



Centering Community-Based Learning

Community-Based Learning (CBL) builds on the rich, diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, families, and educators. Delivered in learning environments that are relationship-centered and ensure a sense of belonging, CBL builds on community assets, cultural wealth, funds of knowledge, and indigenous ways of knowing. Community-Based Learning is powerful instruction that increases student engagement by connecting classroom learning to real-life experiences and to issues that are relevant to students' lives and communities, improving their sense of ownership and agency.

Visioning

- Invest in educators' learning about and appreciation for students, families, the community, and their wealth of knowledge to inform instructional goals and curriculum. Utilize practices such as community learning tours, relationship-building home visits, and family/student interviews to strengthen educators' knowledge, shift mindsets, and build capacity for collective action.
- Explore the question, "how is teaching and learning different in a community school?" Provide educators opportunities to learn the theoretical roots and applied elements of CBL to integrate classroom learning with real-world experiences in the local community. In teams, identify existing practices and opportunities as well as possibilities for CBL in classrooms, such as project-based learning, youth participatory action research, work-based learning, internships, and service learning.
- Ensure that educators have the resources needed to create supportive, student-centered learning environments that serve the whole child, including training and support in restorative justice and positive behavior practices, social emotional learning, and culturally-sustaining pedagogy and classroom practices.
- Support educators to engage in reflective "mirror work" in order to become more conscious of implicit bias and how their positionality and identity influence their work with students, families, and colleagues.

Engaging

- Create dedicated time for professional learning focused on strengthening all educators' implementation of learning strategies that create a clear bridge between the classroom, school, and the community.
- Allocate time and supportive resources for educators to collectively plan curriculum and integrate learning experiences that strengthen classroom-community connections. Include time for interdisciplinary teams of educators to learn and plan together, and to explore school and classroom policy changes needed to create restorative, safe, relationship-centered learning environments.
- Explore flexibilities in curriculum and assessment to support innovations, powerful instruction, and alternative ways of demonstrating knowledge that can best respond to the assets and needs of students.
- Make space for educators to address problems of practice, and ensure the curriculum addresses the learning needs of vulnerable students, English learners, and those with learning differences.
- Continue engaging families through home visits and/or other high-impact family engagement practices to deepen trust and build effective home-school partnerships.

Transforming

- Root school-level policy and procedures related to curriculum and pedagogy in a community-based learning framework, including continuous professional learning opportunities, educator evaluations, selection and purchasing of instructional materials, and assessment practices.
- Bring together teams of educators to develop assessments that provide evidence of the impact/value of community-based pedagogy (e.g., performance assessments like capstone projects, portfolios) as well as to evaluate and adapt their teaching strategies to ensure they remain relevant and effective, using feedback from students, families, and community assessments.
- Foster an environment where students can see the impact of their learning on their communities, thereby improving their agency and commitment to societal contribution.
- Uplift and honor ways that families teach cultural customs, traditions, and history to their children as well as promote pride in their racial or ethnic heritage.
- Support educators to identify and leverage their strengths so they can do the same thing for their students.
- The foundational tenets of a restorative and healing-centered approach to school-wide discipline are embedded in the school and classroom culture and climate.

Visioning

➤ Invest in learning about students, the community, and their wealth of knowledge to inform instructional goals and curriculum. Empathy interviews with students and families, relationship-building home visits, community tours, and other engagement activities are used by LEA-level administrators and leaders to better understand the community.

➤ Seek to answer the question, "how is teaching and learning different in a community school?" Explore CBL with LEA instructional leaders, including superintendents and school principals, and envision how it aligns with and supports LEA instructional priorities.

➤ Create time, space, and flexibility for educators and schools to co-create a shared understanding of CBL, curriculum, and the importance of creating the conditions that support students' learning such as a positive and restorative school climate.

➤ Support school-level decision-making that enables educators to explore curriculum and assessment innovations that best respond to the assets and needs of their local community.

Engaging

➤ Modify instructional resources, curriculum, and LEA-wide professional learning to reflect and support a CBL approach in community schools, emphasizing locally designed community-based curriculum and pedagogy.

➤ Engage a diverse and representative interest-holder group to vet all new and existing curricular resources and supports to ensure they advance equity and address the learning needs of vulnerable students.

➤ Develop and administer an LEA-wide school climate survey to students, families, and educators to ensure the learning environment provides a welcoming, nurturing, identity-safe, culturally- and linguistically-affirming, and relationship-centered space.

➤ Empower community schools with the autonomy to innovate on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in order to curate an instructional framework that best responds to the assets and vision of the local community.

Transforming

➤ Adopt and support a vision of teaching and learning that is at the center of the community school initiative. Continuously strive for LEA-wide teaching and learning that is collaborative, rigorous, relationship-centered, culturally- and linguistically-affirming, relevant, asset-based, democratic, and community-based.

➤ Actively engage families and community members in classroom instruction. Deeply integrate these important co-educators into the LEA's teaching and learning approach.

➤ Make learning and learning outcomes visible to all, sharing in success with families, communities, and partners.

LEA-LEVEL

Progress Monitoring Measures

School climate surveys; shared learning of students and educators via a range of performance assessments (e.g., capstone projects, learning portfolios, learning showcases, community teach-ins, inter-grade and inter-classroom teach-ins, action research presentations, student self-assessment and reflections); and increased learning tasks that build on prior knowledge, are rigorous, and are community-connected. Locally-determined measures such as completion of seal of civic engagement and seal of biliteracy. School-level outcome measures, as defined by CCSPP reporting requirements, including school attendance rates, chronic absenteeism rates, dropout rates, proficiency scores, high school graduation rates, and suspension/expulsion rates.

RESOURCES

- [Community-Based Learning Guide](#)