Community-Based Learning Lesson Plan Builder

Planning Components

Title of Lesson	Grow Where You Are
Grade level(s)	Grade 6, easily adaptable for grades 6–12
Duration	1. How much time are we asking students to commit to this topic? a. 5–6 full days (1 week of our six-week grading period) 2. How much time should staff allocate to support this work? a. 2–4 additional hours (professional learning community time) 3. What are the phases of the project mapped out? a. Phase 1: Day 1—Introduction to topic through stations b. Phase 2: Day 2—Discuss and develop essential question c. Phase 3: Day 3—Inquiry and explanation with guest speaker d. Phase 4: Day 4 and 5—Elaboration and preparing for the field e. Phase 5: Day 6—Field investigation in the neighborhood f. Phase 6: Day 7 and beyond—Taking action and data disaggregation
Essential Question(s)	**What is growing in our neighborhood, and how can we make sure that food reaches everyone who needs it?** **How can understanding what our community grows help us address what our community lacks?**
Objectives	● Students will identify environmental factors such as sunlight, water, soil, and climate that influence which fruits and vegetables grow successfully in the Riverside area. ● Students will use coordinate planes and map reasoning to plan and navigate field investigation routes through their neighborhood. ● Students will formulate statistical questions, collect real-world survey data, and organize findings using dot plots, charts, and measures of center and spread. ● Students will use ratios and proportional reasoning to compare food production across the neighborhood and make evidence-based recommendations about what to grow and share. ● Students will ask and answer questions in a real-world community setting, adapting their language and delivery to their audience. ● Students will demonstrate confidence and courtesy when communicating with unfamiliar adults in the community. ● Students will reflect on how their assumptions about their neighborhood compare to what the data actually revealed.

Project Brief	Food is one of our most basic needs, yet many families in our own neighborhood don't always have enough. Our class will become community scientists and food advocates by going directly into the streets around our school to discover what grows here and who is willing to share it. We will work together to build real connections between neighbors, map the hidden abundance in our community, and help make fresh food more accessible for the families who need it most.
End Products and Sharing Points	**What will the project produce, and who will students want to share it with?** Students will generate a list of possible projects to share with classrooms in grades K–8 and the school's administration team. ● posters/bar graphs ● programs ● Google Slides ● videos/morning announcements
Driving Standards	California Content Standards *https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/* California English Language Development (ELD) Standards *https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ml/documents/eldstndspublication14.pdf* California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs) *https://docs.ctc.ca.gov/Document/Download/30328* Studying city map, planning routes 6.NS.C.6, 6.NS.C.8, SL.6.1 Designing interview questions 6.SP.A.1, SL.6.1, SL.6.4 Speaking with community members SL.6.4, SL.6.6 Recording what grows in the area 6.SP.A.1, 6.SP.A.2, MS-LS1-5 Analyzing garden data 6.SP.B.4, 6.SP.B.5, 6.RP.A.3 Recommending plants to share 6.RP.A.1, 6.RP.A.3, MS-LS2-5 Connecting to food access/sustainability 6.SP.B.5, 6.RP.A.3, MS-ESS3-4

Student and Community Components

Who are my students?	**What are my students' strengths, identities, and lived experiences?** My students bring a rich set of strengths, identities, and lived experiences to the classroom. Many students come from multilingual backgrounds, with several being bilingual and at least one student being trilingual, reflecting strong linguistic and cultural diversity. Their family networks are a key asset, as many students have relatives–such as cousins, aunts, and uncles–who are also part of the school community, fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

	Students demonstrate a strong preference for active, collaborative learning. They enjoy physical activity, movement breaks, and opportunities to teach and learn from one another, highlighting their social nature and engagement with peer-based learning. Their ability to interact and collaborate supports a dynamic classroom environment. Additionally, students show resilience and adaptability through their extended school day, which runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., with many continuing in after-school programs until 6:00 p.m. This reflects their stamina and commitment to learning. Access to free breakfast and lunch ensures that their basic needs are supported, allowing them to focus on learning. Together, these strengths and experiences contribute to a vibrant, interconnected classroom community.
What partners and/or resources are current assets to support this?	**What organizations, leaders, local knowledge, and financial resources should be considered?** Teachers can select guest speakers, with student and expert input: ● Community and Economic Development Department (Riverside City Hall). ● Master gardener from local community garden. ● Local neighborhood/neighbors. ● Toastmasters member or on-campus teacher skilled in public speaking.
How are partners going to be involved in this project?	**Are there primary or tertiary members of the project?** Community and Economic Development Department (City Hall)—Provide maps of a four-block radius of commercial and residential spaces for students to explore access to food in their immediate community. Master gardener from local community garden—Guest speaker provides students with insight on the best fruits and vegetables to grow in their community, what can be grown in small spaces, how to plant, and educate neighbors interested in starting their own gardens. Local neighborhood/neighbors— Help answer a few questions about what fruits and vegetables already grow on their property and if they'd be willing to allow students to collect excess harvest. Toastmasters member (on-campus teacher)—Assists students in practicing the scripts they will use when speaking with neighbors
What learning will occur as a result of partner involvement?	When students step outside the classroom and into their community, the learning shifts in ways that textbooks simply cannot replicate. Guest speakers including local gardeners and community food advocates will bring the science of plant growth and food systems to life, helping students understand not just what grows in Riverside but how to measure, record, and interpret the data that tells the story of who has access to it.

	Beyond content knowledge, these partnerships open doors. Students will see firsthand how careers in agriculture, environmental science, and community organizing rely on the same ability to ask statistical questions, analyze patterns, and draw conclusions from real-world data that they are developing right now. Most importantly, by surveying real neighbors and making sense of what the numbers reveal, students will discover that their ability to collect evidence, spot outliers, and communicate findings is already powerful enough to make a difference.
How does this learning reciprocate into the community?	The work students do in *Grow Where You Are* is not performed for a grade–it is performed for their neighbors. Every data point students collect, every door they knock on, and every connection they make with a neighbor becomes part of a living resource that the community can draw from for years to come. The contact database students build will serve as a roadmap for future harvest collections, ensuring that excess fruit and vegetables find their way to families who need them long after the school year ends. Beyond the data, the relationships matter just as much. Neighbors who might never have connected discover they share a garden fence and a willingness to help. Families who receive fresh produce learn that students in their community see them and are taking action on their behalf. And students themselves return to their neighborhood changed–not as passive residents but as scientists, advocates, and organizers who know firsthand that paying attention to where you live is the first step toward making it better.
What type of disruption might this project create?	*Grow Where You Are* disrupts the quiet assumption that a sixth grader is too young to address a community crisis. When students knock on a neighbor's door armed with clipboards, data collection tools, and genuine curiosity, they challenge the idea that solving food insecurity is someone else's job–a nonprofit's, a government agency's, a grown-up's. That disruption is intentional and necessary. The project also disrupts the boundaries of where learning is allowed to happen. Science leaves the lab. Math leaves the worksheet. Conversations that might never occur between neighbors who have lived side by side for years suddenly happen because a twelve-year-old asked a good question. In a community where food insecurity is the number one need, normalizing those conversations–making it acceptable and even exciting to talk about what grows here and who it feeds–is itself a form of disruption worth pursuing. Finally, this project disrupts the narrative that students in under-resourced communities are recipients of help rather than providers of it. When a student hands fresh produce to a family in need, or adds a neighbor's fruit tree to a community harvest map that will be used for years, they are rewriting that story in real time–and that may be the most powerful disruption of all.

Lesson Components

Problem-Posing and Engagement	**What problem will the students investigate? How will students use their voices and experiences to investigate and improve their community?** Students will investigate the gap between what their neighborhood grows and what their community needs—asking why fresh food exists in some yards while families nearby don't have enough to eat. Using curiosity, data, and their own two feet, students will move through their neighborhood as scientists and advocates, collecting evidence their community can actually use. Introduce food not just as something we consume, but as something that connects us to the land, our neighbors, and each other. Introduce the essential question: *What grows here, and how can we make sure that food reaches everyone who needs it?* Station activities: ● Mystery Map—Get a map printed by the city that shows a four-block radius of the school. Students mark where they think people buy food, where they think people grow food, and where they think people might not have enough food. ● The $35 Challenge—Provide students with a fictional family profile (family size, income, dietary needs) and a "budget" that reflects what a food-insecure family in their area might realistically have for groceries. ● Line Activity—Students stand on a line stepping backward and forward based on their answers to a series of questions. View the Anticipatory Set for CBL Food Lesson for additional initial activity options. *https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Sfsns3F5VPhtkG3nWy8Iwes2wgLmZO-xbOzMYbcGbic/edit?usp=sharing* **Activate Prior Knowledge** ● Have you ever grown anything or watched someone grow food? ● Do you know anyone with a garden or fruit trees? ● What do you think food insecurity means? ● What happens to fruit and vegetables that don't get eaten?
Discussion and Exploration	**How will students engage in dialogue about this problem? What methods of investigation will students use to gather information?** Students explore food insecurity through discussion, data, and direct community interaction—centering the voices and experiences of their own neighborhood.

	Build Understanding and Explore Perspectives Mini-lessons ● Where food comes from and how it moves through a community ● What grows in Riverside and why ● What food insecurity is, who it affects, and why it is not simple ● Does anyone grow food at home? Has food ever been hard to come by? **Methods of Investigation** ● Guest speaker discussions with local gardeners and food advocates ● Hands-on planting and plant care ● Partner-designed interview questions and a community Google Form ● Door-to-door neighborhood field investigation **Identify a Community Need:** The Step Forward/Step Back activity and local data reveal the central tension–food exists in this neighborhood, but it is not reaching everyone.
Critical Inquiry and Explanation	**In what ways will students learn about interpreting, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing both qualitative and quantitative data? What content knowledge and skills will students need to successfully complete the research and products required for inquiry?** Guide students to ask: *If food is growing right outside our doors, why are families still going hungry?* Collecting data: Ways of knowing include plant science, statistical reasoning, map reading, community interviewing, and data disaggregation across qualitative and quantitative sources.
Elaboration	**How will students communicate their findings, engage in discussion about their results, and develop key components for action?** Student pairs shift from investigators to advocates–organizing their field data, identifying which neighbors to follow up with, and planning next steps for harvest collection and distribution. Students take action by: ● Building a community contact database from survey results ● Creating a neighborhood harvest map ● Developing a distribution plan for collected produce ● Designing materials to share starter plants or seeds with neighbors ready to grow

Journey Checks and Formative Assessments	**What metrics will be used to measure progress during the project stages? What metrics will measure the impact of the action of this project?** Progress is measured through observation of partner discussions, the quality of interview questions drafted, the accuracy of field data collected, and the ability to identify patterns in survey results. Impact is measured by: ● Number of properties surveyed and mapped ● Number of community members who agreed to share excess harvest ● Amount of produce collected and distributed ● Number of families connected to starter plants or gardening materials Reflection prompts: ● What did we discover about our neighborhood that surprised us? ● How did our data compare to what we assumed going in? ● What was hard about talking to strangers, and what got easier?
Taking Action and Evaluation	**What will success look and feel like for this project? What will success look like in the action phase for the community?** Success for this project will look like students confidently moving through their neighborhood with clipboards and curiosity, gathering real data from real neighbors and returning with a community harvest map that didn't exist before they started. It will feel purposeful and proud–students will know they did something that mattered, not something that was assigned. In the action phase, success in the community will look like neighbors opening their doors, agreeing to share excess harvest, and connecting with one another in ways that outlast the school year. It will look like fresh produce reaching families who need it, a living database that future classes can build on, and students who return to their neighborhood seeing it differently–not as a place where problems exist, but as a place where they have the tools, the data, and the relationships to help solve them.

Scaffolding and Foundational Components

What considerations and scaffolds will be created or introduced for students to be successful in all lesson components?

Multilingual Learners	● Pre-teach key vocabulary (harvest, survey, food insecurity, distribute, excess, data, property) ● Model door-to-door interactions and Google Form completion step-by-step before students work independently ● Assign clear roles in partner pairs: interviewer, recorder, navigator, presenter ● Use think-pair-share before whole-group discussions and debrief after field investigation ● Practice interview questions and script delivery through role-play before going into the neighborhood ● Provide the community survey and street signage in both English and Spanish ● Partner with community members who speak students' home languages during the field investigation when possible ● Recognize that many students and families have firsthand knowledge of growing food and food insecurity–that knowledge is an asset, not a footnote ● Invite family participation in plant care, harvest distribution, or guest speaking ● Send all project communications and permission materials home in English and Spanish
Refugee and Immigrant Populations	● Offer opt-out options for the Step Forward/Step Back activity and any questions that may feel too personal during the field investigation ● Break the door-to-door experience into clearly sequenced, manageable steps with a visual checklist students carry with them ● Model everything–how to approach a door, introduce themselves, ask questions, record data, and exit gracefully ● Provide sentence frames, visual scripts, and structured templates for every phase of the project ● Connect students with community members who share their cultural background or home language during the field investigation when possible ● Recognize that many refugee and immigrant families have deep knowledge of growing food–invite that expertise into the classroom explicitly ● Provide clear daily goals and visual schedules so students always know what is coming next ● Preview each new phase before it begins so no student is surprised by an unfamiliar task ● Use translated materials for all communications, permission slips, and project resources

	• Note that this project begins with the immediate neighborhood–a safe, familiar starting point–before expanding outward, making it a natural fit for students who are still building comfort in their new community

Students with Disabilities	• Break the field investigation and all preparation tasks into clear, sequenced steps with visual checklists and anchor charts
	• Assign structured roles in partner pairs and small groups:
	  ○ Navigator (map reading and route planning)
	  ○ Interviewer (asking questions at the door)
	  ○ Recorder (entering data into the Google Form)
	  ○ Reporter (sharing findings back to the class)
	• Rotate roles across the project when possible
	• Build in assistive technology supports–text-to-speech, audio-recorded scripts, and tablet-based form entry
	• Plan for physical accessibility during the neighborhood field investigation–map routes in advance and identify any barriers
	• Use flexible grouping and pacing so no student is rushed through a phase before they are ready
	• Assess based on growth, effort, contribution, and understanding–not output format alone
	• Allow alternative formats for demonstrating learning: verbal responses, drawings, photo documentation, or recorded observations
	• Anticipate sensory and emotional needs during the door-to-door experience–previewing what to expect, offering a quiet role option, and always providing a trusted adult nearby

Social-Emotional Learning	Prioritize: • Center student voice and choice throughout–students design their own interview questions, choose their partner roles, and contribute to decisions about how collected produce is distributed • Build belonging and inclusion from day one through the Step Forward/Step Back activity, which surfaces shared experiences and reminds every student that their story matters in this work • Connect students to real-world impact at every phase–every door knocked on, every data point recorded, and every piece of produce distributed is evidence that their actions have consequences beyond the classroom • Use collaborative problem-solving as the primary mode of working–students navigate disagreements, divide responsibilities, and make decisions together throughout the field investigation and data analysis phases • Create space for honest reflection on assumptions, discomfort, and growth–talking to strangers is hard, and naming that difficulty is part of the learning • Recognize and affirm that students from families experiencing food

	insecurity bring expertise and perspective to this project that no textbook can provide
Tribal Communities	• Begin with a key shift in how food is framed–in many tribal communities, growing and sharing food is not a project or an activity; it is a way of life rooted in relationship with the land, reciprocity within the community, and respect for what the earth provides • Honor that understanding by expanding the essential question beyond science and data: *What does it mean to care for the land, and what does the land offer in return?* • Recognize that Indigenous knowledge systems have long understood what this project is trying to rediscover–that food, community, and the health of the land are inseparable • Connect the neighborhood harvest map to the broader concept of land stewardship–who tends the land, who benefits from it, and who has historically been excluded from it • Create space for students to bring and honor their own community's relationship with food and land without requiring them to perform or explain it • Frame the act of distributing food to neighbors not just as a service project but as an act of reciprocity–giving back what the land and community have given us
Other Project Considerations	As the project successfully grows to sustainability, additional services will be added to it. A few services may include free/affordable health and dental care, classes on healthy eating on a budget, and physical fitness activities promoting healthy living. The goal is to expose the community to a collective of Blue Zones healthy living practices that are financially within reach.