

Community as Classroom: Community Engagement

Definition: Community as Classroom includes:

1. Communities serve as learning ecosystems for schools where local and regional experts, organizations, experiences, and places are part of the expanded definition of a classroom.¹
2. The process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum.²

Rationale:

Community as Classroom encourages broadening the idea of the classroom to include three venues for learning: bringing the community into the classroom through guest speakers and content; bringing the students into the community on learning journeys; and simply going outside the classroom to do something you could have just done inside. These venues develop strong relationships between students and their community. Using the local community as a classroom emphasizes real-world learning experiences. Breaking down barriers between the classroom and community enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, as well as their interest in engaging in improving both community vitality and environmental quality. Emphasizing hands-on learning grounded in community increases academic achievement, develops stronger student commitment to community, and encourages the development of active, contributing citizens.²



Video Resources:

1. [Schools that Change Communities](#)
2. [Learning Beyond the Classroom Walls](#)
3. [Place-Based Learning: Using Your Location as a Classroom](#) (elementary example)
4. [Place-Based Learning: Connecting Kids to Their Community](#) (middle school example)
5. [Community-Based Learning: Connecting students with their world](#) (high school example)

Document Resources:

1. [Place-based Education: Connecting Classroom and Community](#)
2. [20 Schools and Networks that Educate with a Sense of Place](#)

Research Support:

1. The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design, by U. Bronfenbrenner. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

¹ "Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative." http://www.peecworks.org/PEEC/Benefits_of_PBE-PEEC_2008_web.pdf. Accessed 27 Oct. 2017.

² Sobel, D. "Place-based Education: Connecting Classroom and Community." <https://www.antioch.edu/new-england/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/02/pbexcerpt.pdf>. Accessed 10 Jan. 2019.



Place Network Schools

Local Learning to Inspire Global Citizenship

2. Experiencing Nature: Affective, Cognitive, and Evaluative Development in Children, by S. Kellert, in *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations*. (pp. 116-151). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.
3. [Effects of Regular Classes in Outdoor Education Settings: A Systematic Review on Students' Learning, Social and Health Dimensions](#)

Implementation Exemplars/Schools/Districts:

1. [This Teacher Turned her Holiday Wish List into a Buzzing Community Initiative](#)
2. [Shaping the Soul of a School](#), Sustainability Academy, Burlington School District, Vermont
3. [The Community as Classroom](#)



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