



### 3.3. COMMUNITY AND WORK AS PEDAGOGICAL SITES AND RESOURCES

If you can take students out of the classroom into workplaces or community settings, you help them recognise that:

- Work and learning take place together
- The range of social interactions is diverse
- Learning takes place in relation to materials and technologies that are dynamic and continue evolving
- Cognitive and affective development go hand-in-hand

Being in touch with the world of work keeps learners and the learning process responsive to changes and new developments. It builds students' capacity to adapt and cope with change.

Curating these experiences requires careful planning and collegial support. It is best done in collaboration with other teachers and ideally with strong backing from the school administration.



#### CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY AS CURRICULUM AT ANAND NIKETAN, SEVAGRAM

Anand Niketan, located in Sevagram, Maharashtra (India), follows Mahatma Gandhi's Nai Talim framework. They take the community both as the key resource for learning and the space where learning is put into practice.

Students' daily routines integrate academic concepts with meaningful, productive work such as gardening, *vastrakala* (textile and craft work), cleaning, waste recycling, bicycle repair etc. These activities are not "projects" added to the timetable, but living contexts in which students encounter concepts, problems, and relationships.

Every week, teachers of different subjects meet to collaboratively design the upcoming learning activities. New teachers often take textbooks as their starting scaffolding tool to anchor their initial ideas. The group collectively explores which activity will best translate the learning objective into meaningful, embedded experience.

For instance, teachers of science, mathematics and social science come together around a common activity site: the kitchen garden of the school. Students measure plots for new saplings, calculate water requirement, observe plant growth and interview gardeners or parents who are farmers about soil type and care.

The details (measurement tools, observation sheets, timing and group roles) are decided collaboratively. The final plan is flexible, recognising that it might rain, or the gardener may not be available. The entire process is iterative. The pedagogic principle here is a judicious blend of community as the primary curriculum, and supported continuous iterations that help organise, deepen, and extend learning that emerges from and is actualised in the lives of children and their communities.

Overall, the learning is designed in a way that each activity translates into a kind of practising self-governance. Shared decision making, managing routines and resolving conflicts become embedded in student experience. This helps students rehearse their roles as responsible members of the society.

## ? QUESTIONS / ARE YOU WONDERING?

I am planning a field trip to give my students a workplace immersion experience, but I have had no personal, direct experience of this industry or work site. How can I ensure this group excursion is an engaging, safe and genuine learning experience?

### PREPARING FOR A FIELD TRIP

If you are

- teaching a subject that relates to a specific occupation or industry, and
- have not had recent (or any) personal experience of the relevant workplace or processes.

It can be a beneficial professional development exercise to experience first-hand what goes on in that setting. This is especially worthwhile if you are planning to take students on a site visit or preparing for a workplace simulation activity at school.

#### How to prepare:

##### Connect with Industry or Community

Draw on your personal or peer network or the wider school community to find someone in the relevant profession or industry who can connect you to the right site.

##### Shadow a Professional

Ask if you can observe someone for a day or a few hours to gain an understanding of their work practices and environment.

##### Observe & Record

Take notes on what you see and hear. Pay attention to any surprising practices, processes, events, or specific terminology.

- Request permission to take photos, so students can visualise the physical spaces, infrastructure, and processes.
- Ask for samples of work-related documentation like forms or instruction manuals.
- Images and documents may be useful for any students unable to participate in the field trip.

### Translate to Classroom

Link workplace processes to planned study areas and specific learning activities.

- Decide which observed processes can be adapted or represented for classroom activities (depending on your school's resources, tools or equipment).
- Prepare guide materials including relevant terminology.

### Plan Student Focus

- Consider how, during a field visit, all students can gain the opportunity to observe closely and/or experience hands-on or technical aspects of the workplace (especially if in a large group).
- Outline in advance aspects of the workplace to which students should pay attention and in what order.

### Safety & Etiquette

- Brief students on safety procedures and respectful behavior as visitors.
- Ensure accessibility and safety for students with disabilities.

**What if I cannot take students off-campus to experience a workplace or community setting due to resourcing or other constraints?**

Work is complex and demanding, and schools are not always equipped to offer such holistic experiences.

To connect students authentically with the world and activities outside school when opportunities to leave the campus are limited, you could:

- Set up project-based or collaborative learning tasks which emulate the way work is actually done in many trades and professions. (See *Additional Resource Links* section on *Project-based learning* and resource 3.4 on *Collaborative learning*)
- Based on students' interests, identify and invite members from industry or community to provide students with ideas of real problems needing solutions.
- Invite experts and members from the community to review students' projects, provide feedback, or mentor them. (See below: *Bringing in the expert*)



I have invited visiting speakers in the past who were experts in their field but had little experience talking to students. How can I make their visit worthwhile and more meaningful to my students?

### BRINGING IN THE EXPERT – TIPS FOR TEACHERS TO MAKE IT WORK

#### Benefits of inviting in expert visitors and speakers:

When students see the richness and relevance of an expert visitor's knowledge and experience, they gain a stronger sense of the way their learning connects with the wider world.

When you and your school support the visitor to connect positively with the young people you teach, they may return. They may even consider offering other forms of support for your students' applied learning, like workplace site visits, access to resources, familiarisation or industry immersion experiences.

#### The challenge:

Community and industry experts are sometimes natural, or even qualified, teachers.

On the other hand, some visitors may need guidance to share their deep knowledge or experience in a way that is accessible or engaging for your students.

How can you make sure that the expert's visit or incursion is a positive and productive experience for all involved?

#### Before the day, help the visitor prepare:

- If you and your visitor have the opportunity to plan ahead, inform them:
  - » what topic(s) your students are currently studying. Invite the visitor to make a connection between one of these topics and their experience.
  - » about a current project your students are working on. The visitor can include insights with direct relevance to students' current work.
- If students are creating a physical artefact, ask the visitor if they might circulate to look at the students' work (even if incomplete) and offer some constructive feedback.
- Offer guidance to your visitor on connecting with students during their visit. Here are some suggestions (to adapt to suit your setting and class):
  - » Include some personal anecdotes
  - » Describe a day in your life at work
  - » Break information into bite-sized chunks allowing time for questions
  - » Be brief with facts and figures (but consider supplying details in a document as a resource for students)

- » Bring in real resources, equipment, artefacts or techniques you use in the course of your work, e.g.
  - » a historian could play a segment of an oral history interview or show digitised archival documents
  - » a lawyer could bring in a court transcript
  - » an engineer could bring in draft plans
  - » a carpenter could bring in a piece of complex joinery
- » If using professional language or jargon, explain the terms to students (especially acronyms and technical terms)
- » Leave time for questions from the students

#### Prepare with and for your students

- Give students some information about the visitor's background and experience, why they have been invited and how their knowledge or skills are relevant to the students' work.
- Give them time to do some extra preparatory research into the visitor, their profession, organisation or industry.
- Encourage students to prepare 2-3 questions about areas that interest them. Even if they don't all get the chance to ask their question, it will encourage them to consider what they are curious about.
- Don't decide in advance who will ask questions. Allow for some spontaneity on the day.

#### After the visit:

- Make time for students to discuss the visit and reflect on what they learnt. This could be done in a group discussion, a think-pair-share or as an individual written reflection.
- Ask students:
  - » What surprised you?
  - » What did you learn that was relevant to your own learning, project work, or future pathways?
  - » What are you still curious about?

You could offer different modes or formats for reflection and give students some choice in how they go about it (see Additional Resource Links on Reflective practice).

### What if my students need to use specific tools or technology that are unavailable in my school?

- Investigate possible partnerships with training organisations and non-government organisations in the applied learning space.
- One example is the Skills on Wheels initiative run by Lend a Hand India.

### Q CASE STUDY: SKILLS ON WHEELS: AN INNOVATION FOR WHEN RESOURCES ARE LIMITED

Skills On Wheels (SoW) is a program developed by Lend A Hand India. It provides an effective model for mobile applied learning that enhances the educational experience of students in rural and/or low income areas. The purpose of the program is to provide vocational education access to students from schools with limited resources.

Skills On Wheels is a multi-skill laboratory housed in a repurposed truck chassis. It contains essential resources for instruction, including tools for practical trades such as welding, plumbing, electrical work, and food processing. The vehicle is also equipped with necessary support technology, including audio-visual systems, Wi-fi and a generator, and is staffed by qualified vocational trainers. This mobile platform travels to different locations. Beyond training delivery, SoW also performs a crucial function in outreach and career counselling.

Students report gaining practical knowledge and utilising the bus's equipment for hands-on activities, such as welding and carving. SoW effectively addresses resource disparities by transporting specialized tools and instruction directly to communities lacking permanent training infrastructure. Its successful deployment highlights a scalable solution for practising applied learning in diverse contexts.



The Skills on Wheels initiative in action. Image: Lend a Hand India



### How do I create applied learning activities for subjects like Legal Studies or Media Studies that might present ethical and safety issues for my students?

- Consider creating workbenches within the school where some parts of more complex tasks are handled.
- The World of Work workbench case study provides a useful example.

#### **CASE STUDY: WORLD OF WORK CURRICULUM, DELHI BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION, DELHI, INDIA - CREATING A WORK ENVIRONMENT WITHIN SCHOOL**

Significant challenges arose when schools tried to implement the World of Work Curriculum. It proved difficult to provide safe and logistically feasible work exposure for Media Studies and Legal Studies students. Real-world placements were deemed problematic, potentially conflicting with student safety and raising ethical issues for schools. Media organisations are often fast paced and highly stressful. Legal settings could expose students to sensitive information, traumatic cases and potentially dangerous criminals.

To overcome these obstacles while retaining the core goal of work integration, the school developed dedicated, simulated professional in-school work-benches. This approach successfully guaranteed safety and maintained pedagogical and curricular focus.

##### **Legal studies work bench: The Community Legal Aid desk**

- A classroom was converted into a semi-formal office, equipped with essential legal texts and reference materials on the Bhartiya Nyaya Samhita and the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- Students operated as a mock Legal Aid team, managing cases based on carefully constructed scenarios.
- The cases included: drafting a First Information Report for minor theft, filing Right to Information (RTI) enquiry, mediating a local parking dispute, advising on basic consumer rights violations.
- This approach allowed students to apply statute law in a controlled, ethical environment. Students were required to work together in teams to achieve the best outcome for their case study client.

##### **Media studies work bench: The Multi-Platform News studio**

- This designated area featured basic lighting, a green screen, a tripod, and a basic editing suite to simulate a dynamic, multi-role media setting.
- Students rotated through different professional roles, such as Reporter, Editor, Producer. Their tasks included:
  - » producing a 90-second news bulletin on a school or local event under a strict deadline, and
  - » creating a Public Service Announcement video for a civic body (e.g. Nagar Nigam), thereby experiencing genuine production pressure.

These work benches had three distinct advantages:

1. Teachers controlled the situations, providing safe contexts that avoided the risks of external placements. They were able to establish safe spaces for ethical and sensitive discussions, for example on client-advocate privilege.
2. The approach ensured a pedagogical focus. Teachers could pause the simulation to provide immediate feedback and foster deeper discussions to achieve the curricular objectives.
3. Students were able to experience time pressure and the need for the types of professional conduct expected in the working world. The scenarios encouraged the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes and provided an engaging way of linking theory and practice.



### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR WORK BENCHES:

Well-designed scenarios (legal cases and media briefs) are essential. They need to be:

- aligned to the learning objectives;
- clear and coherent, unless an element of ambiguity is deliberately introduced to develop the ability to work with incomplete or contradictory information;
- in areas of interest to students; and
- designed to prevent harm

Develop clear briefs on roles and responsibilities in the work teams. This includes:

- identifying the roles that will best support the learning objectives,
- ensuring the role descriptions are not presented in gendered, racialised or ableist language.



Legal Studies workbench in action. Image: Nikita Ahuja, Specialised Resource Person, World of Work, DBSE, Delhi