



Rethinking Curriculum

Place-based and community evaluation framework

Delivering an expansive and inspiring curriculum for all

This evaluation framework has been developed by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the Rethinking Curriculum project, funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It is one of a series of evaluation frameworks that have been shared as part of our Rethinking Curriculum toolkits.

The framework captures some of the key ideas explored in the Rethinking Curriculum **place-based and community** toolkit and offers some key ideas for you to evaluate your school's curriculum practice on this theme. These ideas are drawn from research and evidence and from our work with schools, and include input from leading experts.

The ideas explored are not intended to provide a definitive approach to curriculum development on this theme. There may be gaps or omissions and this should be viewed as a work in progress, which we will aim to develop further as the evidence base continues to evolve. You are encouraged to consider this framework alongside the [place-based and community toolkit](#), and to undertake your own reading and research to build your understanding of the key ideas discussed prior to implementing changes in your context.

This evaluation framework has been developed in collaboration with Julia Hancock of Boundless Learning Ltd, colleagues at Flookburgh CofE Primary School and Jenna Crittenden, curriculum design lead at the Chartered College of Teaching.



Chartered College
of Teaching

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Part 1: Building a place-based and community learning culture

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ Leaders and teachers establish a culture that fosters and develops relationships with the whole school community to enrich curriculum opportunities. They actively seek to build relationships with underrepresented groups and those who are not yet represented in the school community.
- ✓ Leaders have developed a shared understanding across the school community of the benefits of a place-based approach (academic outcomes, school engagement, civic participation, community cohesion, etc.), ensuring that it is valued in curriculum design by all.
- ✓ Staff are trained and provided with appropriate support to plan effective and bespoke lesson sequences around the National Curriculum and the school place; they understand the pedagogical benefits to the approach and how they can implement this.
- ✓ The human and physical opportunities related to place are both sought to enrich the curriculum, while ensuring the acquisition of new skills and knowledge; these opportunities are not used to drive the curriculum choices. The curriculum is regularly evaluated to ensure suitability for each individual cohort's needs.
- ✓ Local, national and global events are engaged with when relevant to the curriculum. They are not tokenistic, standalone or isolated experiences but used as part of the wider learning process.
- ✓ The locality and the community are utilised as both a resource and inspiration to connect learning to the pupils' known world within the curriculum; however, experiences *beyond* the local community are sought when required, supporting a breadth of opportunity and ensuring that pupils are developing global understanding.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What do we as leaders mean when we use the term 'place-based and community learning' and to what extent is this understanding shared by all staff?
2. Do we have a clear process to build and grow our understanding of place and community for our school and how do we ensure that this is evaluated and improved regularly to build understanding between local and global learning?
3. What are our community perceptions of the curriculum that we offer? Do our pupils feel represented and have a sense of belonging? How do we balance this with developing further global representation within our curriculum?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Place-based and community learning is not well understood and planned, leading to isolated events or experiences that are difficult for children to link to their prior or subsequent learning; planning focuses on superficial elements rather than rich, high-quality learning.

The locality of the school is the only dimension valued, and this creates an inward-facing, one-dimensional curriculum design that is not welcoming or representative of the whole community, leaving some feeling unwelcome or alienated.

Teachers do not feel confident to write a curriculum that is bespoke to the school needs, and instead rely upon pre-written schemes of work that do not represent the place or school community.

The curriculum relies upon already established relationships and time is not given to developing new connections. This leads to a curriculum that is one-dimensional and alienates those not represented.



Part 2: Building place-based and community learning into the curriculum

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

- ✓ The curriculum schemes of work are reviewed to identify where there are opportunities to work with and in the community to support and enhance learning. Teachers are given time and permission to develop new links, not relying solely upon previously used links for all cohorts.
- ✓ Teachers understand that place-based is not just about locality but about human and physical connections within the school community, including with cultural, ecological, social, political and economic communities in the locality and beyond. This breadth of 'place' is used to build a sense of equity, justice and representation through the curriculum, ensuring representation of the cohort but also 'opening the doors' to learn with and from others.
- ✓ Teachers are given time to explore local opportunities, developing their own knowledge of the locality and community in order to enhance the curriculum that they plan.
- ✓ Teachers are confident to plan learning sequences, using the sense of place to build pupil understanding between local and global communities over a period of time.
- ✓ Curriculum sequences are carefully planned to ensure that prerequisite knowledge and skills are taught and built upon and that activities with the community enhance this offering rather than leading the sequence of learning.
- ✓ Teachers help pupils to make connections, with explicit links made between their lived experience within the community and experiences on a national or global level.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. How do we ensure that planned learning with our place and community is enhancing our curriculum and not driving our curriculum? Have we got a clear understanding of when opportunities should not be included? Does everyone understand this?
2. Are staff confident in building connections for our pupils between their community and place and the national and global place? How do we (or how do we plan to) build staff understanding and expertise around this?
3. Do we have a good understanding of our strengths and/or barriers and any work to be done in relation to our place-based and community curriculum design?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

Opportunities to work with the local community are not carefully chosen to enhance the curriculum and can instead lead the curriculum, resulting in fragmented and 'busy participation' rather than high-quality learning.

There is a lack of knowledge and understanding from teachers and leaders about the communities that their schools serve.

Relationships that have been historically developed are given curriculum time without regular review of the suitability or impact. This leads to a sense of 'this has always happened here' rather than 'this is what our cohort needs now'.

Time is not protected to build new community relationships and teachers' own knowledge of the opportunities available and, in turn, new opportunities are limited.

Opportunities to interweave pre- and post-learning are not planned, and linking the local learning with that on a national and global scale results in a narrow curriculum offering or one-off experiences that do not result in deep learning.

Assumptions are made about pupils' 'out of school' experiences, and opportunities to identify and seek further support to broaden the curriculum offering are limited.



Part 3: Key considerations for successful implementation

Evaluation

Reflect on where your school is in your journey and allocate a number against each of the statements below to evaluate the extent to which it reflects current practice in your context (1–2 = low; 3–4 = medium; 5–6 = high).

Key ideas from research, theory and evidence

- ✓ Leaders clearly set out the vision and values that are to inform the school's work around place-based and community learning and the wider curriculum, ensuring that these are understood by all.
- ✓ Leaders ensure that sufficient time, resources and supporting structures are in place to enable staff to effectively develop and deliver place-based and community learning, along with the wider curriculum.
- ✓ Leaders draw on research and evidence to inform curriculum development work relating to place-based and community learning; they gather data from their context to evaluate existing practice and consider how they will evaluate the impact of implementing a new approach.
- ✓ Implementation and development of place-based and community approaches is a collaborative process, characterised by iterative cycles of development, meaningful professional learning, shared problem-solving and ongoing review.
- ✓ There are dedicated members of staff to champion this work; these champions, and middle leaders (where appropriate), have clarity around their role and are well positioned to support colleagues and help to drive the curriculum forward.
- ✓ Teachers are supported to build their expertise so that they develop strong subject/pedagogical content knowledge, have a deep understanding of effective pedagogical approaches and are able to combine these with knowledge of the school curriculum, pupils' needs and the wider context, in order to plan and implement the curriculum effectively.

Your
evaluation
(1–6)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Is your school ready to implement curriculum development activity in this area? Have you already evaluated existing practice using the full Rethinking Curriculum evaluation framework, to ensure a strong foundation for this work?
2. Do you have a clear plan for implementation? How will you involve staff in this process?
3. Is there existing capacity and/or how will you create capacity for this work? Is there anything that you will need to de-implement to enable this to happen?

Common barriers

What might impede improvement?

- Leaders and/or staff find it difficult to articulate vision/goals/values.*
- Implementation may be rushed or not well thought-through.*
- There is a lack of resources/time to support development of curriculum.*
- Curriculum changes are implemented wholesale, without sufficient consideration of context, school needs and/or capacity.*
- School leaders do not systematically seek staff input into curriculum development and, as a result, there may be a disconnect between the intended and enacted curriculum.*
- Curriculum changes are seen as a 'quick fix', with new ideas introduced with limited further development or impact evaluation.*
- Teachers implement new approaches too quickly, without a clear rationale or understanding of how they fit into the school context, ultimately resulting in a lack of impact on pupil learning.*