The Community Learning Centre

So You Want To Create a Community Learning Centre?
An Overview of the CLC Framework for Action

INTRODUCTION

Schools, vocational and adult training centres are not only part of the educational system, they are part of the communities they serve. This connection is important in Anglophone communities, especially those which only represent a small percentage of the total population in their area. The benefits of this connection have been well demonstrated in a wide variety of contexts:

The school’s impact on students is strengthened by the support of family and community, while the latter are strengthened by the support of the school.

‘Together we’re stronger’ is a particularly apt expression to describe the potential of collaborative school-community relations: schools/centres, community groups and other public and private sector agencies working together to improve the opportunities to and from life-long learning for youth and adults and contribute to the overall development of the community.

It is for this reason that the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec (MELS) has supported the development of the Community Learning Centre Framework for Action.

The Framework consists of the five major action steps (shown below) to be undertaken by a school/centre and community partners to create a CLC, in order to promote student success and community development. The Framework is not a blueprint but an open-ended guide that has been designed:

- to be comprehensive but practical;
- to work with existing policy & practice;
- to respond to the needs of all partners;
- to be advisory, not prescriptive.

The purpose of this document is to provide a ‘bird’s eye view’ of each of the five steps of the Framework. It also describes a three-year project on CLCs that is just getting under way. Other sources of information are listed on the last page.

1. Explore 

2. Initiate 

3. Plan 

4. Implement 

5. Evaluate
1 EXPLORE

In this step you explore the possible creation of a **CLC**: a formal partnership of one or more schools/centres, public or private agencies and community groups, working together for the benefit of students, families and community.

### 1.1 See what CLCs look like in other communities

This step invites you to discover various images of a CLC, often called a ‘community school,’ in a wide range of contexts. In particular, two complementary images are presented:

- the CLC as a ‘learning community’ where everyone takes and active and reflective part in learning; and
- as a ‘hub’ of community service, offering an extended range of services to students, families and the community.

### 1.2 Create an image of a CLC for your community

In this step, you continue your exploration, seeing how a CLC would work in your community, by answering questions such as: What benefits will it provide to the school, families and the community? You will probably find that you need to identify key ‘stakeholders’ at this point and define your community for purpose of creating a CLC. By the end of this step, you should expect to have crafted your vision of a CLC that informs and inspires your community.

### 1.3 Decide to proceed

The final step in this exploration is intended to determine if the potential partners are ready and willing to proceed. You need not expect that all conditions will be perfect for this joint venture to succeed but you should have a high enough ‘level of comfort’ to continue to Step 2.

2 INITIATE

The purpose of this step is to initiate the partnership, a key transition point where commitment replaces contemplation. From afar, the steps look the same for any CLC but up close they will be different, depending on your context and the kind of CLC you want to create.

### 2.1 Map your needs and assets

The first step in initiating a CLC is to get a clear picture of both the needs and the assets of your community. Recognizing the potential of the community to contribute to its own development is critical in ensuring that the CLC will be truly useful in your context.

### 2.2 Develop mission statement

The mission statement of the CLC articulates the vision that inspired the partners to create it. It sets forth:

- values and purpose;
- types of results being sought; and
- guiding principles.

The mission keeps the spotlight on the changes we want to see happen in the lives of children, families and communities.

### 2.3 Allocate responsibilities and resources

In this step, you begin a shift from **why** you want a CLC to **how** you will make it operational. This step includes deciding how the CLC should be structured, creating an operational team and assigning roles and resources to make the CLC a reality. Regardless of the form the CLC takes, **building trust and confidence** are crucial for the fledging partnership to succeed.

### 2.4 Conclude partnership agreement

Once the above steps have been completed, the CLC is activated by means of an agreement among the partners, be it a contract or some other less formal expression of understanding.
3 PLAN

The purpose of this step is to develop an Action Plan which maps the ‘pathways to change,’ in accordance with the terms of the Partnership Agreement.

3.1 Determine desired results: The first planning task is to determine the results which the CLC wishes to achieve or to which it intends to contribute, based on the types of results identified in Step 2.2.

3.2 Determine programs and services to be offered: Choosing programs and services requires a blend of creativity and practicality. Most of all, it requires a clear focus on feasible but effective means to achieve the results set in Step 3.1.

3.3 Determine capacity to deliver services: In order to deliver programs and services and achieve intended results, the CLC requires capacity. These ‘building blocks’ (for example, infrastructure, human resources and leadership) enable the CLC to attain and sustain high levels of performance in accordance with the expectations of its stakeholders.

3.4 Determine means to evaluate actions and results: The Framework has been designed to support ‘self-evaluation,’ an approach in which the CLC uses performance indicators to see how well it is doing, for the purpose of both accountability and improvement.

3.5 Complete Action Plan: This final step is first used to consolidate and review all aspects of the Action Plan completed in steps 3.1 to 3.4, while taking into account the review of each partner’s annual planning.

4 IMPLEMENT

The purpose of this step is to implement the Action Plan developed in the previous step.

4.1 Allocate resources and begin service delivery: In this step, the various services selected in Step 3.2 are delivered.

4.2 Allocate resources and conduct capacity building: Activities to build a range of capacities determined in Step 3.3 are pursued throughout this step.

4.3 Monitor service delivery and capacity building: Monitoring ensures that both service delivery and capacity building are on track.

5 EVALUATE

The purpose of this step is to evaluate the performance of the CLC in accordance with Step 3.4 of the Action Plan.

5.1 Collect the data: This step involves the collection of bits of information that can be used to produce the indicators selected in Step 3.4. The methods of data collection may include the use of questionnaires, rating scales, interviews and gathering of documents.

5.2 Analyze the data: The principal task at this stage is to assemble the bits and pieces collected in the previous step and make sense of them.

5.3 Report to stakeholders: This final step uses a variety of media and techniques to ensure that the results of the evaluation are communicated to and understood by stakeholders. This step also generates lessons learned that provide the basis for what the CLC needs to do in future action plans.
FIRST STEPS

In order to encourage the sustainable development of CLCs, the Services à la communauté anglophone (MELS), with support from the Canada-Québec Entente for Minority Language Education (Canadian Heritage), has begun a three-year project: The Community Learning Centre: A Minority English-Language Initiative, 2006-2009.

The purpose of this project is to support and monitor the development of a diverse group of CLCs that serve as ‘hubs’ for English-language education and community development, and offer models for future practice. Some key results anticipated from this project are:

- an ongoing network of collaborative partnerships in all regions;
- enhanced access to services for the English-speaking community; and
- improved student retention and success rates.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This document as well as those listed below are available on the LEARN website:

- A Promising Direction for English Education in Québec, written for a general audience, provides a short introduction to CLCs;

- The CLC Framework for Action for Anglophone Schools, Centres and Communities, written for school/centre and community leaders, describes the purpose and actions to be taken in each step.

- The CLC Guidebook: Implementing a Collaborative School-Community Partnership, written for the person responsible for coordinating this process, offers detailed suggestions for implementing the Framework;

- The CLC Workbook: Templates for Collaborative Action Planning was written as a companion text to the Guidebook.

Information on community schools can be obtained from a variety of sources, such as the web sites listed below.

- The Community School (Québec)
- Community Education (Saskatchewan)
- Coalition for Community Schools
- Centres scolaires et communautaires (Canadian Heritage)
- Children’s Aid Society (New York)
- Harvard Family Research Project

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