



# Connecting Classrooms - Leadership Unit 10 – Participant Booklet

## Community engagement

## A. Unit title: Unit 10. Community engagement

## B. Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Consider why a school should engage with the community
2. Decide who makes up the community
3. Plan how to engage with your community in the future

## C. Overview & concepts

Community engagement is the process of involving people in decisions that affect them. This can mean involving communities in the planning, development and management of services. Or, it may be about tackling the problems of a neighbourhood, such as crime, drug misuse or lack of play facilities for children.

Schools cannot meet the complex needs of young people alone. A school leader will need to be aware that community engagement and participation play a key role in furthering children's well-being. Encouraging engagement involves schools in activities such as holding challenge workshops and community conversations.

Research on community engagement is beginning to show a positive impact on pupils, families, communities and other groups when children's well-being and learning are promoted as interdependent.

The major issues, for a school leader, are to develop collaborative ways to:

- improve student achievement by making the curriculum more relevant and working more closely with parents
- make schools more accountable and increase democratic involvement by encouraging local people to have a say in decision making
- build social capital within communities by encouraging adults as well as children to learn
- develop the role of schools as moral agents, promoting social justice and responsibility for youth by tackling challenges such as racism
- promote the school's self-interest by developing good public relations and making more information available to help people choose a school

*The comments above are based partly on the findings of the NCSL (National College for School Leadership) in England.*

Community engagement allows schools to address the five ECM (Every Child Matters) outcomes of children:

1. health
2. safety
3. achievement

4. social contribution and
5. economic well-being.

One example of community engagement supporting the child comes from the NCSL (National College for School Leadership) in England.

A breakfast club can demonstrate the integration of all five outcomes of the ECM agenda by:

1. serving a healthy breakfast (being healthy)
2. involving older students as peer buddies (staying safe)
3. focusing on IT and communication skills (enjoying and achieving)
4. publishing a community newspaper for the area (making a contribution)
5. employing parents and working with a local farmers' market to supply fresh produce (furthering economic well-being)

## D. Activities

- Below you will find a “Community Engagement Audit”. This has seven dimensions listed.  
Use this now to decide on the “Present situation” and any “Action needed” in your school.  
You might want to work with others to share your thoughts and develop your ideas on this.  
Reflective honesty and openness is important here if real progress is to be made.

### Community Engagement Audit

Dimension	Present situation	Action needed
<b>Training for the community</b> The school offers courses and after-school programmes for members of the community.		
<b>Visitors</b> All members of the community are welcomed, and feel safe in the school. All members of the school value and respect visitors.		
<b>Communicating the school ethos</b> The school uses all available means to communicate to the community that it is an inclusive organisation that seeks to serve their needs in a variety of ways.		
<b>Community input</b> The views of the community are encouraged and embraced by the school. The school also tries to include hard-to-reach groups.		
<b>EAL</b> Members of the community who have English as an additional language are given support by the school. (Replace English here for the language of your country.)		
<b>Community voice</b> Key stakeholders in the community are consulted when the school is considering future developments.		
<b>Student voice</b> The views of students are welcomed in terms of how the community might be served and engaged by the school.		

## E. Reflective questions

1. One model of a school may be that:

- Children come in to the school at 0X:00 in the morning
- Children leave school at Y0:00 in the afternoon
- This happens for 5 days per week

- a) How does this compare with how your school functions at the moment?
- b) How much do you link with the community?

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2. An island, a castle or a bridge?

- a) From your discussion do you see your school as an island, a castle or a bridge?
- b) Do you have another metaphor for the way your school presently operates?

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Do you see your school as an island, a castle or a bridge (or something else)?

3. Why should a school want to engage with the community?

- a) What are the benefits to the school?
- b) What are the benefits to the community?
- c) Is it worth the effort?

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4. Who makes up your community?

- a) What groups make up your present community?
- b) Are there any other groups or individuals that you might connect with?
- c) What bridges can you build?

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5. How might you engage with the community in the future?

- a) What steps will you take to engage with the community in the future? The audit you have just done will support you in deciding on this.
- b) How will you build bridges?

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- 6. How can a school support community engagement?
  - a) And what does community engagement mean to you?

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**F. Personal thoughts**

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## G. Personal actions following this unit

What actions will you now take to develop Community Engagement in your school?

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## H. References

Every Child Matters: Change for Children

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/Page1/DfES/1081/2004#downloadableparts>

NCSL (National College for School Leadership)

<http://www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/>

SSAT (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) [www.ssatuk.co.uk/](http://www.ssatuk.co.uk/)