

# Living Library

## Leveraging community educators in learning

Discover the way Westwood High School in Mesa, Arizona leveraged community educators to deepen learning for students. Community educators include youth-serving professionals and volunteers who leverage their knowledge and skills to support learners and complement professional educators.



One-time visit



35+ community educators



Math



Interview



I wanted to focus on the relationships between generations; if students would be more confident and comfortable speaking in their native language, I didn't want to hinder them from experiencing a connection with an adult who cares about [their] future

– Elizabeth Ruiz, Westwood High School math teacher

### Preparing students and community educators

#### Unit launch:

- 150 Grade 9 students prepared interview questions for community educators and hypothesized outcomes on why math is important outside of high school.
- English- and Spanish-speaking community educators from diverse professions were enlisted to support the school's high percentage of emergent multilingual learners.
- Community educators were sent interview questions ahead of time to prepare responses.

#### Social-capital and networking

##### Community educator visit:

- Pairs of ninth graders were placed at individual tables for 15-minute interviews with engineers, designers, transportation workers, stay-at-home parents, athletes, coupon shoppers, artists, restaurant managers, electricians and more.
- Community educators reported that students held high-level conversations and some even brought resumes and applications for internships.

### Exploration and culminating experience

#### After the interview:

- With inspiration from the community educator visit, students chose math-related investigations based on a profession of their choice. Investigations included: ratios for baking and hair dye, interior design and more.
- Students presented the results of their personalized, math-based investigation, displaying how math is relevant beyond the classroom and used in every profession.

#### Lasting connections

##### Sustained relationships and continued learning

- Community educators and family members were invited back for the students' showcase presentations at the end of the unit.
- Multiple community educators had recurring visits to collaborate on other math projects including: car loans, depreciation and credit-score percentages.
- Lasting relationships were forged initiating future internship and mentor possibilities.

### Impact on learning for students

- Perspective shift towards career awareness through mentors who are invested in student success
- Deep and personalized learning, making connections to post-high school professions
- Highlight of the year for students

### Invite with clarity

- Clearly outline ask and time commitment
- Word-of-mouth connections, snowballed into a web of social networks
- Search for community educators inclusively, offering a range of demographics, perspectives and spoken languages

### Considerations for implementation

- Prepare the space, coordinate with staff and admin to support logistics, materials and a budget
- Find more tools to prepare community educators:  
[workforce.education.asu.edu/collectio/n/community-educators](https://workforce.education.asu.edu/collectio/n/community-educators)