



COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS



What is Community-Based Learning?



Community-Based Learning (CBL) is an instructional approach grounded in place-based pedagogy. Standards-aligned instruction is grounded in authentic community contexts, giving students the chance to investigate real-world issues through inquiry, collaboration, and reflection. This approach also builds educator capacity to design equity-centered, community-driven instruction consistent with the California STAC Capacity Building Strategy for [Centering Community-Based Learning](#).

What Does it Look Like?

Standards-aligned units anchored in local issues, assets, or community questions. Instruction is designed through backwards mapping, with authentic outcomes and audiences in mind. Frameworks like Youth Participatory Action Research guide the investigation process. Students engage in inquiry cycles that include questioning, researching, creating, revising, and reflecting. Ongoing formative assessment and visible learning practices are seen throughout.

What Are the Benefits?

- Increased student engagement, attendance, and deeper cognitive demand.
- Opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction and authentic assessment.
- Stronger student-teacher relationships through shared inquiry and relevance.
- Professional growth through reflective practice, collaboration, and innovation.

How Can I Start Using CBL in My Classroom?

- Start with one lesson or mini-project, not a full unit.
- Ask students what issues or topics matter to them locally. Identify one community connection (person, place, or story) to integrate.
- Use an existing lesson and add local relevance instead of creating something new.