

Guide to Creating a Community Connections Committee

1 Understanding the Community Connections Committee

Definition and Goals

A community connections committee is a group of individuals, typically composed of school staff, parents, and community members, who work together to foster positive relationships and partnerships between the school and its surrounding community.

These committees often focus on:

- **Building relationships:** Establishing and strengthening connections with local organizations, businesses, and community members.
- **Sharing resources:** Identifying and sharing resources that can benefit both the school and the community.
- **Promoting community involvement:** Encouraging community members to participate in school activities and events.
- **Advocating for the school:** Representing the school's needs and interests within the community.

By working together, the community connections committee can help to create a more supportive and engaged environment for students, families, and the community as a whole.

Benefits for Schools and Communities

Benefits for Schools:

- **Enhanced Support:** Community connections can provide schools with additional resources, volunteers, and expertise to support the curriculum and/or extracurricular activities.
- **Improved Reputation:** Strong community partnerships can enhance the school's reputation and attract new students.
- **Increased Relevance:** By connecting with the community, schools can better understand and address the needs of their students and, by extension, their families.
- **Enhanced Learning Opportunities:** Partnerships can provide students

with unique learning experiences, such as field trips, guest speakers, and mentorship programs.

- **Improved School Climate:** A positive relationship with the community can contribute to a more supportive and welcoming school environment.

Benefits for Communities:

- **Increased Access to Resources:** Community members can benefit from the resources and programs offered by the school.
- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** Community connections can foster a sense of belonging and involvement.
- **Improved Community Well-being:**

Schools can play a vital role in promoting community health and well-being, which in turn supports student health and well-being.

- **Economic Development:** Partnerships between schools and local businesses can contribute to economic growth.
- **Strengthened Community Cohesion:** Community connections can help to build stronger relationships between different groups within the community, in particular the relationship between anglophone, francophone, and indigenous communities.



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Differences Between Community School Models

In Quebec, the CLC Community Schools models differ depending on the number of schools supported by each Community Development Agent (CDA) to extend the reach of the community resources and partnerships available to students, their families, and the communities in which they live.

In a single-site school model, the committee's focus is typically on building relationships and partnerships within the immediate community surrounding the school.

This might involve:

- **Engaging with community organizations:** Working with local organizations to offer after-school programs, tutoring

services, or community events.

- **Partnering with local businesses:** Collaborating with nearby businesses to provide internships, job shadowing opportunities, or donations.
- **Building relationships with families:** Fostering strong connections with parents and guardians to promote school engagement and support.

In an extended school model, each school committee may have the same focus, however the Community Development Agent may seek out a wider range of partners and initiatives that would benefit multiple schools. This could include:

- **Collaborating across multiple schools:** Working with other schools in the region to share resources and best practices.
- **Partnering with regional organizations:** Connecting with organizations that serve a larger geographical area to offer programs and services to multiple schools.

Key considerations for adapting community connections committees:

- **Community needs:** Identify the specific needs and interests of the community served by the school.
- **School resources:** Assess the resources available to support community partnerships and initiatives.
- **Community involvement:** Encourage active participation

from community members in the committee's activities.

- **Collaboration:** Foster collaboration among school staff, parents, and community members to maximize the impact of the committee's work.

By tailoring the committee's focus and activities to the specific needs and characteristics of the school model, it can be more effective in building strong relationships and promoting community engagement.

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2 Establishing the Committee



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Gaining Support: Engaging Principals and Building Staff Buy-In

Engaging Principals: Importance and Role

Principals play a crucial role in the success of community connections committees. Here are some strategies to engage them:

- **Highlight the benefits:** Clearly articulate the positive impact that community partnerships can have on student learning, school culture, and the overall reputation of the school. Explain the benefits of multi-stakeholder participation in moving the CLC goals forward (teacher buy-in especially).
- **Showcase successful examples:** Share case studies or testimonials from other schools that have benefited from strong community connections. You can reach out to the other CDAs in the CLC network and/or ask the PRT for some examples.
- **Involve principals in the planning process:** Invite principals to participate in committee meetings and decision-making processes.
- **Align with school goals:** Ensure that the committee's activities align with the school's overall mission and objectives. Consult the school Educational Project(s) and highlight the alignment and/or potential contributions to the school goals.
- **Provide regular updates:** Keep principals informed about the committee's progress, accomplishments, and challenges.

Building Staff Buy-In: Benefits and Responsibilities

Staff buy-in is essential for the success of community connections committees. Here are some strategies to build support among school staff:

- **Communicate the benefits:** Clearly explain how community partnerships can benefit staff, students, and the school as a whole.
- **Provide professional development:** Offer opportunities for staff to learn about community engagement strategies and best practices. You can share PD offered by the PRT as well as community partners.
- **Recognize and reward staff involvement:** Acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of staff members who participate in community initiatives. Find out if their participation can count towards their duties in accordance with the collective agreement (check with principal and/or staff union rep for the most up-to-date agreement terms).
- **Create a supportive environment:** Foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork that encourages staff to participate in community activities.
- **Involve staff in decision-making:** Give staff a voice in determining the committee's priorities and activities.

Benefits of staff buy-in:

- **Increased participation:** When staff are invested in community partnerships, they are more likely to participate actively and contribute their time and talents.
- **Improved morale:** A sense of community involvement can boost staff morale and job satisfaction.
- **Enhanced student learning:** Staff who are engaged in community partnerships can provide students with more meaningful and relevant learning experiences.
- **Strengthened school-community relationships:** Staff involvement can help to build stronger relationships between the school and the community.

Staff responsibilities:

- **Participate in committee meetings:** Attend regular meetings and contribute to discussions.
- **Identify community partners:** Connect the school with local organizations, businesses, and community members they may be familiar with already.
- **Help coordinate community events:** Help to plan and organize community-based activities.

By engaging principals and building staff buy-in, schools can create strong community connections committees that benefit both students and the community as a whole.

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3 Committee Structure



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Create a clear structure for the Community Connections Committee. You can use the following worksheet to plan ahead and fill it out with your committee members in the first meeting. Make sure to address:

- Composition: Members, Roles, and Responsibilities
- Frequency of Meetings
- Decision-Making Processes

WORKSHEET: Assembling a School-Based Team/Committee to Support the CLC Community School Goals

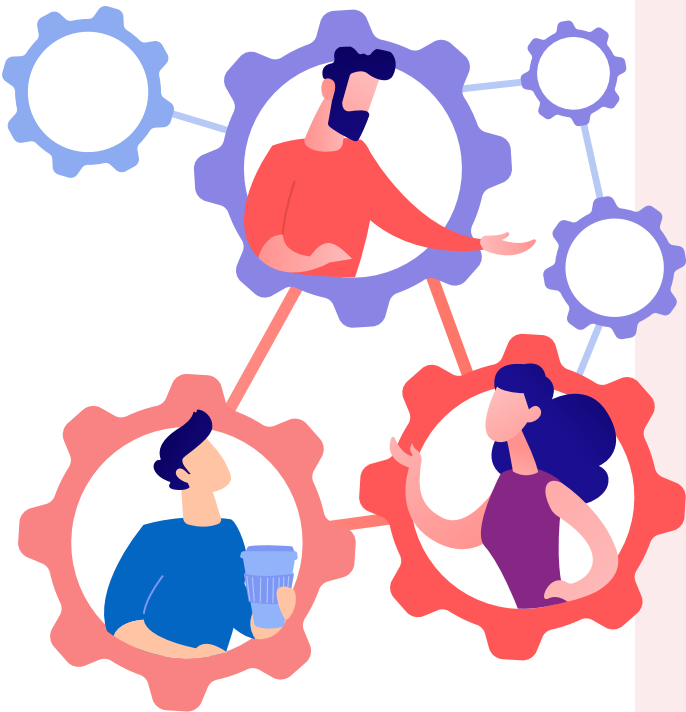
Define Your Team/Committee’s Purpose

What are the primary goals and objectives of your group? Will the group focus on one specific project/program, or will it help ensure all CLC goals are achieved?

Goal/Objective	Rationale	CLC Goal ¹	EP Goal ²	SB Goal ³	Other

1. CLC Goal = Area of Focus / Objective in the CLC Action Plan
2. EP Goal = School’s Educational Project Goal
3. SB Goal = School Board’s Commitment to Success Plan Goal

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Identify Key Stakeholders

List (potential) members from each group

Role	Name (if already identified)	Rationale for Inclusion	Accepted/ Declined
School Administration			
Teachers			
Support Staff			
Parents or Guardians			
Community Partners (Local Orgs, Businesses)			
Students (if appropriate)			
School Board Professionals			
Adult/Voc Ed			
Additional stakeholders unique to your community:			

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Define Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Role/Contribution	Notes

Establish Meeting and Communication Methods for the Team

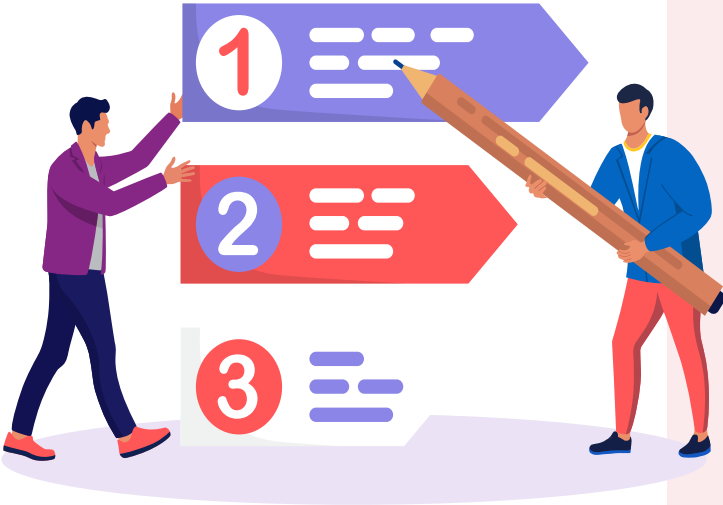
Meeting Frequency

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Bi-weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Other: _____

Preferred Communication Channels

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Video Conference
- ☐ Messaging Apps
(e.g., Slack, WhatsApp)
- ☐ Collaborative Documents
(e.g., Google Docs, TEAMS)
- ☐ In-Person Meetings
- ☐ Other: _____

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Communications Strategy for School/ Community

What tools or platforms will you use to share information and updates:

- with the entire school community?
- with families?
- with the larger community?

Action Plan and Next Steps

1. _____ (By: _____)
2. _____ (By: _____)
3. _____ (By: _____)

Additional Notes

List Potential Challenges and Potential Solutions/Strategies

Challenge	Solution

Reflection Questions

How will this team enhance the school's ability to serve students and the community?

What does success look like for this team?

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4 Initial Activities and Planning



“How Is Our School a Community School?” Activity

OBJECTIVE: Help staff and administration reflect on how the school is already operating as a community school and spark ideas for growth, creating a foundation of shared understanding.

Step-by-Step:

1 BRIEF PRESENTATION (5-10 MIN):

Introduce basic principles of community schools — e.g., partnerships, family engagement, expanded learning opportunities, health & social services integration.



2 SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (15-20 MIN):

Split into small groups and ask:

- Where do we already see these principles in action at our school?
- Where are the opportunities to do more?

3 GROUP SHARING AND CATEGORIZATION (15-20 MIN):

As a full group, cluster examples into themes (e.g., partnerships, family engagement, student support).

4 REFLECTION (10 MIN):

Ask: What would it look like if we fully lived these principles?

Lead into a discussion about the importance of intentional community connections.

Developing a Shared Vision

Create a simple, actionable vision that will guide the work of the Community Connections Committee. Refer to the previous activity, as well as existing Educational Project(s) and the CLC vision (if already developed).

Sample Vision:

“Our school is a hub of learning, belonging, and partnership, where every student and family feels connected to a thriving community.”

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5 Maintaining and Evaluating the Committee



Regular Meetings and Communication

Meeting Structure:

- Meet monthly or bi-monthly, depending on project load and school calendar.
- Keep meetings short (30–45 minutes) and focused.

Suggested Agenda Template:

1. Welcome and review of minutes
2. Updates on ongoing projects
3. New opportunities or challenges
4. Assigning next action steps

Effective Communication Tips:

- Share clear and brief minutes after each meeting.
- Use visual progress tracking (e.g., project board in the staff room, online shared document).
- Regularly update the broader staff about committee work and tie updates to the school vision to reinforce why it matters.

Monitoring Progress and Impact

Track Activities and Outcomes:

Keep a simple log of activities, partners involved, attendance numbers, and basic feedback. You can use your CLC Online Journal and simplify the information relevant to the committee (e.g. *Hosted Family Literacy Night: 23 families attended & 3 new volunteers signed up.*)

Check Alignment with Vision:

- Periodically (2–3 times a year), ask: *How are our activities helping us live our school's community vision?*
- Adjust projects or priorities if needed.

Simple Reflection Tool for Meetings (twice a year):

- What's working well?
- What challenges are we encountering?
- What small change would make the biggest difference?

Celebrating Successes

Ways to Celebrate:

- End-of-year thank-you lunch or certificates for committee members.
- Highlight success stories in school newsletters, staff meetings, and social media.

- Create a “Wall of Wins” in the school to showcase photos, quotes, or outcomes from community-related activities.
- Nominate the committee for school board or community recognition opportunities.

Why Celebrate?

- Reinforces commitment.
- Shows that this work is valued, not extra or invisible.
- Helps with future recruitment (people want to join groups that are energized and appreciated).

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CONCLUSION

Creating a Community Connections Committee is a powerful step toward making the community school approach everyone's work, not just the role of the Community Development Agent.

Through intentional reflection, shared vision-building, structured planning, and ongoing communication, these committees can:

- Deepen relationships within the school and with external partners.
- Enhance student, family, and community engagement.
- Contribute directly to the success of the school's educational goals.

Key Reminders for Success:

- Start small and build momentum.
- Root everything in the shared vision.
- Communicate, celebrate, and adapt.

By embedding this committee into the fabric of school life and making it part of annual staff commitments, schools build sustainability into their community work, ensuring that it evolves and thrives year after year.

Understanding the Difference: Community Connections Committee vs. Table de concertation

The **Community Connections Committee** is a **school-based team** of staff, school leaders, and potentially local partners focused on strengthening the community school approach *within a specific school*. The purpose is to build internal alignment, plan and implement school-specific initiatives, and support the school's educational and wellness goals through partnership.

The **Table de concertation** is a **municipal or regional partnership table** that brings together a wide range of community organizations (schools, health and social services, municipal services, nonprofits, etc.) to collaborate on broader community well-being initiatives.



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Quick Start Checklist: Launching a Community Connections Committee

Secure Leadership Support

- Meet with principal(s) to explain the purpose and benefits.
- Confirm their support for integrating the committee into annual staff commitments.

Introduce the Idea to Staff

- Present at a staff meeting.
- Frame the committee as a way to grow your community school, not as a separate CLC project.
- Highlight how it aligns with school success plans and benefits students, families, and staff.

Recruit Committee Members

- Open a call for interested staff (staff, community partners, and parents).
- Aim for a diverse group representing different roles within the school.

Facilitate the “How Is Our School a Community School?” Activity

- Help staff identify existing strengths and opportunities.
- Use the activity outcomes to build interest and momentum.

Develop a Shared Vision Statement

- Engage staff in creating a simple, inspiring vision for your community school work.
- Finalize and publicly post the vision.

Hold a Kick-Off Meeting

- Clarify purpose, roles, and expectations.
- Assign basic roles (chair, secretary, communications lead, etc.).
- Identify a few easy “quick win” projects or initiatives.

Set a Regular Meeting Schedule

- Plan monthly or bi-monthly meetings.
- Keep meetings short, action-focused, and connected to your shared vision.

Start Small and Celebrate Early Successes

- Focus on 1–2 achievable goals in the first year.
- Track activities and celebrate visible progress publicly.

Evaluate and Adjust

- Check progress mid-year and end-of-year.
- Reflect on what’s working, what needs adjustment, and new ideas for the following year.

