

New CDA Orientation Guide

*Created by LEARN's Provincial Resource Team,
November 2022
Updated September 2023*



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A community school is not just another program being imposed on a school. It embodies a way of thinking and acting that recognizes the historic central role of schools in our communities — and the power of working together for a common good.

Educating our children, yes, but also strengthening our families and communities so that, in turn, they can help make our schools even stronger and our children even more successful.

- Ira Harkavy + Martin J. Blank



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What is a CLC?

A CLC is a community school supporting the English education community in Quebec.

Areas where community schools have an impact:

- Student health and wellbeing
- Improved sense of belonging
- Student engagement in the classroom
- Student engagement in the community
- Community engagement in the school
- Family support and engagement
- Partnerships that contribute to community vitality

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools

Community schools strengthen the relationship between educators, families, and community-based organizations to offer resources to students, families, and the communities at large.

The development of school-community partnerships contributes to improving school climate, which in turn often leads to decreased absenteeism, suspensions, substance abuse, and bullying, while increasing students' motivation to learn.

Quebec's Community schools have a dual mandate:

1. *To foster improved school performance by bringing support to the educational mandate of schools, in particular, through school climate and student engagement.*
2. *To promote the language, culture, and vitality of the English-speaking community by broadening the mandate of schools and helping them become hubs for their communities. A CLC is not a place, it is an approach to community and school improvement based on the establishment of mutually reinforcing partnerships, facilitated by a dedicated coordinator.*

Resources

A series of [eight research Briefs](#) examining priority issues and challenges within Quebec's English-language education sector:

[Brief #8: The Community School Network in Quebec's Official Language Minority Community](#) and a [Workshop on Briefs](#) hosted by the Quebec English-Speaking Communities Research Network

[Partnerships for Equity and Excellence: The Community School Strategy](#)
[Teaching in Community Schools: Creating Conditions for Deeper Learning](#)
[Framework for the Vitality of Official-Language Minority Communities \(OLMC\)](#)

What is a CDA?

The official job title of a CDA varies from school board to school board and depends on the roles the CDA holds. The PRT uses 'CDA' to identify the person whose role it is to mobilize school-community partnerships in support of student achievement, student engagement and community vitality.

During any given week, a CDA will be:

CONNECTING	meeting and collaborating with community-based stakeholders — community partners, administration, staff, and parents — to identify and address school & community needs, challenges, and goals
MOBILIZING	school and community-based resources, including financial and human resources
PLANNING	responsible for developing an annual Action Plan in collaboration with school administration
COORDINATING	with partners and/or service providers to provide programs and activities that align with the goals identified in the CLC Action Plan
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o at staff meetings (written or verbal)o to the Governing Board (written or verbal)o through the Online Journal
LEARNING	participating in professional development opportunities offered by the PRT, school board, school, or community partners

Resources

[Operations Manual template](#): a document completed by the former CDA, often in collaboration with the school principal, which contains all the required information to facilitate the transition of responsibilities.

[Month-by-Month template](#): a blank version for you to add your monthly activities & tasks

Examples from Bobbie Variantzas, Laurier MacDonald CLC: completed CLC [Month-by-month overview](#) and a completed [Operations Manual \(CLC LMAC\)](#).

Building Relationships in the School

In the 2021 movie "Heart of Champions", an army vet takes over as coach of a dysfunctional university rowing team. During one particularly difficult practice, the coach overhears one team member say that the team was slowing him down. Without missing a beat, the coach tells everyone to jump off the boat and to swim to shore. They do so, while protesting to the coach, who then tells the lone teammate to take the boat home. He could not do it alone. He needed the whole team. The coach then told everyone to get back in the boat and to row it back home together, which they did.



In the same way that one rower could not get the boat home alone, a CDA cannot and should not work alone. Building your network and fostering relationships will allow you to do your job well. Your first year should be spent primarily on building relationships. Those relationships will be the foundation of your community school.

Each community school determines its own vision with the goal of developing partnerships and strategies to achieve better outcomes for students, families, and the English-speaking community.

School Principal(s)

Collaborate with the CDA and the various community partners to develop a school culture that engages families & community

Help teachers and the CDA make connections to the Quebec Education Program (QEP) and the School Educational Project

Encourage teachers and the CDA to work together

Collaborate with the CDA in the development & alignment of the CLC's annual Action Plan with the needs & challenges to be addressed

Suggested *discussion questions* for initial conversation with your principal:

What is the administration's vision for the school?
What student needs have been identified? Which are the most pressing needs?
What do I need to know about the student population?
What is the school environment/climate like?
Who are the key community partners our school is currently working with?
How is family engagement? Are parents involved or engaged?
Did the previous CDA leave a completed CLC Operations Manual?
Where is the CLC Action ? Can you walk me through it?
Who is someone I can work with in the school?
(i.e. resource teacher, librarian, other teachers).
Not all staff will get on board with you at the beginning, go after the 'keepers'. Some schools form small 'community' committees made up of the CDA and a couple of other school staff as a way to promote staff engagement.

School Board Representative(s)

The School Board Representative's (SB Rep) role is to be the liaison between the school board, its various departments, the CLC school team, and the PRT. The SB Rep will advocate for the CLCs and the CDAs at the school board level and help you to identify services, programs, and activities that will support your Action Plan.

School Staff

Building relationships with the secretaries, caretakers, librarians, and cafeteria staff should not be overlooked as much of the CLC programming happens outside of regular school hours and these staff members are often able to help them run more smoothly.

If the CLC is new, school staff may not understand your role or what you do. Perhaps you held a different role in the school prior to becoming the CDA. You may feel misunderstood or apart from the rest of the staff. Seek out and connect with other non-teaching staff members, they are often considered "apart" as well.

Teachers

As a new CDA, meeting teachers can be challenging. Your school principal can help you navigate the teacher network.

Staff Council and Staff meetings - Ask your principal if you can be present at the first Staff Council and Staff meetings to introduce yourself and to talk about any upcoming CLC projects. Let the teachers know what you can do for them and invite them to share what they are working on in their classes. Ask your Principal for the CLC to be a standing item on the Agendas. Your goal is to provide updates on projects & activities, access to resources, and to let staff know in advance of activities that might bring changes to the regular school day. Let the teachers know you are available to support them. Not all CDAs will be invited to sit on Staff Council or be able to attend all staff meetings, and that is OK. Find someone who does attend to be your liaison.

The Staff room is also a good place to start relationship building and to find out what's going on in the school and classes (i.e. field trips, grad, yearbook).

Parents

You should report regularly to both the Governing Board and the Parent Participation Organization (PPO) and/or the Home and School Association. Parents are your allies, partners, and target audience. They can provide feedback on your programming, give insight into student needs, and take leadership on new activities & programs.

Resources

*[Resources for CLC Principals](#): effective practices, common challenges, and the benefits of leading a community school (CLC), including [CLC Roles and Responsibilities](#).
Sample of a [Governing Board Report](#) from Bobbie Variantzas, Laurier MacDonald*

Who is the PRT?

CLCs are supported by LEARN's Provincial Resource Team (PRT).

The PRT:

<i>Advocates for the CLC network</i>
<i>Conducts research on effective community school practices</i>
<i>Offers professional development to CLC teams</i>
<i>Works with regionally and provincially mandated organizations to generate resources, programming, and funding opportunities</i>

Each member of the PRT is assigned a specific School Board to support. That is the person you have the most contact with as you start out. When you contact your PRT representative with a specific question, you may hear back from another member of the team.

The members of the PRT have different areas of expertise:

<i>Debbie Horrocks, Director of PRT</i>	<i>Governance, navigating the educational environment (funders, stakeholders, provincial partners, funding structures, etc.), mental health and wellness, provincial representation, research, community school advocacy</i>
<i>Katherine Dimas, Assistant Director and former CDA</i>	<i>Family engagement & early childhood, strategic planning, collaborative planning, evaluation, productivity/time management</i>
<i>Ajay Modi Former teacher, Math & Science consultant, and RECIT</i>	<i>Student and teacher engagement, Makerspaces/ STEAM, Project-based learning, grant writing, data collection and evaluation, project development</i>
<i>Dannielle Dyson</i>	<i>Makerspaces/ STEAM, Outdoor education, volunteer/project/event management</i>
<i>Bobbie Variantzas, former CDA</i>	<i>School-community partnerships, mental health, student engagement, teacher engagement, CDA responsibilities</i>
<i>Mary Leblanc, former CDA</i>	<i>School Climate Grant, partnership development, grant writing, CDA responsibilities (Online Journal, Action Plan, etc.), communications</i>

Resources

[PD offered by the PRT](#): Bookmark our PD page

[LEARN Newsletter](#): Signup to stay in the loop on all LEARN's offerings

[Grants and MEQ Mesures](#): A list of grants and a list of Mesures funding

[Project Opportunities](#): list of projects available to CLC schools

The CLC Network

There are currently over 90 CLCs across the province of Quebec. Participating schools include elementary, high school and adult /vocational education centres located in urban, rural, and remote communities across the province.



Staying in Touch Across the Province

A new CDA's email address will be added to a Google group email list. The PRT will use this list to send out announcements, updates, and project opportunities. CDAs can also use it to reach out to their peers with questions, using it similarly to a discussion board, to get examples of, or recommendations for, partners to present on specific topics, grants to support projects, or field trip ideas. Keep in mind this email group goes out to all the CDAs across the province - a CDA may wish to choose specific peers to reach out to, at times. Add this email address to your contacts, to avoid these important emails being filtered into your spam folder:

clc-coordinators@learnquebec.ca

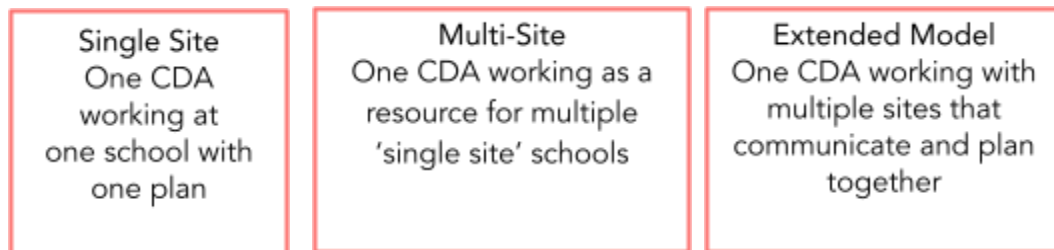
Join the [CLC: Quebec's Community School Network](#) Facebook page to stay in touch with the network updates.

Other CDAs in the network are a valuable resource to you. Don't know who you need to talk to? You can ask the PRT to direct you to someone.

CLC Models at a Glance

In 2014-2015, school boards started to explore expanding the reach of the CLC model to benefit a greater number of schools and students within their boards. Strategically, it makes sense for a CDA to work with multiple schools in the same region, where there are common partners, and often the schools and communities have similar challenges. Expansion also gives CDAs more leverage in their communities. When CDAs sit at the local development tables (tables de concertation) they would represent a greater number of students, families, and community members, thereby allowing community resources to be distributed more equitably amongst the whole population.

Three models exist within the network:



Resources

[CLC Extended Model Evaluation Report](#)
[Practitioners Guide to CLC Extension](#)

What is the CLC Action Plan?

An Action Plan is the CLC work plan for the year. It is created in collaboration with the school Principal or Vice-Principal and the CDA. The Action Plan is informed by the school's Educational Project and, to a lesser degree, the School Board's Commitment to Success Plan. It takes into consideration the needs of the school community and addresses the factors that allow students, their families, and the English-speaking community to thrive.

The following table shows how the various levels of governance are interrelated.

<p>Ministère de l'Éducation – Strategic Plan The Ministère plays a leadership role by stating its vision of Québec's education system.</p>	<p>Educational success of all students, in the youth & adult sectors</p>
<p>School Service Centre – Commitment-to-Success Plan The school service centre plays a leadership role by sharing its vision of education for its jurisdiction, which is based on the vision of the Québec education system by adapting to those it serves and the issues that affect them.</p>	
<p>Educational Institution – Educational Project The educational institution plays a leadership role by creating a school environment that meets the needs of all its students.</p>	
<p>CLC Action Plan The CLC plays a leadership role by identifying and responding to the needs of students and families.</p>	<p>Student success & community vitality</p>
<p>Community Action Plan The community organizations play a leadership role in mobilizing all community stakeholders in responding to the needs of community members.</p>	

Commitment to Success Plan (School Board / School Service Centres): Aligned with the strategic directions and objectives of the MEQ's Strategic Plan, the Commitment to Success Plan informs its public of the commitments it has made to ensure educational success for all students in their Board over a given period of time. It is prepared in collaboration with all education stakeholders on the Board's territory. These plans are revised every 5 years.

School Educational Project: Aligned with the School Board Commitment to Success Plan, it defines the schools' orientations, priority actions, and expected results. It is developed in collaboration with its community (students, parents, school staff members, community, and school service centre representatives). It is updated and revised every 5 years.

The CLC Action Plan: Aligned with the School Educational Project(s) and the School Board's Commitment to Success Plan, it is created in collaboration with the school Principal(s) and should remain in place for 3 years or more. Big goals take time to achieve!

As the CDA you are always trying to balance needs and resources - principal, teachers, partners, and parents -and looking at a school success plan and seeing which fits where and what works. The CLC plays a leadership role in identifying and responding to the needs of students and their families.

Resources

[Portrait of CLC Network 2022 - 2023 Action Plans Infographic](#)

[Action Plan Template and Overview Video](#)

[Compilation of the 2022-2023 CLC Action Plans](#)

Example of a [Completed Action Plan](#) (source: Laurier Macdonald)

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

S.M.A.R.T. goals are essentially statements of the results you are trying to accomplish in your Action Plan. They help you focus your attention and your resources on what is most important so that you will ultimately be successful in achieving your priorities.

Specific → Should answer the 5 'W's': Who will be involved? What are you trying to accomplish, in general? When will this happen? Where will the activity/project happen? Why do you want to do this?

Measurable → How are you going to measure the progress in your plan?

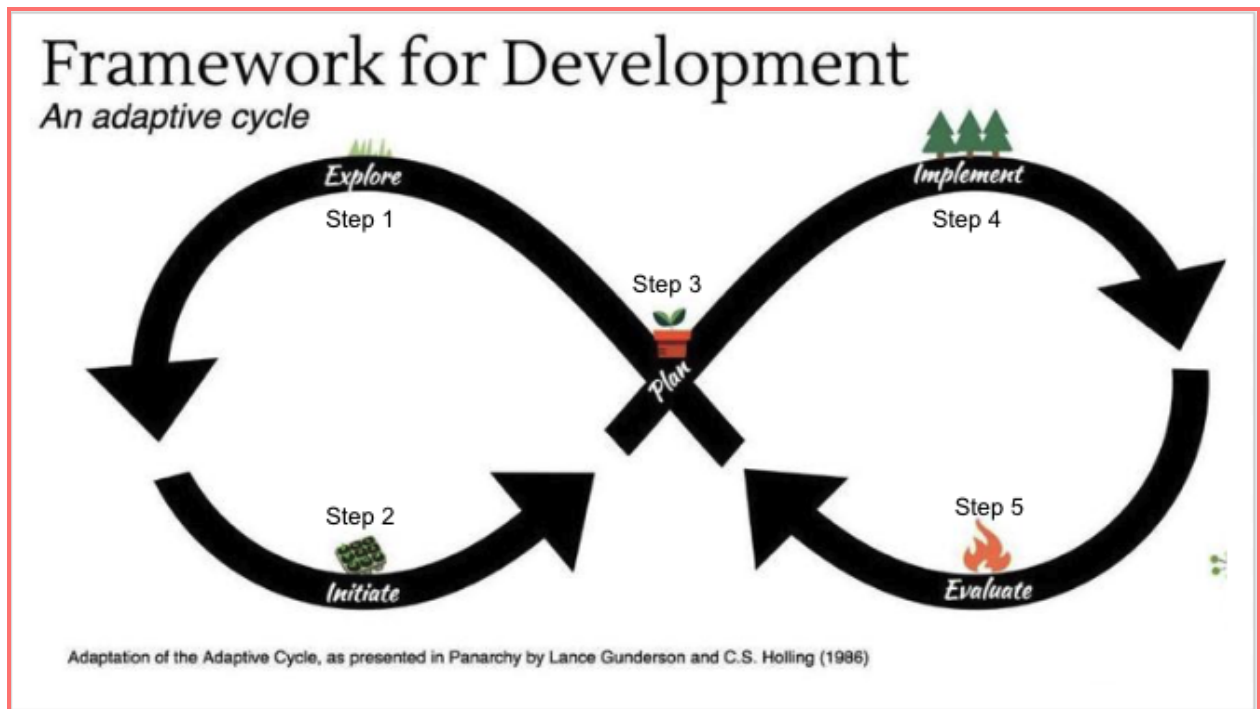
Achievable → Do you have the tools, resources, and partners to achieve the goals you have set?

Relevant → Is this something that is needed? Was it highlighted in the school Education Project or in a parent survey? Does it align with the needs of your school and/or your community?

Timely/time-bound → Set a date to accomplish your goal. Without a deadline, it is just a wish. Goals without deadlines indicate that you are not fully committed.

Steps in the Framework

The Framework for Development consists of 5 steps that guide the community school approach to promote student success and community development. Here you are seeing the 5 steps to development as an adaptive cycle.



Let's briefly explore each step:

Explore

In the beginning, you want to plant the seeds. In this first step you are exploring what a CLC will look like in your community. Take time to explore what CLCs look like in other communities and imagine how it would look in yours. Identify the needs to address and explore the resources you have access to. This is where you can dream big – pie-in-the-sky big! Imagine all the great programming and partnerships you can create through your CLC.

Initiate

Next, watch the seeds begin to germinate. Develop a mission statement for the CLC and start initiating partnerships that will help you work towards your goals. Look for partners who will have similar mandates to yours or whose mandates actively help you respond to the needs you have identified for your CLC.

Develop

Watch as the plants begin to grow! Here you will develop your Action Plan, mapping out how you will achieve the goals (short- and long-term goals) you have set for the CLC through programing and partnerships. This is where you will want to be as concrete as possible, planning how you will achieve those goals.

Implement

Now comes healthy vibrant growth on the plant you have nurtured so far. You will begin to implement the Action Plan you developed and start those initiatives you have planned with your partners, putting in place conditions that will lead to successful programming.

Evaluate

Now, give it some time to bloom and mature. Watch as your programming runs its course and evaluate if it is going well. Is it meeting the goals you set for the CLC? Are these partnerships the right fit? Do you need to make any changes? Or do you need to burn it all down and start again? Remember that CLC development is an ongoing and adaptive process. Conditions will change, as will opportunities you have access to. As your CLC continues to evolve, the need to begin the steps anew will become more and more apparent. It may be time to plant some new seeds.

Resources

[Steps in the Framework](#)
[CLC Weekly Planner](#)

Building Relationships with Partners

Taking time to build solid relationships with school staff and community partners will have long-lasting benefits. Strong relationships will help you build strong partnerships which will enable you to access programs, resources, and opportunities for your students, teachers, and community.

Partnership Tables/ Regional Development Tables (Les tables de concertation)

A partnership table is a formalized group of individuals, often representatives of community-based organizations, who are committed to collaborating on common or complementary goals.

Community Development Agents sit on a variety of local intersectoral development tables (les tables de concertation), which bring together various regional stakeholders to plan and coordinate their actions to support the whole community. This is also where regional funding for projects and programs is dispersed, so if you aren't at the table, you can't access the funds.

On local development tables the CLC will often be the only, or one of the only English voices at the tables. The English community might be unfamiliar to some community partners, especially the French school community. Your job is to help demystify some of the challenges the English-speaking schools and communities face, while advocating for resources that will help you meet the needs of your school(s).

Partnership Outcomes

The community school approach is a systemic approach to changing school climate and culture. Over the years, the CLC Initiative has been building the capacity of the schools and community organizations to work together on shared common goals, or common outcome areas.

- Health + wellness of students & staff
- Access to arts & culture experiences
- Developing life skills & healthy habits
- Supporting families
- Intergenerational learning opportunities

Developing relationships with community partners takes a lot of time and effort. Teachers want to know what the benefit is to having community partners come into their classrooms. Community partners want to know how the schools can meaningfully connect or appreciate the services they are providing.

School-community relationships should be mutually beneficial.

Types of Partner Involvement

There are many ways that partners can be involved in the development or the delivery of a community school project or program.

- *Financial resources* to get your program off the ground through grants or donations
- *Material resources* to contribute to your program, ie. books for a library or plants for a garden
- *Volunteers* to help run your program

Some of the best partnerships are when you work closely with a partner to develop a program that directly relates to both your mandates and answers needs that you have both identified to address.

As a CDA, you want to find the partners and organizations in your community that can help you achieve your CLC Action Plan goals. You need to find out who the different partners are, what their mandates are, and how their goals intersect with the CLC goals.

Community Service Learning

Community Service Learning (CSL) creates the opportunity to connect students' learning with real life experiences in their community. The community itself becomes a learning resource where students can apply what they have learned in the classroom to address real community issues. It is a learning strategy that engages not only students and teachers, but also community stakeholders and sometimes even families.

Examples of CSL projects include a community garden, intergenerational projects, and a shoreline cleanup.

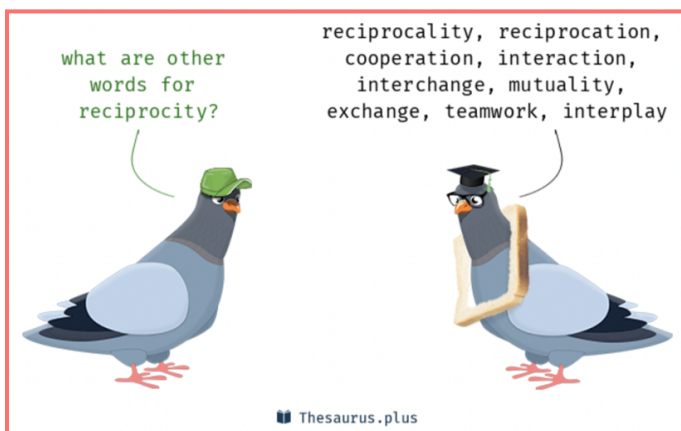
The Reciprocity Principle



Reciprocity Principle at work: The oxpecker is a medium-sized bird that has a symbiotic relationship with a variety of hoofed mammals. Large mammals like the water buffalo are prone to ticks, which feed on their blood and can spread diseases and cause anemia. Luckily for the water buffalo, the oxpecker feeds on ticks. By eating the ticks from the hide of the water buffalo, the oxpecker gets a free meal, and the water buffalo gets cleaned of parasites.

In community schools, the 'reciprocity principle' also comes into play. Effective and sustainable partnerships should be

based on the identification of common or complementary goals focused on student success/engagement and community vitality. This opens up a broad range of partners for the school to potentially work with. The aim is for a win-win scenario for all.



Example: An elementary school is focused on improving student reading skills; the CDA may reach out to their local or provincial literacy organization and collaborate with them to bring programs and activities to the school community that are focused on building youth literacy skills. This could be Reading Buddies, an intergenerational reading support

program, or even a family literacy activity.

Keep in mind, sometimes even if there can potentially be reciprocity, you may need to say, "No". Some partnerships are not viable for one reason or another; sometimes your goals do not align, or certain conditions are not met, at other times the timing is just off.

Resources

[CLC Partnership Quick Assessment Tool](#): What makes a great partner?

[CLC Partnership Agreement](#): Guidelines for Creating a Partnership Agreement

[CLC Service Agreement Template](#): To ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of deliverables and work processes.

[School-Community Partnerships: A Lifeline in Challenging Times](#), blog post by Debbie Horrocks

Learning to Pitch: The Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a short pitch that you can use when you meet someone and have a limited amount of time to tell them quickly and simply what you do and what the CLC is.

YOUR NAME & WHAT YOU DO Briefly describe your role with the CLC. Share your passion for the job. Perhaps say something unexpected, something they will remember. You want to capture their attention.

WHO DO YOU DO IT FOR? Give them some context - provide some perspective. What do you want your audience to remember most about you, about the CLC?

WHY IS WHAT YOU DO NEEDED? Include a compelling or interesting example of something you have accomplished. You want to leave people wanting to hear more.

SCOPE OF THE IMPACT YOU MAKE Demonstrate the impact of the work you do (or that has been done by a previous CDA) Share some data from a recent survey or evaluation.

CALL TO ACTION How can the people you are talking to be involved with the CLC Initiative? How can you work together? Why is their involvement important to you?

Give your audience just enough information to have a sense of what you are talking about and lead to a deeper conversation at a future time.

*Make sure your elevator speech flows – and most importantly – practice it.
When you think you know it...practice it again!*

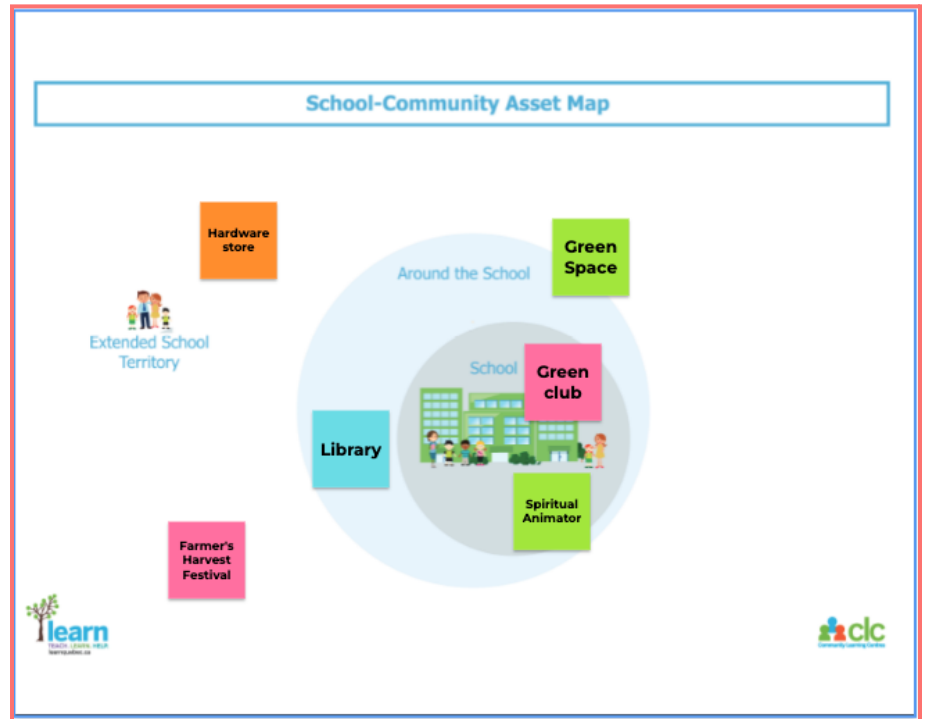
Resources

[Promotional Flyers](#): CLC One-pager + two-pager promotional flyers in French + in English
[Orientation to Community School Approach](#) – template for presentations

School-Community Connections Map

Creating a School-Community Connections (Asset) Map of your own is one way to do an inventory of all the good things in and around the community that you may decide to keep, build up, and sustain for years - but first, you need to identify them and to know that they are there for you as resources.

Overall, the CLC team should be able to clearly see who they have mobilized to support youth success in learning and life. This includes the engagement of all stakeholder groups: students, teachers, staff, parents, school board representatives, community organizations, and community members. Gaps will also naturally surface, indicating where efforts can be focused strategically to improve the support for students and the interaction between community and the school.



A School-Community Connections (Asset) Map (an 11 x 17 version in the above image) may already be in your school. You can also ask your PRT rep for one.

Begin by using the map to conduct an in-depth interview with your school principal. The aim is to learn from the principal's reflections about the existing assets, resources, and connections in the community. For your Community Asset Mapping exercise, you can use post-it notes to actively stick on a printed out poster-size map or try working on [this digital version in Jamboard](#).

The school might be the main site of CLC activities, or they might be delivered in a variety of locations. In any case, the aim is to diminish or eliminate barriers between the school and the community and to encourage collaboration.

A printed copy of the map can also be displayed in a central spot as a conversation starter with teachers, staff, parents, partners, and community visitors about their school-community connections.

Resources

[Asset Mapping Toolkit](#) includes a smaller version of the map, and suggestions for types of resources to identify.

Community Asset Mapping is a brainstorming exercise. Next, to make the ideas more formalized, you can use the [CLC Community Assets Inventory Template](#), created by former CDA Julie Corriveau-Wilson.

What is the Online Journal?

The Online Journal is where you record all the great projects and initiatives you have going on through your CLC. These activities can be taking place in your school(s) or at a community venue.

ONLINE JOURNAL



PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVITIES FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS REPORT FAQ LOGOUT

Chances are, before you learn how to use the [Online Journal](#), you will still need to keep track of your volunteers, participants, areas of focus, and funding partners for your ongoing programs. You can do so with this [Project Tracker](#). This tool not only can help you capture this type of information, it can also assist you in planning an activity or event.

An online training session, login access, and support to the Online Journal is provided by the PRT. When you first log into the Online Journal, you can start by reviewing the FAQ page that includes a 10-minute video about the tool.

The Online Journal Report is submitted by the CDA to the principal(s), the school board rep, and the PRT. The final June report is sent to the Ministry of Education, who funds the CLC Initiative.

Reports from the Online Journal are due: Nov. 24th, 2023, Feb. 23, 2024, June 14th, 2024

You may also wish to share highlights with school staff at staff meetings, parents at Governing Board, community members at a partnership meeting, funders, and partners in detailed project reports.

Stay Connected!

The community school approach goes beyond providing services and advocating volunteerism. It involves creating dynamic, flexible spaces for lifelong learning, improved health and wellbeing, and an engaged sense of belonging for the entire community, including school staff, students, and their families.

Your role as the CDA is pivotal in the community school approach, and demonstrates the power of partnerships and teamwork and what they can bring to communities. The role of the Provincial Resource Team (PRT) is to provide you with ongoing support and expertise. Don't hesitate to reach out to your PRT representative for help in navigating your journey.