

Classroom Alive Toolbox

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INTRO

Classroom Alive (CA) is a model for peer-led journey-schools. By taking intellectual studies on a physical journey, CA students create a context which challenges and cultivates their physical, social, intellectual, and creative capacities.

The central framework of CA is simple and consists of three core elements, uniquely manifested on each trip.

1. A walking journey between two points
2. A group of individuals following paths of self-directed study
3. A rhythm of peer-led learning practices.

CA journeys are all self-organizing. There is no group who organizes the journeys for students; rather there is a community who supports inspired individuals to create their own trips.

Wo(a)nder On.

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THE FOUR PHASES OF CREATING A JOURNEY

The undertaking of a Classroom Alive takes place in four phases and this booklet examines the essential elements of each step in turn.

Core Team & Partners

At its essence a Classroom Alive exists out of nothing more than the agreements and intentions of a group of individuals. To create a Classroom Alive journey two or more individuals interested in undergoing such an experience must come together and set the intention. These individuals become the Core Team whose first step is to Partner with past alumni. Partnering connects new teams to past organizers to support them in the design phase and assure their vision is aligned with the principles of Classroom Alive.

Design Phase

The design phase is when the Core Team creates the way the **Three Core Elements** of Classroom Alive will manifest on their journey. Many of the opportunities to really create a vibrant school rest in the work of the design phase. Ideally a time and place have been set aside to kick-start the Design Phase. Keep it clear, keep it wild, keep it alive.

Creating the Studies

Each student is their own professor and as such must create their own curriculum and syllabuses. This process will be different for each student. There are a lot of good resources out there for self-directed students. In addition to this, a Classroom Alive journey is a student collective. The shared study practices that are created and held by the group will be instrumental in the level of success that each student individually experiences.

The Journey

Trying to undertake a long journey with a group of people is challenging; having ample time to study whilst journeying is even harder. When you begin walking, the practicalities of where to sleep, what to eat, and much more will fall into place in accordance with each group's individual needs. Dancing with the chaotic and fun nature of these practicalities will be great impacted by the communication forms that were created during the design phase.

CORE TEAM

Creating a Classroom Alive starts with a group of two or more inspired learners, making the commitment to each other to undertake the journey.

Admin Work

Before we launch into all the fun stuff, we have to say that committing to be a Core Team member of Classroom Alive is not all chuckles and ponies. There is a lot of **administration and organizational management** involved. If the core question of the self-directed learner is “what are the experiences that will best cultivate my growth”, then any perspective Core Team member must ask if they actually feel called to the building of administrative and organization skills. ***This work will take up a significant chunk of your study time*** so if you are really just interested in learning about bio-chemistry for example, then maybe creating a Classroom Alive is not for you. That being said, being a Core Team member and creating a Classroom Alive for those who are interested in organizational and leadership capacities is an invaluable experience. ***It is simply a question of discerning if these are skills you are interested in developing.*** If so Core Team on towards glory! If not, maybe there are better paths for you, or maybe join a Classroom Alive for just a couple weeks.

Communication

If you find yourself with a friend or two who all feel inspired to take up creating a Classroom Alive rock on. So the fun starts. Now your job is to bring as much ***consciousness to the process of creation*** as possible. ***At the root of this lies your communication.*** Collaborating is not easy and it is at the edge of your thinking where the most interesting work will take place. In the Core Team it is essential that you learn to gracefully move in disagreement and to communicate freely.

Classroom Alive as an infrastructure exists almost nowhere but in the space between people. Most organizations have the benefit (or hindrance) of physical infrastructure that holds them and which has been shaped by previous intention. Classroom Alive is constantly created out of the flows of communication between, at first the Core Team, and then later, the participants.

Keep it clear, keep it wild, and most importantly, keep it caring.

Forming Agreements

This is why it is important to form clear agreements or principles to guide the endeavor. Below is an example of how some CA core-teams have formed their agreements. In this case it was written as a simple constitution which articulates core intentions for a healthy learning space. Whatever you decide upon for your journey, the Core Team must commit to the principles as more than mere words at the root of your intentions. They must be taken up as living qualities.

The Constitution used by both *CA - Sweden to Greece* and *CA - Ireland*

- **Respect for the Earth:** *To respect all that exists outside of us in our environment and to strive to meet with openness and clarity all the places we encounter.*
- **Love for the Other:** *To strive to meet every human being with love and respect.*
- **Awake Self:** *To strive each day to be awake to, care for, and act from ones inner Self.*
- **Wonder for the Unknown:** *To be striving to act for the highest potential of the world. To have reverence for the vast unknown and wonder for the mysteries of the world.*

Partnering

Partnering is the process where newly formed Core Teams have skypes with past organizers to get mentorship and to make sure their intention is in line with the principles of Classroom Alive. Send an email to info.classroomalive@gmail.com answering the following questions and you will get connected to the organizer alumni network.

- Who are the individuals in the core team (interests, questions, skills, etc)?
- How do you know of Classroom Alive?
- Where do you imagine your trip will be?
- Days and times (incl. your time-zone) you would be available for a Skype in the next three weeks.

Partnering is a way for new teams to receive support and for the community to make sure each new proposed journey is in line with the principles and practices of Classroom Alive. In order to use the Classroom Alive name for your journey it is necessary to go through the partnership conversations.

DESIGN PHASE

In creating a Classroom Alive students are creating their own studies, but they are also creating a school.

The Route

The first question for a Core Team is between what points will you be travelling? This is the foundation of the whole experience. When deciding your location keep in mind the vast effect climate and terrain will have on the experience. This fact cannot be stressed enough; your environment will be your classroom! Things to consider are: temperature, average weather conditions, difficulty of terrain for traversing, access to water, access to food, and places to camp. No matter what, taking your studies on the road will be challenging. When finding your overall route look for ways in which your environment will support your study experience.

A key component of this is creating an overall route schedule that leaves enough time so that the journey is not pressured! Classroom Alive is not meant to be about performing great physical feats, rather the walking provides the steady, slow foundation of rhythm and lifestyle. Something which previous Classroom Alive's have done is to integrate flexible sections of hitch-hiking into their schedule, so that distance could be made up if needed. In this way the group felt flexible to be walking whatever distance felt appropriate on a given day. The length of the route is another important question. A Classroom Alive is always a minimum of a month long and has a maximum of roughly 372 years. When considering the length of time of your journey, keep in mind the longer you walk the deeper and stronger a culture and school you will build. Imagine the camaraderie on year 371!

Joining

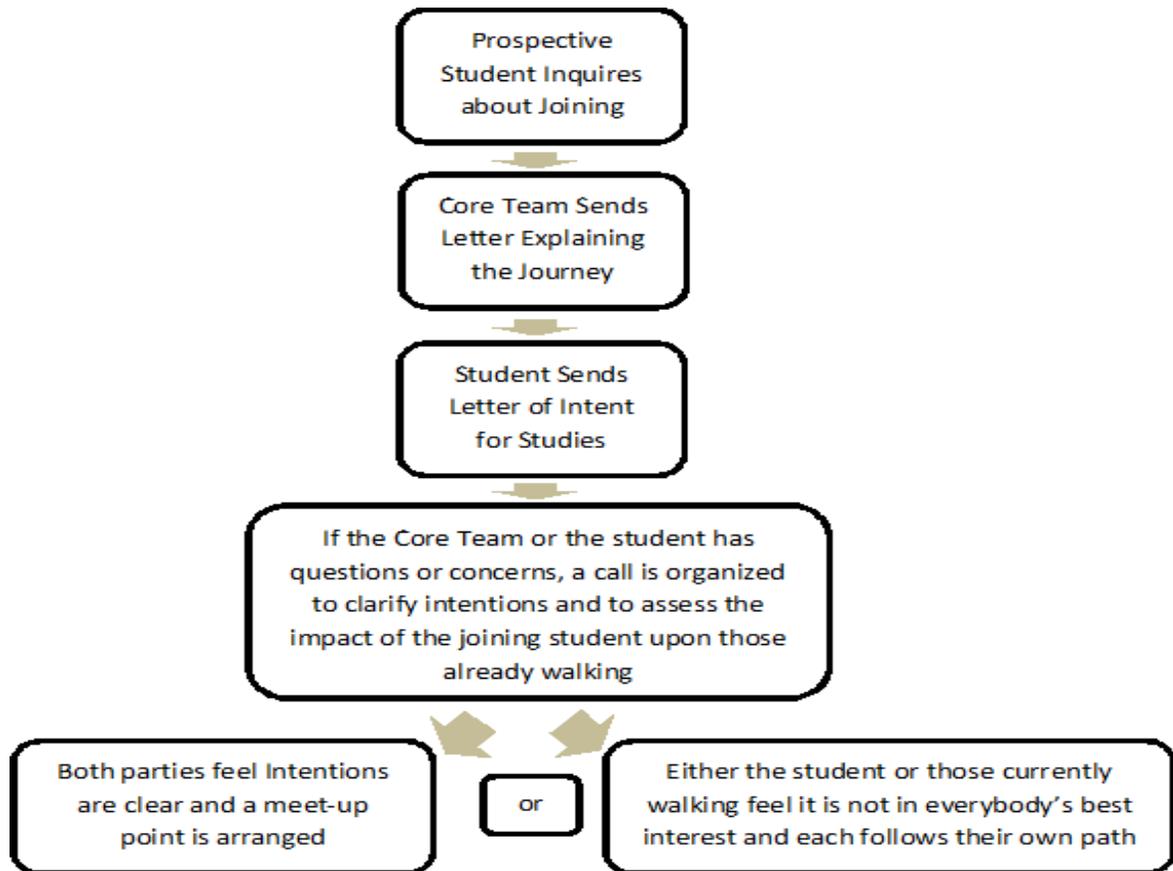
In designing a Classroom Alive journey you must consider, will it be open for others, if so what structures will be in place to support this process? If someone does want to join how will you decide if they can? Having the experience open to others is what can make it a truly collaborative, diverse, and dynamic learner's collective. It also however, takes planning and the more the Core Team is clear in their intentions and agreements the simpler this process will be.

Will students be joining whenever they like for however long they like or at specific times for specific periods? We have found that having students come in and out can be both fruitful and challenging. It offers bursts of inspiration and new insights as the students bring a fresh perspective to the experience and the studies. An essential aspect of

CA however is creating a community of learning. The constant coming and going of students can make this difficult.

Open weeks are a model that can be implemented to provide a balance of this dynamic. Open weeks are pre-selected days or weeks along the journey during which students who are interested in a short experience can join. We have noticed that in general it takes one week for students to get comfortable in the physical experience, and three weeks to arrive completely in their studies. Many have walked on CA journeys for as few as 3 days however and still had worthwhile experiences.

Ultimately you have to work with two questions for students joining the walk. Is this the right experience for them now, and is it possible for this CA journey to maintain the integrity of its intention if this person joins. You must find an application process that answers these questions and works for you. A summary of previous processes used by the other CA journeys is below:



Decision Making

What is needed is a clear, simple, and inclusive way for decisions to be made on the journey. Examples of questions that this process will need to be able to address are: What if someone gets sick? Where should you camp on any given night? Who decides the exact details of a given section of the route? Below is a [model](#) called Decision Alive that has been used on previous journeys. Other CA journeys can replicate it, tinker with it, or use something entirely different, just be clear!

Decision Alive

The model of Decision Alive is founded on the principles of **division of labour**, **empowerment** and **accountability**. Decision Alive is a meeting that happens on a rest day at the beginning of each route cycle (roughly 7- 14 days). At the beginning of the meeting, the group shares reflections from the past cycle on each role that somebody had taken up (route, food, studies stewards, evening host, online communication, time keeper, finances, Node-organizer etc.) Then each role is named in turn and those who want to take it up for the coming cycle indicate so, and anybody who wants to nominate somebody for the task can also do so. With larger tasks a team of two or three can be chosen. That team is then empowered for the duration of the route cycle to incorporate the reflections of the group with totally authority for the route cycle. If however, at some point, somebody feels that they cannot not go along with a decision, (**not that they didn't like** a decision, but that literally, they **cannot** go along with it) then a consensus circle is called to find the best decision for the group. This model rests on the balance of **empowerment** and **accountability**.

The decision making model will greatly define who has authority over what decisions. It is important however to reflect on two questions. Once the journey begins will there still be a "Core Team"? If so what responsibilities will they have, will authority be transferred to the group after a period of time? What effects will this distinction have on the experience? If students are joining once the journey has begun, how will new students' participation in maintaining the structure change as they become more integrated into the essential aspects of the journey. Is there a time period by which, for example, students are considered to be part of the Core Team? For example a student joining for one week should perhaps not be in charge of the communications but one who will be there for a month could.

Communicating with the World

This is simple and essential. Create a website or a blog and share your intentions and experiences. This will both hold you accountable to an outside community and provide a source of support witnessing for your journey when you have doubts. This also can be the portal through which prospective students find your journey as well as where you communicate to them.

Finances

How will you finance your journey? While Classroom Alive is more cost effective than any other form of education it can be a challenge for some students as you cannot work while on the journey. Classroom Alive also aims to be an inclusive place and allow for students to join regardless of their economic circumstances. Past trips have been funded by a mix of individual financing, support from foundations, and peer donations. Being part of the CA network can help other CA's show their validity as an educational endeavor and apply to various foundations, depending on their location. Crowdfunding can also be an option.

On past CA trips, with the aim of making the journey economically accessible, students have covered basic costs out of a shared pot to which all students freely contributed different amounts according to their personal finances. A common pot will leverage collective buying power and allow the group to buy and cook food together and but requires that the group trust each other to operate economically in a way that serves the purpose of the whole and wellbeing of all. This can be a challenge for some people but will help build the spirit of trust, equity and gift. It can happen, however, that through a collective pot people "fall asleep" to money, so it is important to find a way to balance this with practices that bring awareness money.

The basic costs will vary depending on where you are and how you chose to live. Below is a list of costs per person as experienced in Western Europe (Scandinavia excluded). The weekly costs for transport and accommodation are based on very infrequent usage.

Food: 25 - 60 € per week

Transport: 10 € per month

Accommodation: 12 € per month

Gear: 30- 50 € per month

CREATING THE STUDIES

As the journey is designed the students work individually and collective to design how they will conduct their studies. Creating the studies take place in two parts: Individual Studies and Peer-led Learning Practices.

Self-Directed Studies

There is a lot to say about self-directed curriculum design in general. Below are just some brief points to reflect on when designing a curriculum. There are a plethora of very goods resources available that go into more depth in the subject. One especially relevant website for curriculum design is Open Masters <http://www.openmasters.org/>, more resources can be found at the end of this section.

Syllabus

- Search for syllabus of courses in the topic you are interested in. Search online, ask friends in school, go to professors. Don't only find singular resource; collect webs of insight as much possible, build upon other teachers and students resources for engaging with the topic you are interested in.

Checkpoints

- Create clear checkpoints (Writing assignments, teaching, mentor check-ins, etc) which follow the path of interest you wish to take. Don't make the checkpoints too ambitious or you will become disheartened. Break your checkpoints down into many small missions (read these chapters by this date, a draft of this article by this location).

Communicate

- Tell everyone about your checkpoints. Share with your peers, share with a mentor. For bigger ones, like a final project, tell your wider community as having your peers and communities witnessing will provide accountability and tension to your *intensions*. More about this in the peer-led practices section of this document.

Teach

- Teach as much as possible. This is covered more in the peer-led practices section of this booklet.

Studying While Journeying

Resource Preparation

- The more preparation that you can do before you set out the better, as once you are on the journey it may prove very challenging to get your hands on the resources you need.

Hold Structure

- Hold the guidelines and structures of your studies with all the strength you have AND be open as the creative chaos of life on the road hits.

Location Relevance

- One thing to think about is ways that your studies can relate to the places you pass. Whether in content or process, e.g conducting interviews along the way, studying local fauna, giving pop-up presentations. This will bring the whole experience more alive weaving the studies and journey ever deeper.

Challenges Faced by Self-Directed Students

Motivation.

- Stepping out of an institution for ones learning can at first be like stepping into a void of willpower, as the source of motivation, the weight of the school as witness, disappears. This is one of the biggest challenges, and like the rest of the challenges, is addressed by the peer-led learning practices discussed later in this section. The peer-led practices can provide the needed accountability, support, and rhythm to overcome the potential self-directed learner's vacuum of external motivation. The work of motivation will be a never ending dance, never feel defeated and simply keep trying to improve. Remember that part of what you are learning as a self-directed student is the *capacity* of self-motivation. It is a difficult and incredibly valuable ability that takes time to cultivate and is never finished.

Continuity

- Self-directed studies and the quality of life on the road will always be working to disperse your attention. Students might find themselves drawn to jump from interest to interest. Students may be prone to not push through the difficulty to come to real understandings. In creating ones self-directed curriculum always search for how you can make your path of learning as continuous as possible. Be flexible but steadfast with your questions and intentions.

Prejudice

- Knowledge, left completely alone, will always tend toward a fragment view of things. We will base our future learning on our pre-existing prejudices. Find as

many and diverse outside sources as possible to help expand your understanding. Keep a systems perspective on the resources you are selecting so that the insight you are gaining can resist fragmentation. To expose yourself to diversity, you must *actively* seek that which seems alien to you.

Production

- This challenge is particular to a journey context. While journeys are incredibly rich and inspiring it can be hard to carve out longer periods of extended stillness that can be required for producing out of your studies. Writing essays and the like become much more challenging practically. When creating your self-directed curriculum you can ask yourself what are the key pieces you want to produce and really focus on those when you get a chance, knowing that there is a lot more there that will be digested in the months to come after the walk is completed.

Some resources that can help with this are:

Open masters
P2p
edX
coursera
udacity
uncollege
udemy
great courses

Creating the Peer-led School

On CA it is the peer-led practices which make the learning possible. There are many different particular forms that this can take. At its core it consists of one thing - creating a *learning culture of accountability and passion!* It cannot be stressed enough how definite a role this culture will play in the success of the studies on a CA journey. As much as CA is at first created simply by the shared intention of the core team, the studies are created entirely out of the students' collective intention towards how they choose to learn.

Four elements that will be essential for creating the learning culture are:

Teaching

Finding ways for students to be teaching is an invaluable way for them to be deepening their learning. Creating moments at which students are expected to be teaching each other, or those they pass, provides anchor points for their thinking, keeping them accountable to their process. Teaching is also one of the best ways to see what you don't know.

Witnessing

We are social beings and to remain focused and inspired we must be witnessed. The same is true of studies, in leaving an institution, a very large impersonal witness; practices must be created to witness each other's studies. This can happen in the teaching but can be extended beyond into more regular and dynamic ways (see the end of this document for examples).

Collaborating

One valuable resource on a CA journey is the many interesting individuals studying *different* topics. This makes it a rich experience when the many disciplines can come together around a shared topic, each student bringing their own lens to the focus at hand. This can also provide a welcome break from ones individual topic of study. These times on previous CA journeys have proven to be some of the most fruitful learning experiences. We highly encourage when designing a CA to see how the most shared study can happen. Perhaps an entire journey is formed with shared studies.

Rhythm

On the journey things will always be in flux, there will always be reasons that you don't want to, or feel you can't, follow through with some of the study practices. It is of the utmost importance that students stay committed and push through, doing everything possible to keep rhythm, to stay committed to whatever forms you have chosen. The practices can of course change but always do so consciously. Perhaps a certain practice begins to feel a little empty. Don't let it just fade away. Consciously let it go and see if there is another way perhaps to be engaging better. This rhythm, this commitment to show up for the practices is a collective act, the one which provides a foundation in the midst of the chaotic and always dissolving quality of trying to study on the road. The more this commitment is held the stronger the culture of learning will be.

Group Practices

Five practices that have been used in previous CA journeys as peer-led learning practices are:

Study Check-ins

Study check-ins are an incredibly simple form. Once a week students gather in a circle and spend a couple hours sharing 5-10 minute summaries of the past week of their studies and talk about their intentions for the week to come. This is a simple routine in which the shared intention to be studying is re-affirmed.

Mentor Groups

Once a week students gather with a consistent group of 3 or 4 peers to challenge and reflect on each other's study process and threads of content. The mentor groups meet for a couple hours during a walking or study session and through meeting with the same

smaller group of peers regularly a more in-depth process of peer-accountability can develop.

Lessons

Lessons taught by the students provide an anchor of accountability, a space for sharing their findings, and a chance to see what they still don't know.

Focus Weeks

The Focus weeks are times on the walk during which students study the same topic. The Focus Weeks are designed as a point of intersection, where students with similar interests can gather around a chosen topic, exposing students to a greater spectrum of study and building a greater shared sense of learning.

Nodes

The Nodes are designed to give students the opportunity to teach what they have learned to people in the cities they pass through and to hear from local experts. The nodes can be a day, a week, or a month of sedentary shared learning that opens a Classroom Alive to the public and local teachers.

THE PRACTICALITIES OF THE JOURNEY

The group of students walk and study together, continuously creating their peer-led journey school.

Food

You will be challenged to streamline food, both shopping and cooking. What is the exact amount of food you need, what kind of food do you need, who is going to cook, how will you cook, etc. are all questions you will have to answer.

Water

Water is an essential practicality that must be considered. Purification and access are the two areas to address. Access of course depends entirely on the environment one is passing through. For most places which are not in the vast wilderness, finding homes along your route should be no problem. Do some research about the areas you will pass, if there are more wild sections, research more carefully, there are a lot of resources (maps, guidebooks etc.) which will have specific information about water sources.

Pills or pumps are your two main routes for cheap purification. There are different benefits and drawbacks to any purification system. Pumps are generally healthier but more time consuming and breakable. Again if you are on a route that has you going through even sparsely populated areas you can simply be asking for drinking water from those you pass. It is always good to carry back-up water purification pills even if you are travelling through populated areas. Carrying a few extra empty litres of water bottles can give flexibility when in need. Whenever possible asking for water is a meaningful part of a Classroom Alive journey as it is an easy moment to interact with strangers and meet the culture of the place you are passing.

Route

You can plan the entire journey in whatever level of detail you like before you set out, but there will always be things to be navigated once you are on the road. In addition to larger questions that might arise, there is also the element of the day-to-day navigation. This level of meticulous detail which needs to factor in everything from water sources to the groups energy level needs to be done on an ongoing basis but can be circulated amongst the group throughout the trip. To help do this task on previous trips, teams have used a mix of maps, guidebooks, Smartphone's with saved routes, and notes from websites and blogs. Often the best maps will be found in the big cities closest to where you are going. Sometimes guidebooks for regions can be found online or in farther off cities. Simple traditional topographical trail maps have been found to be the most useful.

If you are in a tight situation Google maps and screenshots can be used if you have an opportunity for network access, especially on more road based routes this can be a truly viable option. And sometimes maybe you are just supposed to get lost.

Wild Camping

Housing is another large practicality of life on the road. The journeys that have happened so far have almost exclusively used tents and camping. Camping is enriching and it keeps you outdoors, and flexible. You can pitch your tent almost anywhere, and if not for free, it is definitely the cheapest housing one can find! In general wild camping (camping in places that are non-official camping grounds) is a much more possible activity then most people imagine. Almost all over the world it is an option with the biggest hindrance being safety in some countries. In more urban areas ask around for a squat or for community centers, college campuses, or strangers with yard space. When asking be playful and warm.

The possibility to be sleeping outside each night can play a large role in choosing your overall route. A CA journey on which you could not be camping could quickly become much more complicated and costly.

Daily Schedule

In creating the foundation of CA the core team should define the rough outline of what a day on the journey will look like. The main goal is to create a clear intention as to **how, on a daily basis, will the students be undergoing their self-directed studies?** This will obviously change from day to day but it is essential that you are clear on what your goal is, even if the goal itself is be totally spontaneous! You could define how many hours a day you aim to study or where in the day you will fit the studies. An example of other trips is on the right:

A Day of Classroom Alive	
06.00 - 07.00	Morning Practices
07.00 - 07.45	Packing
07.45 - 08.30	Breakfast
08.30 - 10.30	1st Block Walking Session
10.30 - 12.30	2nd Block Study Session
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 - 15.30	3rd Block Study Session
15.30 - 17.30	4th Block Walking Session
17.30 - 18.30	Setting up Camp
18.30 - 20.00	Dinner
20.00 - 21.00	Story/check-in/Biography & Campfire
21.00 - 22.00	Closing the day

Physical Health

From previous journeys we have found that it takes approximately a week for the average person to adjust to the physical element of the Classroom Alive lifestyle. Be aware as people are joining that they will need extra care.

Gear

Each person will have their own preference for what gear they bring but the basic principle is pack light and bring layers. In addition to this there are a few pieces of gear which are especially important to think about.

E-reader -It might seem like a small detail but get an e-reader! They make your life as a journeying student so much better. It is nice being able to work from a large selection of books and documents, and an e-reader makes this light. The other great thing is that there are a lot of books which are available for free online, all the classics, legally, and many others titles, a little less legally. They tend to have long battery life and you just have to treat them a little carefully if you want them to last the distance.

Study Space - One essential piece of gear for a Classroom Alive is a big tarp. When you are on the road you will need to be able to set-up a study space in diverse environments. On the journey this will be a constant process and exploration. How can you create productive learning spaces on mountain tops, or thunderstorms.

Backpacks - For anyone who has hiked before you know that there is an equation that goes $\text{weight}=\text{pain}$. When you are packing, pack light! Over time you will adjust but a few pounds can make a big difference.