Teaching toolkits

Working with schools to enhance your curriculum

Considerations when partnering with a school to enhance your curriculum through Community Engaged Learning.

This guide complements two existing guides. You should first read:

- How to build partnerships with external partners to enhance learning
- Five steps to developing a Community Engaged Learning programme, module or project

The broad principles of working with schools are the same as working with community groups. Here we will look at some of the considerations specific to schools.

Why do you want to work with a school?

- Identify what it is about young people and/or teachers that you feel makes them the right partner for this piece of work.
- Identify the benefit for a school in their terms. For example, will your partnership support their curriculum, or will it provide extra-curricular learning? Will your partnership enhance teachers' subject knowledge, or support development of their skills?
- What activity would the school community be doing with your students?
- What age children do you want to work with?
- How can you make your activity age-appropriate?
- Are you aware of the needs of the school for that age group?

Consider how school pupils will work in the project

- What do you want pupils to learn?
- What would be the best way for them to learn this?
- How will you know what they have learned?
- What resources do you need?

Source: adapted from British Council Connecting Classrooms resource

The benefits of a school partnership for students and pupils

A school partnership can:

• generate enthusiasm and motivation for learning

• cultivate an openness to new thinking and ideas

• inspire a desire for positive change, locally and globally.

> " Partnerships offer many links with national curricula - although for most teachers the outcomes listed above will simply represent good quality education. In addition, partnerships also lay strong foundations for Global Citizenship".
>
> From Oxfam's guide to school partnerships

They can help pupils develop:

• self-awareness

• respect for others

• skills of enquiry and critical thinking, and the ability to apply these to local and global issues

• the ability to communicate in different ways and settings

• an appreciation of diversity

• a sense of injustice and a commitment to tackling it

• an understanding of how local and global are interconnected, and of the impacts that actions have at both levels.

Types of work could you do with a school

Here are examples of activities where universities engage with schools.

These activities can enrich the teaching and learning activities offered to your students and be assessed.

• Academy school curriculum development (these schools do not follow the National Curriculum meaning there is scope for working with teachers on your and their subjects).

• Student mentoring of school pupils.

• Lesson sessions: one-off workshops in class on a specific topic or general "day in the life of".

• After school clubs.

• School careers fairs.

• Introductory talks on your subject area.

• Participating in or setting up a subject-related festival.

• Participating in a local or national fair e.g. the Big Bang Fair.

• Partnering with a theatre company for immersive subject-based workshops.

• Six- to ten- week Saturday clubs.

• Summer schools (one week long).

• Masterclasses.

• Taster days.

Hands-on activities, interactive displays, or demonstrations would form part of most of the above, and most activities could be run by students without academic staff present.

Check Partnership Development Guidance (Chapter 8: Academic Partnerships Framework) on building a collaborative project when deciding what type of activity you would like to develop.

Evaluating activities with school pupils

You will want to evaluate what the school students get out of the project. Light-touch is often best.

Examples include:

- Post-It notes: pink for perfect/positive, green for grow – pupils write one thing on each.

- Luggage labels in different colours: pupils record different feedback on each, such as a drawing before and after the project related to what they are learning (in one project, we drew a robot, another, a scientist, and noted the more realistic portrayals after children had encountered ours).

- A scale of smiley/not-so-smiley faces to circle.

- A number line to put a sticker on.

- An ideas wall – students respond to key words with comments.

- Audio-recorded group discussion

- Teachers' feedback through interview or questionnaire.

- Feedback can be presented in word clouds and infographics as well as charts.

Finding a school

UCL's Access and Widening Participation team can give you advice on which schools to approach.

For schools in London, especially schools in the four boroughs around UCL East, contact Celine West in UCL Culture Schools Engagement celine.west@ucl.ac.uk.

The Institute of Education works with many schools so you may wish to enquire there:

ioe.businessdevelopment@ucl.ac.uk

bit.ly/CELSchools

The online guide has links to further reading and resources.

Safeguarding and risks

Working with children and young people requires extra consideration of safeguarding. UCL's Access & Widening Participation team provides guidance and resources on this that you can adapt to your project.

You may find it necessary to have staff and students checked through the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS), however this is usually only done where interactions are regular and unsupervised. See the UCL guidance.

All activities need to be risk assessed. UCL Culture and Library Services have risk assessments for school outreach and workshops in our spaces in riskNET that can be copied and used as the basis for your own assessments. You can find them through a search in riskNET.

Other partnership organisations

Creative Schools is a London brokerage organisation that conducts indepth analysis of schools' needs and disseminates calls for partnership work to arts organisations. UCL Culture is a member, contact staff there as above.

The Brilliant Club is an award-winning university access charity that works with schools and universities across the UK. Their mission: "The Brilliant Club exists to increase the number of pupils from under-represented backgrounds progressing to highly selective universities. We do this by mobilising the PhD community to share its academic expertise with state schools."

Generating Genius aim to inspire, motivate, and support 14-18 year olds to pursue STEM subjects at school and to ultimately consider careers in these fields. They work with students from underrepresented groups and partner schools across London with universities and other organisations. UCL Engineering are a partner.

Students working with UCL Culture's museums and schools programme highlight some of the benefits to them

"It has helped me see a real life example of how things that I learnt about in my course could be applied in real life, as well as helped me improve my programming skills by supporting students who knew little about programming."

"This experience has been a great opportunity to hone my teaching and leaderships skills and develop ideas holistically with a diverse group of colleagues from many different departments."

"I've definitely increased in confidence and teaching skill. Before I had considered myself 'not good' at working with kids, but I was only inexperienced. It's helped me become a better communicator and encouraged me to use initiative. I've also been able to talk to academics, researchers and teaching staff, which has informed my aspirations. For example it was great meeting and working alongside two ecologists - which inspired me to choose more ecology modules in the hopes of working in conservation!"

"In a job interview I have been able to talk confidently about tangible real-world achievements. I have been able to use examples to answer questions in job applications. I have gained confidence and a year's part-time work experience with UCL, which enhances my CV. I have gained skills in public speaking, running workshops and team work. I have gained a better understanding of what works and what doesn't, the chance to reflect and discuss experiences with an excellent and experienced mentor, to learn from others and have had the opportunity to experiment in a safe, collaborative environment."

"This experience has definitely strengthened my application for Teaching Fellow in Higher Education. It was great to develop my teaching skills using different approaches."

Where to find help and support

communityengagedlearning@ucl.ac.uk to:

- request advice or consultancy services
- book a curriculum design workshop
- book training for your students

Other toolkits in the Community Engaged Learning (CEL) series:

- How to build partnerships with external partners to enhance learning
- Five steps to developing a Community Engaged Learning programme, module or project
- Engaging the local London community in your teaching: how to find out more about them

For general teaching advice or curriculum support:

arena@ucl.ac.uk: contact the UCL Arena Centre

bit.ly/CELSchools to access this full online guide, including links and further resources.