

Step 6: Present to Students

The presentation (discussed below) to all the classes in the school is the most important step in preparing the students to have a labyrinth. A knowledgeable person is needed to make the presentation. He/she should be familiar with the history of labyrinths, how the labyrinth can be used by the students and be prepared to help the students develop guidelines for walking together on the labyrinth.

Note: *The presenter needs a room to set up equipment and materials - let the classes come to that room. It is difficult to carry everything from room to room. The room must be able to be darkened if you are showing a DVD or a Power Point presentation.*

In a large school this presentation is very time-consuming (one school had 600 students so the class presentations took most of a week) but it meant that the children were prepared to use the labyrinth in a productive and meaningful way. One possibility is to train the art teacher or librarian to do the presentation to their classes since they see all the students in the school on a regular schedule.

Although we strongly recommend that the presentation be done by an adult, the way in which the labyrinth has been introduced to the students can be varied. In one school, the presentation was given to a 2nd/3rd grade class who then went to the other classes to present the information. In another school the Enrichment Classes were given the presentation and they developed a Learning Center where all the other students were invited to visit.

The class presentation we use includes a brief history of labyrinths with photos, a Time Line which shows graphically how long there have been labyrinths in the world and a world map with locations of labyrinths around the world before 1900.



The Time Line I made is 8 ½ feet long and a foot high. It is best to use plastic or a material which will roll easily and is durable. After drawing the line in the middle of the sheet, I showed events which are familiar to the children (Columbus, birth of Christ, etc.) above the line. Using Jeff Saward's book (page 19 in "Labyrinths and Mazes" – see "Resources", page 18) I placed under the line the names of countries where there were labyrinths.

I put stickers on a world map, again using Jeff Saward's book, in each of the countries where there were labyrinths before 1900. The map was then laminated. This gives a brief but graphic idea to the children that labyrinths are not just a new concept.

Slides (or Power Point) of different labyrinths are shown including pictures of ancient labyrinths (you can use the "History of Labyrinths" from the DVD), some modern labyrinths in the community which may be familiar to the children, and pictures of labyrinths at other schools (found throughout the DVD). A discussion may be initiated as to why labyrinths have been found in so many different cultures and how they can be used today. The benefits of using the labyrinth should be discussed. Children have mentioned such benefits as: to calm down, to stop being sad, to think about what is bothering them and figure out what to do about it and to think about things they are thankful for.

When working with adults it is always explained that there is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. However, when working with children we have found it is best to set guidelines for quiet group walks. This is important when the intention is for children to get in touch with what is going on in their lives, solve a personal problem or even to grieve a loss in their lives. We have the children develop the guidelines that they feel are important for them to be able to have quiet time to themselves on the labyrinth. They are much more likely to develop a respect for the labyrinth if they are involved in setting the guidelines. We explain that if they are on the labyrinth alone, they can do whatever feels right to them. But when they are in a group, there must be rules to respect the needs of others. After some children had suggested things like "Don't throw stones" and "Don't push or shove", one girl suggested this general rule: "You should stay in your own bubble." We encourage "Be silent" as one of the rules - to

show respect for others who might be dealing with loss or sadness. One school has only two rules: "Don't move the rocks" and "Respect others on the path."

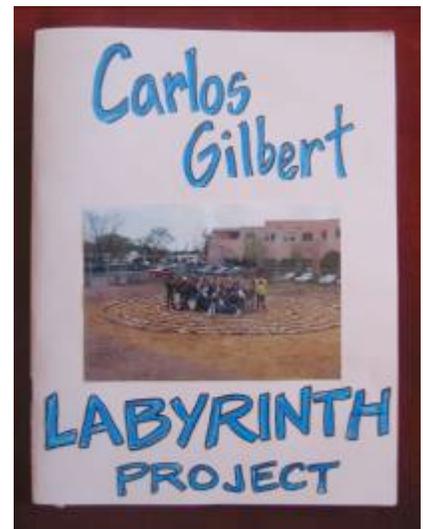
Of course, if the physical education teacher is using the labyrinth for a labyrinth ball game or a music teacher for drumming (See "Part 2 – Lesson Plans and Classroom Ideas"), the rules are quite different. The teacher should "set the stage" for each walk.

We always make sure that the teachers have copies of the pattern of the labyrinth which will be constructed at their school so the children can color or paint it. Not only do they enjoy this but it familiarizes them with the pattern they will be building.

Step 7: Classroom Activities

Start a "Labyrinth Book" like the one on the right from Carlos Gilbert Elementary School (consider having a parent volunteer to organize it) for the classroom, which might include:

- Journal experiences from the children; it might help the teacher to have a worksheet prepared (e.g. What did you like about building the labyrinth? What was it like to walk the labyrinth the first time? Other experiences?).
- Photos taken before, during and after construction.
- Drawings of labyrinths by the children.
- Samples of curriculum projects that relate to building and using the labyrinth.
- Results of student research. (Good web sites to start with: www.labyrinthsociety.org and www.veriditas.net.)



Make posters to distribute around the school that announce the building of the labyrinth and encourage students to bring stones.

Write invitations to parents inviting them to come on the day of building.

See more activity ideas in "Part 2 –Lesson Plans and Classroom Ideas".

Step 8: *Lay Out the Labyrinth*

We recommend laying out the labyrinth pattern the day before construction. Older children can help lay out the design of the labyrinth. With younger children, it is best to have the pattern already drawn on the ground, marked with tape or string or whatever works for you. Their biggest satisfaction is placing the rocks on the pattern and seeing the labyrinth almost magically take shape.

Described below is how we lay out the pattern of a modified Chartres labyrinth. Of course, there are other patterns which can be used (see “Part 3 – Construction Workbook”). We have used Robert Ferré’s book “Constructing the Chartres Labyrinth” to build many 11 circuit labyrinths (not in schools) and have modified his instructions to build the 7 circuit “modified Chartres” pattern. (<http://www.labyrinth-enterprises.com/conchartres.html> \$20 plus shipping)

These are the steps:

- Drive a stake where the center of the labyrinth will be.
- Following the directions in Robert Ferré’s book (or in “Part 3 – Constuction Workbook”), lay out the 90 degree crosslines which will guide you in the rest of the construction.
- Form a loop at one end of a chain or non-stretch rope. The chain or rope needs to be longer than the radius of the labyrinth (by about two or three feet).
- Drop the loop over the stake in the center.
- In Step 4 (Plan the Labyrinth) you determined the diameter of the labyrinth, the diameter of the center area and the direction the entrance path will face. Mark the radius of each circle on the rope with paint or tape. If you use tape, be sure it cannot slip on the rope while you are working.
- Rotate the rope around the center pin in a series of small steps and mark out the center circle line and outside perimeter line with surveyor’s flags or rocks. We use just enough flags or rocks to give a suggestion of where the circles will be.
- The most difficult job is laying out the entrance lines – be sure to follow directions carefully from Robert Ferré’s book or in “Part 3 – Construction Workbook”. Remember that the entrance lines do not converge toward the center but run parallel to each

other. We lay down surveyor's tape (held in place by surveyor's flags) for the entrance lines and (if it is a modified Chartres pattern) for the "labryses" - the short lines that delineate the turns (in the official pattern, the labryses are a double headed ax shape). Some concern has been expressed that the surveyor's flags could be dangerous for young children. Perhaps you would prefer to use long nails to secure the surveyor's tape.

Now you are ready for the fun part – the actual building of the labyrinth.

Step 9: Construct the labyrinth.

We have used several techniques for placing the stones. In addition to the marked rope, it is possible when working on dirt, sand or fine gravel, to join boards together to make a giant compass.. Have long bolts sticking out so that when the board is dragged around the circle, eight concentric circles are formed.



When using the technique mentioned in Step 8 (Lay Out the Labyrinth), you can rotate the marked rope every few feet around a pin in the center of the labyrinth and have children place a stone under each of the 8 marks on the rope. After placing the marker

stones, it is

easy to fill in the spaces between them. At a large school where 600 children shared in constructing the labyrinth, we divided the circle by twelve groups and had 1/12th of the "pie" for each group. We watched the labyrinth grow around the circle during the day!



It is helpful if an explanation of this process is given in the classroom before going to the site. We try to include this at the time of the class presentation - usually the week before building the labyrinth.

Be open to suggestions from the children. For example, a child once suggested that we put a flat stone at the entrance to the labyrinth so people would have a place to stop and think about how they wanted to use the labyrinth that day. He called it a "Pausing Stone" and we have placed a Pausing Stone at the entrance to every labyrinth we have built since then.

Step 10: *Take the First Walk*



There needs to be a break between the busyness of construction and the quiet first walk of the labyrinth. If the children seem particularly wound up, they may need some time on the playground or in the classroom before walking the labyrinth. One possibility is to have the children line up around the outside of the labyrinth

and hold hands for a moment of silence before walking. Then they just move around the circle as they wait their turn to enter. You may wish to remind them that there will be no talking until they return to the classroom (so the other students can continue their walk in silence).

With a group, it is necessary to allow space between the students so that they do not bunch up on the path. One suggestion is for the children to count slowly to 20 or 30 before entering the labyrinth. Or have someone at the entrance letting the children know when they should begin the walk. Standing a few moments on the "Pausing Stone" is a good way to prepare for the walk.