-compass-rose-with-north-south-east-west-indicated\\_21003283.htm#query=compass%20rose&position=3&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/vector-compass-rose-with-north-south-east-west-indicated_21003283.htm#query=compass%20rose&position=3&from_view=search)

[compass rose]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]



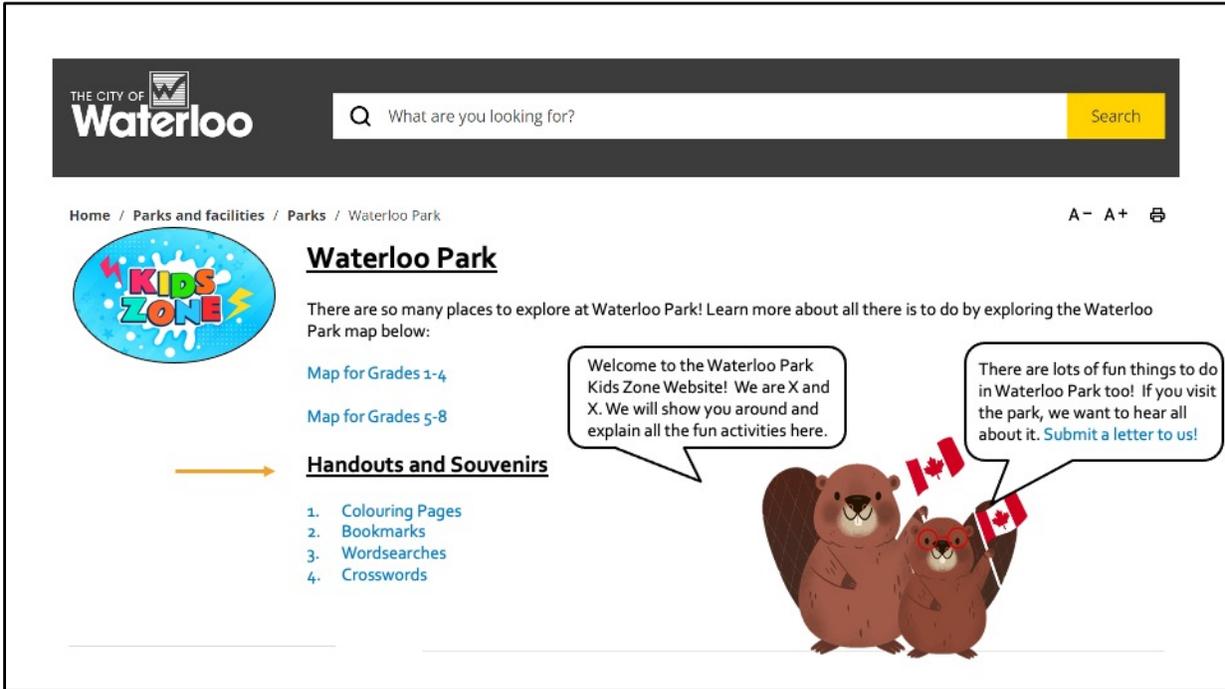
In addition to becoming valuable educational resources, the child-friendly versions of the map would also be fun for families to use during more casual outings to Waterloo Park. The maps would encourage children and parents to navigate the park together while promoting conversations like the one shown in the orange box. Children and their parents could also use the map in unique ways before and after visiting the park. Families could talk about planning their next trip to the park using the map by numbering the locations they would like to visit or drawing the path they will take to get from one attraction to another. After visiting the park, children could also use the map to help them tell a story about their time in the park (e.g., First I went here. Then, I saw this). These activities would promote conversations about the past and the future, which are complex forms of language that facilitate literacy skills and conversational turn-taking (Leech & Rowe, 2021; Rowe & Snow, 2020).

The park maps could also assist in the development of other cognitive and socio-emotional skills. For example, maps help children improve their problem-solving and spatial skills (Jirout & Newcombe, 2014; Liben et al., 2013), they support children's understanding that a symbol can represent something other than itself, and they can promote perspective taking (Lillard & Kavanaugh, 2014).

**Photo Sources:**

Taylor's image [map]

PowerPoint icons [map icons (e.g., barn, playground)]



In addition to the map, we also wanted to incorporate handouts and souvenirs for kids on the park website.

**Photo Sources:**

- <https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/waterloo-park.aspx> [Waterloo Park website]
- [https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design\\_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from_view=search) [kids zone]
- [https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]

## Handouts & Souvenirs



Colouring Pages

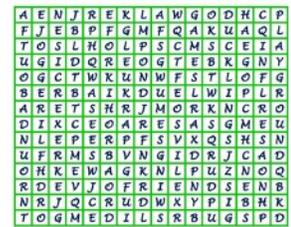


Bookmarks



Crosswords

Park & Playground Word Search



Wordsearches

Our first idea for handouts is colouring pages. We think it would be a fun idea to connect the content of the colouring pages to Waterloo Park by using elements of the park as illustrations for the pages. For example, a colouring page version of the child-friendly map could give children even more opportunities to learn about maps through colouring, drawing, and labelling.

Another souvenir that children could receive from the park is bookmarks. Waterloo park could host monthly events, where children, families, and artists in the community submit their bookmark designs based on a theme for the chance to feature their artwork on the bookmarks. This would inspire creativity in children and give them an opportunity to make an impact on their community. Having unique and personal bookmarks would not only encourage engagement with Waterloo Park, but it could also increase children's interest in readings stories and urge parents to read with their child.

The last idea for handouts are crosswords and wordsearches. These are simple, fun, and can be incredibly helpful in improving children's vocabulary and language skills. For example, wordsearches can be used to teach new words or new concepts, like nouns and adjectives. Crosswords can be a good opportunity for children to use their

existing vocabulary and practice spelling. The difficulty of the worksheets could also be adjusted for different age groups and learning levels, so that all children can benefit from them.

We primarily hope that the handouts and souvenirs will be helpful and fun for all families, especially those who might have difficulty accessing these types of resources elsewhere, as they would be free and educational (Neuman & Celano, 2014; Neuman & Moland, 2019).

**Photo Sources:**

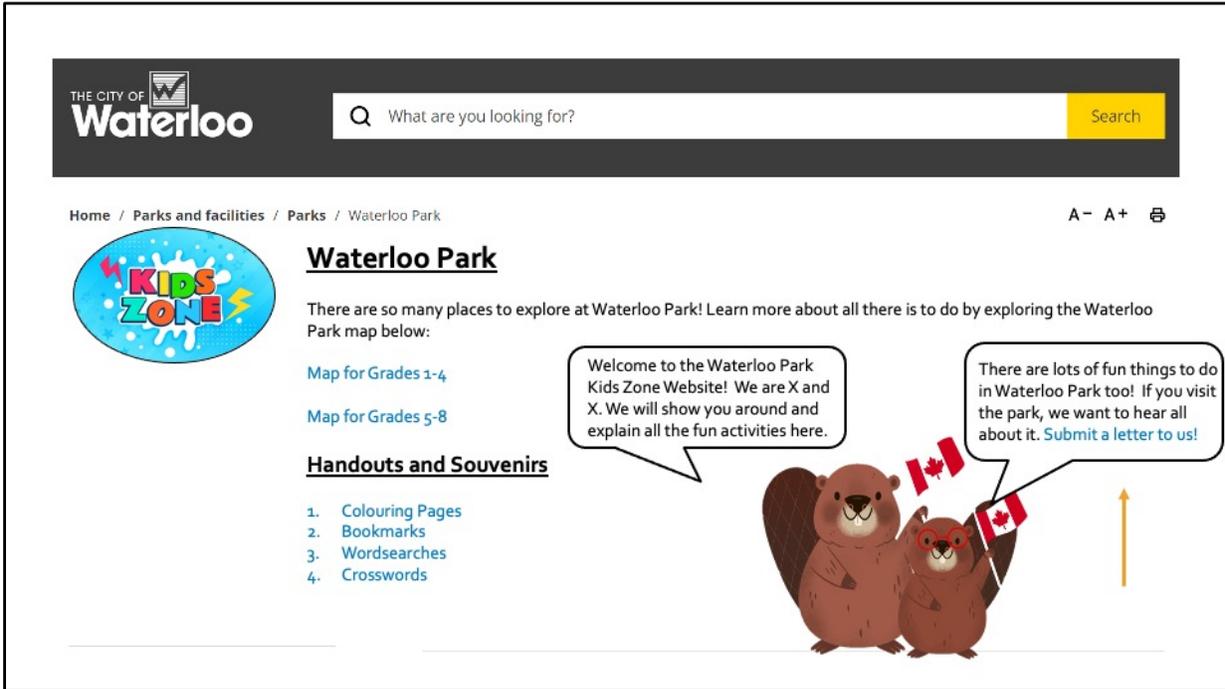
<https://coloringhome.com/coloring/xTg/nMn/xTgnMnGLc.gif> [picnic]

<https://coloringhome.com/coloring/MTL/GnE/MTLGnEMGc.gif> [park]

[https://nxm3s2s7mdp1kt8af1gr4vc8-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/17417696\\_web1\\_190626-JSJ-Bookmarkcontest\\_2.jpg](https://nxm3s2s7mdp1kt8af1gr4vc8-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/17417696_web1_190626-JSJ-Bookmarkcontest_2.jpg)  
[bookmarks]

[https://files.liveworksheets.com/def\\_files/2020/10/30/103018295833326/103018295833326001.jpg](https://files.liveworksheets.com/def_files/2020/10/30/103018295833326/103018295833326001.jpg) [crossword]

[https://www.99worksheets.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/word\\_search\\_park\\_and\\_playground\\_hard\\_version\\_pdf\\_6.jpg](https://www.99worksheets.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/word_search_park_and_playground_hard_version_pdf_6.jpg) [wordsearch]



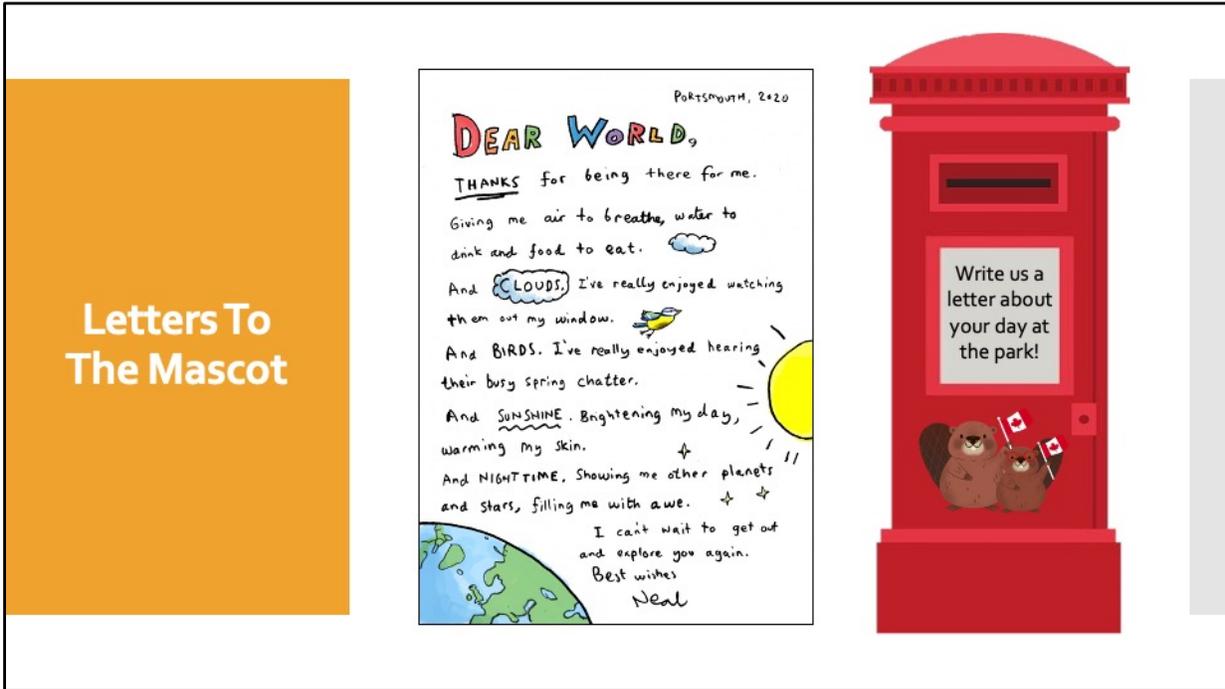
For our final idea to further encourage engagement with the park, we propose implementing a program called, “Letters to the Mascot”, which would be a feature that is available online and in-person at Waterloo Park.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/things-to-do/waterloo-park.aspx> [Waterloo Park website]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design\\_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/kids-zone-colorful-banner-design_18505097.htm#query=kids%20zone&position=0&from_view=search) [kids zone]

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This idea encourages kids to write about their day and experience at the park in the form of a letter. Just like how children might address a letter to Santa Claus during Christmastime, children could write about their experience during their visit to Waterloo Park and send their letter to the park mascots. One or two small mailboxes could be placed at main exit points in the park so that children could slip their letter in before leaving. Families could also submit their letter through the Kids Zone on the Waterloo Park website in the form of a document or scanned image.

Talking about things that happened during the day gives parents a great opportunity to engage in back-and-forth conversation with their kids and have discussions about events outside of the here-and-now, both of which are extremely important for children's language development (Leech & Rowe, 2021; Rowe & Snow, 2020). Parents can also encourage children to talk about any feelings they might have experienced, since discussions of emotions are another essential component for children's social and cognitive development (Aram et al., 2013).

Friends of Waterloo Park could also participate by sending return letters to the children, acting as the park mascots. This could be done through email correspondence with parents, who could leave their email address in their child's

letter. This would be an opportunity for the parents to make connections with community members and for the children to have their own pen pals.

“Letters to the mascot” would be a very cool and fun idea that would give children more opportunities to introspect, have meaningful conversations with their families, be creative, and discuss experiences and emotions. Letters that are especially interesting and creative could also be featured on the Waterloo Park social media pages or website.

**Photo Sources:**

<https://images.clipartlogo.com/files/istock/previews/1031/103182703-post-mail-box-vector-isolated.jpg> [mailbox]

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]

<https://thechildrensbookshow.com/media/pages/news/letters-from-lockdown/606867ceb8-1612357914/neal-layton-letter.jpg> [letter]

## Conclusion

- ✓ Additional activities in the park
- ✓ Promote child development (e.g., language, motor, cognitive, etc.)
- ✓ Build connection between family members
- ✓ Encourage interaction with Waterloo park from near and far
- ✓ Accessible to children of different demographics
- ✓ Available at all times of the year

In conclusion, all the virtual and in person activities that we presented were specifically designed to promote development across multiple areas in natural ways. As the examples throughout this presentation illustrated, the activities will lend themselves to conversations that are rich with new words, questions, and ideas to build language and other skills. The activities will also be accessible for children of various demographics, so kids of all ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, and financial statuses will be able to enjoy them.

Thank you for listening!



Thank you very much for listening. We appreciate your time and attention. That concludes our presentation but if there are any questions or comments, we would be happy to discuss them.

**Photo Sources:**

[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration\\_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from\\_view=search](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-happy-canada-day-illustration_14063724.htm#query=beaver&position=19&from_view=search) [beavers]

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