

SIX TIPS FOR ENGAGING A COMMUNITY EDUCATOR

Community educators provide capacity and insight in service of deepening and personalizing student learning. They enrich learning environments by forging authentic relationships, sharing expertise and expanding networks. They work in schools, community-based organizations and anywhere that learning happens.

1

SET THE PURPOSE

Consider possibilities for utilizing community educators within the learning space who might enhance your students' understanding and experience. With your team, look at your upcoming projects and curriculum:

- Is there a project-based learning (PBL) unit to which you could add a guest expert whose unique perspective might deepen student learning?
- Could an industry expert share real-world application of content with a small group of students?
- Is there a portion of your day that could benefit from new methods of engaging in learning?

2

THINK ABOUT UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES

Brainstorm together the differentiated expertise that could be helpful in the role you've identified. Think beyond just academic skills.

- A literacy accelerator needs some knowledge on supporting reading development, but they also could be someone who has a positive presence, is skilled at motivating others or a person students trust.
- A PBL unit could feature a guest expert in that field or a person in the community affected by the issue.

3

MAP YOUR COMMUNITY

Build a map of where you may seek out people in your community, or virtually, with the desired expertise. For example, if you are doing a project on sustainability, think about farms, city services, university faculty and students, journalists, etc. Consider:

- Who does your team know in your personal and professional networks?
- Who do your students interact with that may have this expertise?
- What organizations exist that have this expertise and experience?

4

INVITE WITH CLARITY

Reach out to the community educator and invite them to the learning space. Being a guest at a school is an honor, and often people just need to be asked. Forty-two percent of people volunteer because they were invited. Be sure to check with your school's guidelines for visitors first.

- Introduce your team and why this project is important to your students.
- Clearly outline the ask and the potential time commitment. Use [this overview](#) as a template.

5

COLLABORATE TOGETHER

Successful partnerships rely on collaboration. Work with community educators ahead of time so that their knowledge and perspectives can shape the experience your students will have.

- Even if they are visiting for just one day, have a phone or video call to be sure both of you are aligned on content, logistics and goals.
- Share MLFTC's [Community Educator courses](#) to help them prepare.

6

SET THE VISIT UP FOR SUCCESS

Whether visiting virtually or in person, set the visit up for success with these tips:

- Remind everyone about the schedule so that you're off to a good start.
- Ask them to arrive a few minutes early to help them ease into the learning space or handle tech issues.
- Touch base with the community educator at the beginning of the engagement for any last-minute updates and again at the end to wrap up their visit.