



STATE TRANSFORMATIONAL ASSISTANCE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Centering Community-Based Learning in Community Schools Guide and Planning Tool

What is it?

California Community Schools seek to create schools where learning is relationship-centered and racially-just, and classroom-community-connections are vital to school transformation efforts. Classrooms and learning spaces draw from the cultural wealth, funds of knowledge, and indigenous ways of knowing of students, families, and educators to cultivate responsive classrooms that foster a deep sense of belonging. Community-Based Learning is contextual, culturally-responsive, and nurtures young people's agency to be competent, productive and active participants in a democracy.

Purpose

Community-based learning increases students' engagement by connecting the learning process to issues that are relevant to their own lives and community. Community schools are places where learners rediscover their sense of self and create a clear bridge between the classroom, school, and their community. By creating deep learning experiences that are relevant, culturally affirming, rigorous, and agentic, learners are supported to build academic competencies that will support them to actualize their hopes and dreams.

Community-Based Learning: a Capacity Building Strategy Across the Stages

In California's capacity-building strategies, community-based learning is an approach to transforming teaching and learning. Through a continuous cycle of reflection and action, rooted in praxis and an assets-based orientation, community-based learning is driven by the learners, community, and the indigenous land where the learning is placed. The capacity building strategies envision the work of community-based learning as developing across the stages of visioning, engaging and transforming. The stages are characterized as follows:

- **Visioning:**
 - Develop a shared understanding of CBL and engage full educator teams in learning about students, families and practices that will allow for learner-centered and racially-just environments. Adult learners are set up to transform teaching and learning through a collaborative approach.
- **Engaging:**
 - Build educators skills and efficacy to implement CBL through robust teacher-leadership and powerful and collaborative spaces of adult-learning. Educators address needs of vulnerable students and collectively innovate practices, curriculum, and CBL outcomes.
- **Transforming:**
 - Powerful instruction and student-centered assessments are visible to the entire community. Educator-led teams leverage autonomy and knowledge of students

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to implement strong learning systems of continuous reflection and improvement. Adult and young learners take on a learner mindset that creates joyful and real-world classrooms.

The Role of LEA's and Districts in Community-Based Learning

- Support site educators to meaningfully learn from their students and community through regular feedback and engaging in the needs and assets assessment.
- Alongside site-educators, build learning programs that best support the needs, strengths and aspirations of students, families and educators.
- Build partnerships with local organizations that see their role in supporting classroom-community connections.
- Trust and support teachers to vision, plan and implement community-based learning.
- Provide time during the regular work day for rich collaboration that allows for educator teams to engage in cycles of inquiry, reflection and action.

Assets-Mapping CBL in your Local Context:

The work of CBL, includes building on existing practices and ways of knowing in your community. It is not a one size-fits all approach, or even a curricular program that can be purchased and duplicated. A critical exercise in CBL implementation is to begin finding the assets– the teachers, families, students, community partners, and learning spaces – where this work already exists and can help inform the work in your context. The following are examples of places to begin your exploration:

[AUHSD Capstone Program: “A journey to agency, autonomy and joy”](#)

- Capstone projects help build on student assets and authentically measure teaching and learning in community schools.
- The anaheim story tells a clear and powerful example of teacher autonomy to drive real-world and community-based learning.

[Community Science Teaching at Mann Community School](#)

- Community-based responsive curriculum that centers students' learning and real world experience based on local issues of environmental justice.

[How Community Schools Connect Classrooms: Learning from Pio Pico Dual Language Elementary School](#)

- Parents at Pio Pico are trained in lesson planning to deliver culturally-sustaining lessons that build on the funds of knowledge in the community.
- The example shows parents delivering lessons in their home language in Guatemala, K'iche.'

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[Investing in Young People to be Community Leaders at Oakland Community School](#)

- Students are provided with the learning conditions to be problem-solvers and leaders in their community through youth participatory action research.
- The example highlights students engaging in community-based research to engage in advocacy for their community.

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Community-based Learning Planning Tool

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How to use this tool:

- Site and district teams are encouraged to use this tool to reflect on existing curriculum, lessons or learning programs at the school and district level. Teams should identify opportunities where these elements can be integrated at the school level and alongside community organizations.
- The following elements are a starting point in defining Community-Based Learning and there may be units and lessons where a high degree of CBL implementation will be more evident than others including through the creation of Capstone Projects, Culminating Projects and Community Showcases. The goal is to build in these elements in ways that are responsive to the needs of students and community.
- It may be helpful to integrate the elements into existing initiatives and curricular scope and sequences, while identifying strengths and gaps across school sites and districts.

GUIDING QUESTIONS	REFLECTION
Place-Based: How are young people provided the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and value of the defining features of their physical place – the geography, environment, language, culture, religion, history, identity, economy, and sociopolitical context?	
Community Connected: How is learning connected to the people who live in the community surrounding the school? In what ways is the learning meaningfully connected to the rich assets of the community—such as its people, businesses, organizations, and nonprofits—or to the pressing issues facing the community, enabling young people to relate their learning to their own lives and environments?	
Individual Student and Collective Community Agency: How does the learning foster individual student and/or collective community agency?	

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<p>Relationship-Centered: How does the learning foster relationship-building and a deeper sense of community and belonging?</p> <p>In what ways is the learning environment conducive to supporting the whole child?</p>	
<p>Community Knowledge and Assets: How does teaching and learning build on local forms of knowledge?</p> <p>In what ways is the learning visible to the community, and does it actively contribute to the community's collective knowledge and understanding?</p>	
<p>Civic Engagement and Civic Mindedness: How does the learning connect students directly with real-world issues, show students how their actions can have a tangible impact, and empower them to become proactive, engaged citizens?</p> <p>In what ways does the learning enable students to contribute to community well-being and encourage a sense of duty to participate in civic activities and public advocacy?</p>	
<p>Addressing Community Needs and Assets: How are students provided the opportunity to create awareness of the community's needs and assets?</p> <p>In what ways does the learning prompt students to come up with actions or solutions to address community needs or lift up community assets? In what ways does the learning connect with community organizations so that student projects can be part of the solution to the community issues that the organizations are taking on?</p>	
<p>Reinforce Values of Equity and Justice How does the learning prompt students to notice, explore, and disrupt notions of power and privilege?</p> <p>In what ways does the teaching and learning uplift non-dominant narratives and ways of knowing?</p>	
<p>Meaningful and Agentive Assessments: Does the teaching and learning involve multiple forms of assessing student knowledge and skills? Do students have an opportunity to make the learning visible? Does the assessment process promote student agency and voice? Does it promote social-emotional learning? Does the assessment honor community knowledge and community-connection?</p>	

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