

Community-Based Learning

A Resource for Schools

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Community-Based Learning A Resource for Schools

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Overview

Community-Based Learning (CBL): A Resource for Schools is designed to support teachers, schools, regions, boards, and community partners in implementing and enhancing student learning through community-based learning and an experiential lens.

Introduction

Community-based learning encourages learning opportunities for elementary, junior high, and senior high school students by bringing the community into the school or by placing students in the community as part of learning experiences that can support the curriculum and inform their studies.

Community-based learning is a teaching strategy that brings together academic learning with community engagement; this approach can see students demonstrating learning and skill development with partners in the community or can bring the community into the classroom (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2020). Students benefit from the expertise, talent, and resources of community-based service agencies, government, business, citizen groups, entrepreneurs, families, industry, and organizations. Through these opportunities, students can apply and develop, in real-life contexts, knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes acquired through their learning in school.

Community-based learning enhances students' personal development and growth, sense of belonging to community, confidence and self-esteem, as well as understanding of community roles and responsibilities. Community-based learning also helps students see the role of lifelong learning by exploring the importance of developing workplace skills that include fundamental, personal management, and teamwork skills. The experiences also provide students with exposure to specific careers, job skills, and understanding of labour market information.

Risk management prior to any community-based learning experience is essential. The safety and well being of students while engaged in CBL is a priority. Teachers must communicate risk to families and support students in developing safe practices that can be applied in their community-based learning environment.

The Community-Based Learning Policy defines the components and requirements for community-based learning experiences. This policy can be found in the Appendix of this resource and should be reviewed before students are introduced to and participate in any CBL experience.

Goals of community-based learning

The central goals of community-based learning are to:

- Provide opportunities for students' personal growth.
- Foster, promote, and develop student self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy.
- Enhance students' development as citizens who actively engage in and contribute positively to their communities.
- Help prepare students for future opportunities, responsibilities, and experience.

Community-based learning experiences that are intentional and align with curriculum can help students to:

- Develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be successful in school, in life and at work.
- Make informed decisions about their education and career plans.
- Build a foundation for successful transitions to their roles in the community and the workplace.
- Facilitate the development of the Essential Graduation Competencies.

Learning through the Community

Who can engage in community-based learning?

CBL is for all students, at all grade levels, courses, and abilities. By providing students with opportunities to use their knowledge and skills from the classroom in a community experience, students are able to see how their skills can transfer to new settings.

How and where can community-based learning be introduced?

The chart below represents CBL experiences for students from elementary to high school. CBL experiences will connect to the outcomes of the curriculum. In addition, wherever students are engaged with partners in the community all RCE/CSAP policies apply; this includes but is not limited to transportation, field trip forms, and parental consent.

CBL Experience	Grade Level	Considerations
Community Career Exploration	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Connected to a learning goal and supports student understanding of careers, industry/business and supports opportunities for career and skill engagement.</p> <p>Examples may include completing an inventory of what is available in the community during a community walk, touring local businesses, examination of community services and related jobs/ career pathways.</p>
Community Economic Development Projects	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Connect with local government, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Enterprise Networks for partnership/ learning opportunities.</p> <p>Examples may include supporting local walking trail development or clean-up or participating in a networking event or workshop.</p>
Co-operative Education	16 years of age, or 15 years of age and in Grade 11	<p>High school PSP course which places a student at a worksite or in the community as part of their learning. This includes a combination of pre-placement and ongoing instruction and a work-site placement.</p> <p>Most of the course takes place in the community. Due to the independent nature of co-op, the students must meet workplace readiness criteria prior to being placed in the community.</p> <p>Contact your region's/CSAP Youth Pathways Consultant for further information.</p>
Entrepreneurial Learning	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Opportunities to support entrepreneurial learning in all subject areas may include workshops/ pitch competitions/ design thinking challenges.</p> <p>Invite entrepreneurs or other community partners into the classroom to support student learning.</p> <p>Engage community partners in classroom workshops; explore community enterprises such as a Farmer's Market, book exchange, seniors support groups; apply entrepreneurial skills to community events or support a community need; participate in the Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence and Junior Achievement Programs.</p>

CBL Experience	Grade Level	Considerations
Field Trips	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Hosted within the community (outside of school) E.g., field trip to a farmer's market, business or other community group.</p> <p>Connected to a learning goal and offers opportunities for integrated learning. Communication with the community host establishes a relationship and clarifies needs, including the purpose of learning associated with the experience, discussion on safety (and assessment where applicable). Students should always be engaged in reflective practice related to outcomes.</p>
Guest Speaker	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Presentation is linked to student learning and curriculum outcomes and is interactive.</p> <p>Engage students in reflective practice appropriate for grade level. Consider how to expand the single experience by developing extension activities such as connecting with the speaker's place of work via technology (Google meet) for contact beyond presentation. Engage students in exploring the business through an in-person or virtual field trip.</p> <p>Review student expectations when a guest comes into the class, help students identify questions and how to express appreciation to the guest speaker.</p>
Internship	16 years of age, or 15 years of age and in Grade 11	<p>May apply to the completion of multiple co-op placements related to a specific field of study the student will undertake after completing high school.</p> <p>Refer to the CBL Policy for explanation and expectations of Internship. Prior to any internships, contact your region's/CSAP Youth Pathways Consultant for clarification and approval.</p>
Job Shadow	Ages 13+	<p>Placement of a student for a single day (up to 8 hours) of learning at a work site to provide insight into education, skills and responsibilities associated with a career or employment in general.</p> <p>Pre-planning and reflection are required components of all job shadows.</p> <p>Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form must be completed (see Appendix) if the learner is not under direct supervision of an RCE/CSAP employee, or parent or family member. The Risk Assessment form must be kept at the school for 1 year from the completion of the experience (RCE/CSAP policies/ paperwork will apply).</p> <p>Ex: Grade 9 Take Your Kids to Work Day.</p>
Project-Based Learning	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Clear goals established that align with curricula and skill development. Requires meaningful reflection pre/during/post and hands-on application wherever possible.</p> <p>Apply full project life cycle with students (initiation, planning, implementation, and closure).</p> <p>Can introduce mentorship or volunteer opportunities for students.</p> <p>Whenever tools are used, teachers and students must comply with Safety Net guidelines. See Technology Education (Safety Net).</p>

CBL Experience	Grade Level	Considerations
Service Learning	All grades with teacher supervision Age 13+ for independent engagement	<p>A structured learning experience that integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience and skill development.</p> <p>Service Learning must be student-driven and inquiry-based.</p> <p>Whenever tools are used, teachers and students must comply with Safety Net requirements - See Technology Education.</p> <p>Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form must be completed (see Appendix) if the learner is not under direct supervision of an RCE/CSAP employee, or parent or family member. The Risk Assessment form must be kept at the school for 1 year from the completion of the experience (RCE/CSAP policies/ paperwork will apply).</p> <p>Examples could include development of walking trails, planting of a community garden, or responding to a community need.</p>
Short-term Placements	16 years of age, or 15 years of age and in Grade 11	<p>These placements are intended to provide community or workplace exposure for shorter periods of time than a co-op placement; students make connections between classroom learning, skill development and a workplace or community organization; maximum total of 25 hours.</p> <p>Learners must engage in learning that supports safety awareness that would also be specific to the placement.</p> <p>Approval of school administrators and families would be required prior to commencement of a short-term placement.</p> <p>Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form must be completed (see Appendix) if the learner is not under direct supervision of an RCE/CSAP employee, or parent or family member. The Risk Assessment form must be kept at the school for 1 year from the completion of the experience (RCE/CSAP policies/ paperwork will apply).</p>
Virtual Workplace Experiences	All grades, with teacher supervision	<p>Exploration of company sites to introduce new experiences for students and information on workplace skills; opportunity to engage with employers for a tour of a company/ work site using technology.</p> <p>Engage students in pre/during/post reflection activities.</p> <p>See Appendix for CBL Partnerships.</p>
Youth Apprenticeship	16 - 19 years of age	<p>Students who are working in a designated trade, under the supervision of a certified tradesperson, undergo a registration process to become a youth apprentice through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.</p>

Note:

1. When students and teachers engage in any community-based learning experience they must comply with RCE/CSAP and CBL policies.
2. Teachers should consider how the [Physical Education Guidelines](#) may be beneficial in managing risk associated with CBL experiences.
3. Speak with your school administrator or contact your RCE/CSAP [Youth Pathways Consultant \(YPC\)](#) with any questions you may have.

Connecting Curriculum with Community-Based Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

Community-based learning experiences can provide opportunities for all students to be active participants in their learning. UDL offers students flexibility in their learning, in the ways concepts are presented, the ways they communicate their learning and demonstrate their understanding and the skills they are developing. CBL provides students with options to practice and develop skills in relation to concepts in a community classroom setting. CBL experiences align with the principles of UDL by offering multiple ways of engaging students. UDL and CBL both have high expectations for learning and offer flexibility in how students can access and engage in learning. The three main principles of UDL that align well with the goals of CBL are:

Universal Design for Learning: 3 principles

Provide multiple means of Engagement	Provide multiple means of Representation	Provide multiple means of Action & expression
Stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning in different ways.	Present information and content in different ways to support understanding.	Offer options and supports to all so everyone can create, learn and share.

Engagement: The “Why of learning”. CBL experiences motivate students and create interest in learning. CBL experiences capture students’ interests and increase engagement.

Representation: The “What of learning”. CBL experiences can be used to introduce students to new concepts and learning in a variety of ways.

Action/Expression: The “How of learning”. CBL experiences offer students flexibility in how they communicate their learning.

CBL experiences present opportunities for students to engage in the development of these competencies in a real-world context.

Teacher Considerations for CBL Pre/ During/ Post Experiences

In order to fully prepare students for meaningful engagement in a CBL learning experience, it is important to engage students at all stages of their learning.

Pre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Discuss with the host the expected behaviours for this experience.▪ Clarify what or if PPE may be required.▪ Identify and complete paperwork/ forms required by the school/ RCE/CSAP/ CBL Policy.▪ Initiate discussion with students about what they want to look for, ask, and expect from the experience.▪ Review the agenda for the experience and discuss roles and responsibilities.▪ Encourage students to have at least one take-away from a CBL experience and look for at least one question they would like to explore further when they return to class.▪ Ensure the experience is inclusive and accessible to all learners.▪ Consider how the learning may be assessed.▪ Consider how the learning experience can be an integrated learning experience. <p>TIP - Have the experience be as hands-on as possible, prepare for movement, interaction, and accessibility for all learners.</p>
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ensure students remember the learning goal for the day; build in extension questions/big ideas to support a rich learning experience.▪ Engage students in making integrated learning connections.▪ Conduct a debrief immediately after experience, wherever possible to capture students' ideas and thoughts that can be explored more in depth.
Post	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Engage students in exploring how they can showcase their learning and takeaways from the experience in other curriculum areas.▪ Engage students in discussion to review the experience; seek student voice in recommendations for improving the experience.▪ Engage students in sharing thank yous with the community host.▪ Engage students in reflective practice that is appropriate for the grade level.▪ Explore possible ways to reconnect/ reengage with the CBL experience at a future point to support their learning.▪ Reflect on the CBL experience from an educator perspective. What went well for students? What could be improved? How could you better prepare for future experiences?

Reflective Practice in CBL

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on or think about what you do (action), why you have done it, and what you can learn from it. Reflection enhances the dialogue between teacher and learner as well as between learners during the learning process. This practice also supports the development of creative thinking skills and encourages active engagement in work processes. At its core, it drives the process of continuous learning and can help develop a growth mindset.

Suggestions for Learners for CBL Pre/ During/ Post Guiding Questions

Teachers can facilitate conversations and other types of classroom (student) activities prior to, during, and after CBL experiences in relation to the following suggested questions. These are great discussion starters for teachers to facilitate student connections at a deeper level.

Pre	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Why are we engaging in this experience?▪ How will this support our learning?▪ What information can be gathered and why is this information important or relevant?▪ What skills might people use and how did they develop them?▪ What skills do you think you will see/develop as a result of your experience?▪ What are the expectations for this experience and what do you hope to see/learn/do?▪ How does the experience support our interests and connect to/life?▪ How do we see ourselves represented in these experiences?▪ How will we stay safe during our experience?▪ What are you most looking forward to about your experience?
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What are we experiencing?▪ What is your first impression of this experience?▪ What skills are evident/used in this experience?▪ How does our classroom learning relate to this CBL experience?▪ What am I learning about careers?▪ What do I wonder about now?▪ How have we met our goals for the day?▪ What have I learned about myself in the context of the experience?
Post	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What can we do with the information we gathered?▪ What are your biggest takeaways from this experience?▪ How could we follow-up with our hosts?▪ How can we use our questions to drive further learning?▪ What skills did you identify as important in this experience?▪ How was this experience impactful for you?▪ What did you most enjoy about your experience?▪ What do you want to learn now?▪ How can other CBL experiences contribute to your learning?

Coordinating Community-Based Learning Experiences

Community-Based Learning Partnerships

Regions/CSAP have developed relationships with many CBL partners that include local community organizations, businesses, not for profits, social enterprises and government. The partnership information, found in the Appendix represents a list of partners located across Nova Scotia that would typically be accessible province wide by the RCEs/ CSAP. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive; schools, RCEs/ CSAP are able to make many community connections that would be unique to their geographic areas and needs that can support student learning.

The table offers suggestions on partner engagement at various grade levels; types of support provided by the partners may need to be tailored to best support students' needs and curriculum outcomes. For example, Junior Achievement may provide a menu of options that could support students in Grades 4-6 who are engaged in the "Who Am I" self assessment phase of career exploration while students in Grades 9-12 may require different supports in learning about entrepreneurial skills through the Company Program.

Guidelines for engaging with a community partner:

- Ensure that the opportunity and experience are of benefit to both the students and the community partner.
- Set a time to meet with or have a discussion with the community partner to review the opportunity and expectations.
- Connect with other teachers to explore how the experience can be applied across curricula and possibly support engagement of other students.

Questions about a regional partnership opportunity or school-based partner opportunities should be directed to the [Youth Pathways Consultant in each RCE/ CSAP](#).

Risk Management Expectations:

Risk management is an essential component when planning and implementing a CBL experience for students.

- Teachers should speak with school administrators and review RCE/ CSAP policies before participating in a CBL experience outside of the classroom. Teachers should obtain permission from school administrators before bringing a community partner into the school as part of student learning.
- Teachers/schools are required to obtain informed consent before participating in any CBL experience, field trips/activities. Informed consent includes completing required RCE/CSAP forms as well as the [Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form](#) if required. Risk Assessment and informed consent forms must be securely kept in the school for 1 year. See table on CBL Experiences or the [CBL Policy](#).
- Prior to CBL experiential learning engagement, it is important to engage in pre/during and post preparation for any CBL experience, including emergency preparedness.

The Role of the School Insurance Program (SIP) in CBL

The School Insurance Program is a not-for-profit organization that manages all aspects of property and casualty-related insurance for the Regional Centres for Education of Nova Scotia, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) <https://sip.ca/about-us/>.

Public schools in Nova Scotia are insured through the Nova Scotia School Insurance Exchange, informally known as School Insurance Program, or SIP. SIP provides administration, risk management, loss control, risk financing and claims management services to all schools, regions and boards in the province.

Most full-time students enrolled in NS public schools are automatically insured through SIP. The plan covers accidents while the student is:

- On school premises,
- At a workplace or other community placement for educational purposes,
- Participating in a school activity, including travel directly to and from the school, placement of activity.

Students are covered for student accident insurance while on approved CBL experiences. There are restrictions under the SIP policies in instances such as students travelling on water or in the air. There may be other instances where there are restrictions. Schools must refer each situation to SIP to determine whether adequate coverage is in place. Refer to school administration or your YPC for access to SIP and further details related to community-based learning.

All RCE/CSAP insurance policies must be followed. It is a principal's responsibility that all paperwork and policies are followed for every CBL experience.

These files must be accessible to administration and Youth Pathways Consultants.

Reporting Incidents or Accidents

If an incident or accident occurs during a CBL activity, the teacher responsible should immediately refer to administration to determine the process for reporting.

Transportation

The transportation of all students to and from extra and co-curricular activities is regulated by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. All RCEs/CSAP must comply with the Motor Carrier Act (Nova Scotia 1998) regarding transportation for students. SIP fulfills the requirements of the Regions/CSAP obligations under the Motor Carrier Act as long as all regulations are followed.

Information Access and Privacy - Online Learning Experiences

Students may wish to investigate community-based learning and career development experiences online. Student use of any platform should be reviewed with regional/ CSAP technology staff to ensure that it meets all privacy and security requirements. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that any online experience is hosted on a regional/CSAP or provincially approved platform. Refer to [E-Learning Support](#) for resources and support.

Appendix

Available Resources

- [Community-Based Learning Policy](#)
- [Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form](#)