



Community Education

Tamarack’s goal with these guides is to find and highlight examples of community engagement. In this guide, we explore how Community Education can be made more effective by using community engagement principles. Those principles include: grassroots citizen action; collaboration between actors; clear visions and goals; and public decision-making.

Our original intent with this research was to educate ourselves about how others were putting these principles to work in the real world, but the examples we found were too good to keep to ourselves. By sharing these resources, how-to guides, and inspiring stories, we hope to encourage others to put these principles to work in their own communities.

Not all the resources we’ve included discuss “community engagement” explicitly, but we feel these are interesting and useful examples. If you know of a helpful resource or a great story we should include, please let us know so we can add it soon—we’re always looking to revise and improve this guide. We hope this guide is a helpful start for anyone interested in engaging their communities around Community Education.

Is this your first time using one of our Tamarack Guides? Turn to Page 2 to see *How to Use This Guide*

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Definitions which might be useful:

Community Education: Education at all levels and ages which teaches skills, instills community values, uses local resources, and involves the entire community in the process of teaching and learning collaboratively through diverse activities both inside and outside traditional classrooms.

Community School: A school which acts as a hub of community activity, fostering relationships between students, teachers, parents, business, health and social services, nonprofits, volunteers, and others.

Service Learning: Incorporating community involvement and volunteer work into traditional curricula to the mutual benefit of students, who are engaged in their communities, and community organizations, which receive valuable help in their activities. Service learning is just one aspect of Community Education.

Signature Documents: Two Resources We Couldn’t Do Without

Caledon Institute: Communities and Schools Series
<http://www.caledoninst.org/comsch.htm>



The Caledon Institute’s [Communities and Schools Series](#) includes five profiles of schools that have made their communities an important part of education, and two position papers from the Caledon Institute on the importance of community to learning.

The pieces discuss the different ways that communities and schools interact, and raises important political issues, such as the privatization of education.

Institute for Educational Leadership: Education and Community Building—Connecting Two Worlds
<http://www.communityschools.org/combuild.pdf>

This [booklet](#) from the Institute for Educational Leadership makes the link between community engagement and education more clearly and explicitly than any other we found. It describes the rationale for linking schools to the larger community and how it can be achieved. It also includes “Sticking Points”—the things that can stand in the way of the integration process and how to avoid them. The stories of four communities round out this extremely useful resource.



How to Use This Guide

We've divided the guide into 6 sections:

- Great Stories
- Resources
- Effectiveness
- Innovative Ideas
- Different Perspectives
- Connections

We divided the guide into these categories in order to help people like you who want to make positive changes in your community—Stories to inspire, Resources, Effectiveness, and Innovative Ideas to help you get started, and Connections, so there's always more information to find if you need it, and people to call on if you need help.

As you read through the guide, you'll see text that's been highlighted blue. If you're reading this on your computer, (and we'd encourage you to do so) simply click on the link to be taken to the document you've just been reading about. That way, if something catches your eye, or you'd like something clarified, the information is available right away.

You'll also notice some "Must-See" boxes in the margin that point you towards related information. Just click on those links to find even more.

It's that simple. And remember, if you know of something that should be included in here, please send us an email at

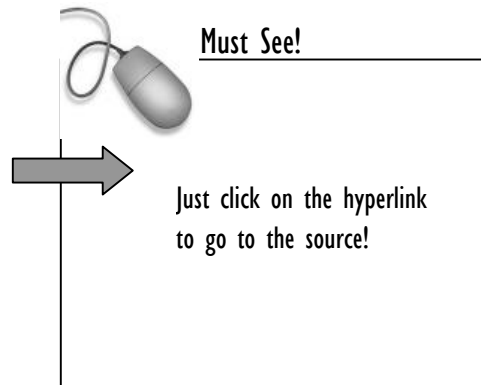
louise@tamarackcommunity.ca

and we can be sure to include it soon. There's new information all the time, and we'd love to have it. So if you hear about a resource or a website, just write us. It'll only take a minute, we promise.

To access many of these online resources, you'll need the Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. The software is free and available at www.adobe.com

We hope you find this guide informative and easy to use. Happy clicking!

Tamarack



Great Stories about Community Education

We think the best way to learn is by example. The resources in this section tell great stories about Community Education to inspire you to make positive changes in your own community. Just click to read about them!

Must See!



The Caledon Institute has done some great research into Community Learning: Their report "[How Communities Learn](#)" is another helpful resource available on their website. It promotes learning at every level of community, not just in school.



Caledon Institute: The Tisdale RECplex—(almost) Everything Under One Roof (Canada)

<http://www.caledoninst.org/tisdale.pdf>

This [article](#), from the Caledon Institute, explains how The small town of Tisdale, Saskatchewan opened the RECplex in 1997. It serves as a hub of community activity, integrating educational, recreational, and cultural space in a single, 100,000 square-foot complex. It is a great model of an educational centre that collaborates effectively with its community.

Coalition for Community Schools: Community School Models

<http://www.communityschools.org/Models.pdf>

The examples of community education in this [collection](#) demonstrates some of the innovative methods used to bring community and schools together. A profile describes the goals, philosophies, evaluations, and methods of each school used (25 are included). Contact information is included as well so you can talk directly to the people involved in these great projects.

Evergreen Canada: Grounds for Learning

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/lg-grounds.pdf>

[Evergreen Canada](#) focuses on environmental education, but community engagement is always a component of their work. [Grounds for Learning](#) tells the stories of six schools that have improved the quality of education for students and engaged the local community by bringing nature to school property. Evergreen has set a high standard for the integration of community, schools, and the natural environment, and all three areas are better off as a result. This is just one of many useful [resources](#) available at [Evergreen.ca](#).



Coalition for Community Schools: Community Schools—Partnerships for Excellence

<http://www.communityschools.org/partnershipsforexcellence.pdf>

This short [document](#) from the [Coalition of Community Schools](#) is a terrific, basic document about the Community School Movement. It outlines clearly and quickly what a community school is, what it does, and how it benefits the community. Short profiles of community schools illustrate these benefits, and contact information is available at the end if you need more information.



Dollars and Sense Magazine: To Raise a Village—Education for the Community

<http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/1998/0398scher.html>

This [article](#) profiles two community schools in New York that have built community among students, teachers, parents, and their local neighbourhoods. The students at these schools have built community through a wide variety of activities, including running a soup kitchen, planting trees, and organizing a cultural festival.

Resources for Community Education

We think these resources will be helpful tools for Community Education projects. They lay out the whole process for you, step-by-step. But don't feel trapped by them! They make suggestions and point the way, but please, adapt them to the needs of *your* community.

The Children's Aid Society: Building a Community School*

<http://www.communityschools.org/CompleteManual.pdf>

This complete [guide](#) to establishing a community-based school (or modifying an existing one) begins with general principles of community education and builds from there. It outlines the importance of partnerships, how to plan and pay for a community school, and the outcomes which should result. This is an American resource, but many parts will be informative and helpful for a Canadian audience as well. Illustrated with case studies and a directory of more useful resources at the back. This is a must-see.

* (note: The Children's Aid society is the author of this resource; the Coalition for Community Schools provides it on their website as a "partner publication.")

Evergreen Canada: All Hands in the Dirt—A Guide to Designing and Creating Natural School Grounds

<http://www.evergreen.ca/en/lg/toolshed/allhands/index.html>

[Evergreen Canada](#) believes that planting a garden at neighbourhood schools is a great way to build community. This [online guide](#) gives you complete instructions for planting a community garden at your school. It tells you how to go about building a team to work on it, deciding what you want at the site, how to design a garden that meets the community's goals, and how to involve as many people as possible. This is a very helpful resource from Evergreen Canada, an organization that has been bringing communities, schools, and the environment together for years.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: Service Learning Toolbox

http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/learnserve/resources/SL_Toolbox.pdf

This [collection](#) of worksheets and checklists will help teachers plan and evaluate service-learning projects. The step-by-step process outlines how to identify needs in the school and the community, choose the right activities for students, and evaluate success afterwards. Again, this is targeted at an American audience, but will be useful to Canadian educators.

Neighbourworks: Using Public Schools as Community-Development Tools—Strategies for Community-Based Developers (United States)

<http://www.nw.org/network/lessonsLearned/pdf/schoolsCommDevelopChung.pdf>

The [Neighbourworks Network](#) completed this [study](#) along with the [Joint Centre for Housing Studies](#) at Harvard University. It's a little more theoretical than the previous resources, but it's still very useful. It explains how developers can have an impact on community engagement and the quality of schools by joining with community organizations, students, and parents. It also discusses how to make schools part of a more comprehensive development plan.



Must See!

Click on "[Teacher's Corner](#)" at the top of the [Learning Grounds](#) page for lesson plans, helpful suggestions, and a bibliography with more resources for teachers.



Ring a Bell? Write Us!



Do you know about a resource we should have here? Let us know! [Click here to send us an email](#). It'll only take a minute.

Effectiveness in Community Education

How successful have other people's Community Education projects been? How did they measure their success? These resources explain how other people have evaluated themselves, and how you can use these tools yourself. Just click to read!

Coalition for Community Schools: Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings To Date

<http://www.communityschools.org/evaluation/evalcontents.html>



This [study](#), undertaken by the [Coalition for Community Schools](#), aimed to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the community school model. It outlines what worked and what didn't in 49 community school initiatives. The research asks important questions: do community schools promote better academics, behaviour, or community spirit? The schools studied also offer great examples of the kinds of work being done in community schools in America.

Coalition for Community Schools: Strengthening Partnerships—Community School Assessment Checklist

<http://www.communityschools.org/assessmentnew.pdf>



This is a very brief but helpful [collection](#) of checklists designed to help teachers and other involved community members make the most of a community education project. This resource will be more helpful near the beginning of a project to help further planning—it helps evaluate the kinds of partnerships involved, the existing programs, and funding sources.

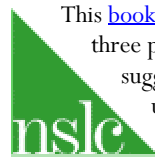
Must See!



The NSLC has an easily searchable [database](#) of information on Service Learning, including Toolkits, Syllabi, Funding sources, and Effective Practices. They also give an excellent [introduction](#) to Service Learning if you need it.

National Service Learning Clearinghouse: Educators' Guide to Service-Learning Program Evaluation

http://www.servicelearning.org/resources_tools/tool_kits/pdfs/EvaluationToolkit.pdf



This [booklet](#) is a complete guide to evaluating service-learning programs. It is split into three parts: Part one covers basic principles of evaluation and makes general suggestions for making evaluation successful. Part two provides worksheets for use during the evaluation process. Part three gives more specific instructions. This is a great resource, to use in part or in whole.

Innovative Ideas in Community Education

The materials in this section are ones that we thought took a fresh approach to Community Education. They don't all approach the topic in the same way, but their solutions are original and inspiring.

Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI): Schools as Centres of Community—A Citizens Guide for Planning and Design (United States)

<http://www.cefpi.org/pdf/schools.pdf>

[CEFPI](#) is a professional organization for architects and planners who work at designing schools—the physical buildings themselves. This [guide](#) explains how community needs can be addressed during the design process, and how the buildings themselves can serve the purpose of community engagement. It outlines how citizens can get involved in the design process and lays out the design principles needed to make the school a useful space for all community members, not just students.

US Department of Education: Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centres (United States)

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/LearnCenters/>

This [research](#) paper discusses the benefits of using public schools as ready-made community centres. Most traditional schools are open only 6 useful hours per day, and sit empty the rest of the time. By keeping them open after classes and into the evening, schools can be centres of activity for the whole community, with academic or recreational activities available for students and adults. Many community schools embrace this philosophy as a central part of their mission.

US Department of Education: Rural and Small Libraries—Providers for Lifelong Learning (United States)

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PLLICConf95/librry.html>

This [research paper](#) from the [US Department of Education](#) examines how libraries can be centers of learning for people of all ages. In many communities, especially rural ones, libraries are the best and most easily accessible institutions for promoting community education. They are especially useful for promoting “lifelong learning,” since traditional schools usually have little connection to adults in need of education.



Must See!

Take a look at the appendices at the end of this report (just scroll down the page)—it provides more information on all sorts of topics, from funding to staffing to evaluation.



Ring a Bell? Write Us!



Do you know about a resource we should have here? Let us know! [Click here to send us an email](#). It'll only take a minute.

Different Perspectives on Community Education

The links that appear in this section are meant to challenge our conventional thinking about Community Education. That means the resource could offer a different solution for schools, or it could say our thinking is flat-out wrong. We just want to know about all the thinking in this field, not just from people who agree with our view.

BC Ministry of Education: Environmental Concepts in the Classroom—A Guide for Teachers (Canada)

http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/environment_ed/

This [guide](#) is to help teachers in British Columbia instruct their students about the environment. It stresses the need for “integrated” learning, in which students learn about civics, mathematics, humanities, and society by studying the environment. That integration, however, stops short of actual interaction with the community and environment in which the students live.

Industry Canada: Canada’s SchoolNet—Network of Innovative Schools (Canada)

http://www.schoolnet.ca/nis-rei/e/members/view_school.asp?provID=2

This [webpage](#) lists schools which Industry Canada has chosen as being particularly innovative in brining technology into the classroom and finding new uses for it. Some of the schools here, such as [Willoughby Elementary](#) in Langley, BC, have used their new technical expertise in community-engaging ways, such as a [website](#) about the endangered salmon on which their community depends. Others, however, have little interaction with their surrounding communities.

Education World: Is Community Service a Waste of Time? (United States)

http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr188.shtml

This [article](#) from [Education World](#) is helpful because it makes the distinction between “community service” and “service learning.” Often, the two terms are used synonymously, but this article points out the real differences between them. By their definition, “Community Service” is an exploitive exercise, while “Service Learning” is a valuable addition to curriculum. This article clears up some concepts which are sometimes difficult to tell apart.



Thomas B. Fordham Foundation: Charity Begins at School (United States)

<http://www.edexcellence.net/issuespl/subject/service/charity.html>

This [opinion paper](#) criticizes service learning for being too politicized, and for displacing and weakening traditional academic instruction. It also says—and isn’t the only one to say—that making community service mandatory dilutes the importance and value of true volunteerism.

Connections

If you're still looking for information, and we hope you are, these resources will tell you where to find it, or who you can talk to. The things we've tried to draw your attention to are a start—these resources will help you along the way.

The Coalition for Community Schools

<http://www.communityschools.org>

This [website](#) is the premier source of information on Community Schools available on the web. It focuses on American examples, as do many of these resources, but the Coalition for Community Schools is doing the most innovative [research](#) we found into community schooling.



The Institute for Educational Leadership

<http://www.iel.org>

The [IEL](#) is the parent organization to the Coalition for Community Schools, and it offers a slightly broader view of the state of progressive education.



Education World

<http://www.education-world.com>

[Education World](#) is a massive resource on many topics, which can make it overwhelming. Their “[advanced search](#)” option will make it more manageable, but also click on “[Browse Topics](#)” at the top of the page—“[Research Resources](#),” “[Teacher Resources](#),” and “[Special Education](#)” are all good places to start.



The National Service Learning Clearinghouse

<http://www.servicelearning.org>

This [organization](#) is dedicated to finding and distributing information about service learning. It offers links to online [tool kits](#), [lesson plans](#), and [evaluations](#). They provide a database called [Epicenter](#) which searches a large collection of best practices for community education.



Caledon Institute

<http://www.caledoninst.org>

[Caledon](#) has an extensive [online library](#) of position papers on many social topics, including education. Most of their activities are in the political field, but they always advocate for community solutions.



Evergreen Canada

<http://www.evergreen.ca>

[Evergreen](#) has combined education about the environment and community. Their website offers [resources](#) for [schools](#), [communities](#), and [individuals](#) who want to learn about the natural world and engage community at the same time.

