

Capitals

Community resources that may influence individual and group interests, intentions, and behaviors:

NOTE: The following content is abstracted from a speech by C. B. Flora (2004). In the speech, Flora described “capitals” in terms adapted from Andrews (2002), and from content cited on the Water Outreach Web site, especially in <http://wateroutreach.uwex.edu/beps/documents/EssentialBEPs120204.pdf>

Natural capital means healthy ecosystems, multiple benefits. Educators stress:

- Systems and interdependence are characteristics of the biological and natural order
- Natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities disciplines contribute to understanding of the environment and environmental issues
- Learner connections to immediate surroundings provide a base for understanding larger systems, broader issues, causes and consequences
- Human communities are mindful of natural systems
- Ecosystems yield multiple community benefits
- Those with conflicting uses of the ecosystem seek common ground
- Effective education generates and makes use of data about the local conditions

Educators invest in **cultural capital** by building on different heritages, which they seek to maintain and value. That includes:

- Recognizing and valuing cultural differences
- Identifying mechanisms to maintain ancestral languages and customs
- Taking the time to understand and build on different ways of knowing and doing.
- Taking into consideration the community as a whole, including: socio-political, economic, historical, and cultural influences
- Building on locally existing skills and resources
- Reaching people in multiple ways

Educators increase **human capital** by increasing the use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities of local people. That includes improving:

- Questioning and analysis skills
- Knowledge of environmental processes and systems
- Skills for understanding and addressing environmental issues

- Personal and civic responsibility
- Identification of skills, knowledge and ability
- Augmentation of skills, knowledge and ability
- Use of skills, knowledge and ability
- Recombination of skills, knowledge and ability

Social capital includes strengthened relationships, communication, community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability. Educators who build social capital understand that it:

- Evolves from work with a coalition or group
- Supports a person who takes responsibility for managing or leading the process, and relies on quality group planning and facilitation techniques
- Builds effectiveness through linkages to other communities, partners, and resources
- Relates to long-term community vision and goals

Investing in **political capital** means increased voice and influence.

- Those who are concerned about environmental issues are organized and work together.
- Excluded people know and feel comfortable around powerful people.
- The issues of excluded people are part of the political agenda.
- Agencies and communities
 - Build value for education as part of policy development and implementation
 - Offer avenues for participation that are competent, fair, and enhance involvement for all levels of responsibility
 - Build skills for flexibility and responsiveness to environmental issues and for facilitating community engagement

Environmental educators often use **built capital** as they work with communities to increase water quality. Built capital includes: sewers, water systems, constructed wetlands, and riparian buffers. Built capital is human-constructed infrastructure used to enhance other capitals, particularly natural capital. Investment in **financial capital** means that conservation does not take place at the expense of a vital economy. But a vital economy is not defined in terms of growth, but as appropriately diverse and healthy economies, which include: reduced poverty, increased business efficiency, increased business diversity, and increased community residents' assets.