Connected Learning Handout 1: Connected Learning and Educational Equity

Small Group Discussion

In your small group, based on the video[1], discuss the questions below. Make sure you hear from everyone in your group. You have about 30 minutes to talk before we reconvene in the larger group. Don't worry if you can't get to every question but do try to respond to as many as possible in the time frame.

Questions to discuss:

Small Group Discussion

In your small group, based on the video[2], discuss the questions below. Make sure you hear from everyone in your group. You have about 30 minutes to talk before we reconvene in the larger group. Don't worry if you can't get to every question but do try to respond to as many as possible in the time frame.

Questions to discuss:

1.) What did you think of the video? What surprised you or made you think a bit differently about your community?

2.) What is the population your library program serves? (Take a look at the Kids Count data to help you think more about the population you work with and for.)

3.) What are the assets that youth in your community bring to the community?

4.) What more do you wish you could do to serve youth better within the context of educational equity?

5.) What are some of the passions/interests that your youth exhibit? How do they exhibit them?

6.) How does your library nurture youth passions and interests particularly in order to build educational equity in your community?

---

[1] https://vimeo.com/157289578
[2] https://vimeo.com/157289578

Connected Learning Handout 2: What is Connected Learning?

Connected learning combines personal interests, supportive relationships, and opportunities. It is learning in an age of abundant access to information and social connection that embraces the diverse backgrounds and interests of all young people[3].

Connected learning knits together three elements[4]:

- **Interests:** Learning is motivating when it grows out of personal interest.
- **Relationships:** Learners need support from peers and mentors to persist through setbacks and challenges.
- **Opportunities:** Success beyond the classroom requires tangible connections to real-world career and civic opportunities.
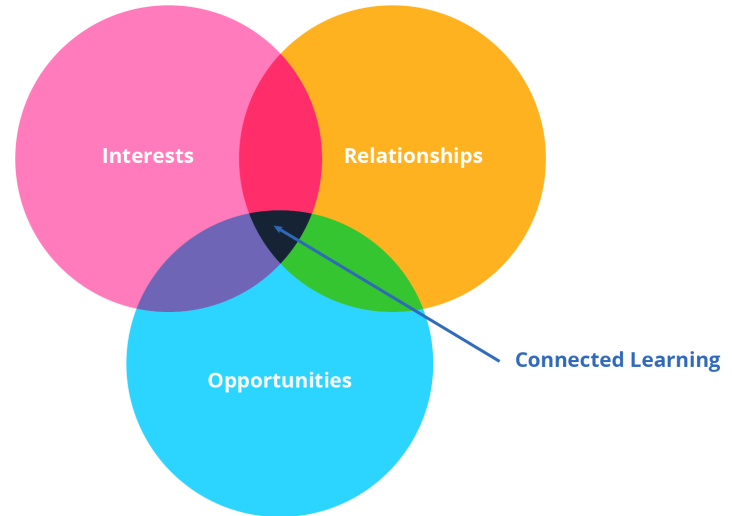
Core properties of connected learning experiences include:

- **Production-Centered**: Digital tools provide opportunities for producing and creating a wide variety of media, knowledge, and cultural content in experimental and active ways.
- **Shared Purpose:** Social media and web-based communities provide unprecedented opportunities for cross-generational and cross-cultural learning and connection to unfold and thrive around common goals and interests.
- **Openly Networked:** Online platforms and digital tools can make learning resources abundant, accessible, and visible across all learner settings.

---

[3] https://clalliance.org/about-connected-learning/
[4] Ito, Mizuko, Kris Gutiérrez, Sonia Livingstone, Bill Penuel, Jean Rhodes, Katie Salen, Juliet Schor, Julian Sefton-Green, S. Craig Watkins. 2013. *Connected Learning: An Agenda for Research and Design*. Irvine, CA: Digital Media and Learning Research Hub.

Interests
Here is Alex. He is an avid popular culture fan and loves professional wrestling.

Relationships
Alex discovers WrestlingBoard, an online community of people who share his passion and interests in pro-wrestling. He decides to start writing fan fiction about pro wrestlers using Wattpad, a free online publishing tool. He starts building a fan base and his confidence grows.

Opportunities
Alex decides he is interested in becoming a professional writer and applies to a magnet high school to study journalism.

Image created by Brgfx - Freepik.com

Connected Learning Handout 4: Theory into Practice

The information below is excerpted from the CLX Connected Learning Guide available at https://chicagolx.org/resources/connected-learning-guide *- see original source for footnotes and citations*

!. Interests

Connected Learning Approach	What This Might Look Like
Encourage Curiosity and Exploration of New Interests	
- Stay curious about what your students are interested in and be willing to learn with them. - Connect learners to experiences that deepen current interests, spark new interests, or that enable civic contribution. - Enable youth to enter at any level while challenging them to "level up" to greater complexity.	- Take active initiative to learn about and support diverse student interests to better understand youth priorities and values without pandering to trends in youth popular culture. - Make a conscious effort to connect youth to other organizations that might help youth go deeper into an interest they have. Consider your own social networks. How can you activate your networks in service of your youth? - Within your organization or school, you can support "progressive complexity" for youth to continually increase their skills through a learning pathway, course sequence, internships, peer mentoring, or other youth leadership opportunities.
Be Led by Learners	
- Maintain flexible processes and be willing to change direction if you see that participants are becoming disengaged. - Actively demonstrate respect for youth perspectives about what is important.	- Employ activities that genuinely have no right answer. Activities in making (whether making a story, a photo, or a lyric inspired by the topic) can allow youth to express themselves in the creation of an artifact. - Establish a youth council and incorporate their input in programmatic and strategic decisions to show a commitment to youth input. Actively look for places to compromise and explain the decisions you make when they differ from youth input.
Use Technology for Creative Production and Expression	

● Maintain a mix of high-tech and low-tech approaches, modeling for learners how to select the appropriate tool for their desired use and skill level. ● Encourage and guide exploration of interests via online collaboration, sharing, and showcasing. *See Relationships below for positive norms*. ● Leverage technology to help amplify and disseminate youth voice	● Bridge analog to digital, from the familiar to the unknown. Architecture interns new to 3D modeling software can start with pencil and paper sketches to invite creativity. Then, with a solid concept in mind, they can learn the digital tool to bring their concept to life. ● Use digital technologies to create projects that can be worked on in person and online, individually or collaboratively. ● Youth value authentic audiences for their creative production. Online tools and forums enable low-barrier ways to produce or share original outputs, such as graphic designs, audio tracks, written words, multimedia art, or live-streamed performances.

II: Relationships

Connected Learning Approach	What This Might Look Like
Cultivate Peer Relationships	
● Support peer-to-peer sharing of expertise. ● Nurture ongoing partnership and collaboration in person and online. ● Affirm the role of adult mentors to help youth value learning together and support these adults with their own peer professional learning.	● Encourage collaboration based on shared interests and skills instead of established social circles. When receiving a participant's request for help, give their peers a chance to volunteer their own knowledge and expertise. ● When assigning group projects or friendly competitions, provide support for online collaboration where youth can share code, art, music, or writing. ● Talking openly about the things that you geek out over is one way to cultivate trust and build a relationship. Dedicating time to learn from your adult colleagues can also model the importance of peer-to-peer learning.
Create a Safe Space Supported by Caring Adults	
● Model empathy and listening with respect as well as candid but age-appropriate discussions with youth about their life experiences. ● Set the inclusive expectation that everyone is welcome to participate especially marginalized youth ● Create clear pathways and roles for participation while maintaining flexibility.	● Treating youth with respect, giving them space to express their emotions without judgment, and really listening to them are most likely to help them feel safe and supported. ● Ask youth what they need from you to feel more comfortable and be willing to make those changes. It's easier to broker an entry point for them if you know what they like and how they learn best. ● Enable multiple ways to contribute, yet be willing to let youth observe while they get more comfortable. Balancing the tension between wanting a young person

YALSA
Young Adult Library
Services Association
CONNECT · DEVELOP · GROW

INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

Chief Officers of
COSLA
State Library Agencies

	to participate and wanting to give them space to join in is challenging but can build trust.
Work Openly with Shared Purpose	
● Cultivate inclusive networks of youth and adults who love to share their work and enable them to learn from and share with others. ● Create opportunities for youth to see how their passions relate to shared issues, enabling meaningful contribution to real communities. ● Allow shared purpose to develop over time rather than assuming it from the outset. Support it by revisiting and upholding clearly articulated values.	● Online communities are important parts of openly networked infrastructures, even if accessible only to the participants in your program. Allow some external sharing (e.g. the posting of digital badges to LinkedIn). ● An end-of-program showcase can be held for an authentic audience of friends, family, policy makers, and the community, inspiring lifelong civic engagement. ● When cultivating shared purpose it can be helpful to have a collaborative project or event–like producing a zine–to encourage learners to work toward a shared goal, allowing them to set and revise group goals.

III. Opportunities

Connected Learning Approach	What This Might Look Like
Translate Learned Skills	
● Visibly name the skills youth are learning, taking time to make those skills completely transparent to learners. ● Help youth discover which of their skills and interests might connect to related academic or career paths. ● Enable young people to learn from your unique skills, interests, and professional path.	● Often youth don't have the language they need to translate what they have learned into other settings. Give them the language they can use on a resume or when talking about their skills with others. ● If a young person is particularly taken by a topic or skill, invite professionals or plan job shadow days to illustrate how an interest might translate into a potential academic or career pathway. ● Be transparent about your own career journey, struggles, and successes. Be sure to consider the ways in which your privilege might have reduced barriers for you.
Broaden Contexts for Learning	

• Illuminate learning pathways that connect activities to the next learning experience, whether within your organization or beyond. • Foster civic awareness, dialogue, and participation as a context for learning. • Coordinate learning experiences across settings, dedicating time to partnership development.	• Within your organization, award digital badges to recognize individual skills. They can also be used to communicate a connected pathway of learning experiences. • Support youth civic engagement through online communities and digital activism, helping youth use their voices to affect issues they care about. • Service learning or independent study projects are ways to allow youth to earn in-school credit for self-directed learning happening out of school or in the workplace.

Broker Opportunities for Civic, Academic, and Career Payoffs

• Equip youth to make their progress and achievements visible across settings. • Equip educators and mentors to broker connections to new opportunities. • Be intentional in connecting teens to future opportunities and encouraging them to pursue them.	• Schools and colleges can award academic credit for out-of-school program participation and learning portfolio. Digital badges can support this kind of cross-sector recognition of skills. • Foster collaboration among educators, organizations and parents/guardians to better connect youth to existing opportunities. • Cultivate relationships and warm handoffs to other youth-serving professionals in interest areas beyond your program or expertise. Invite an educator from the other organization to co-lead a session with you or come to meet your participants as a way to help them make a new connection.

Connected Learning Handout 5: Connected Learning Principles in Action:
The following is an excerpt from the chapter "Supporting Youth Learning" by Crystle Martin in the book Putting Teens First: A Roadmap..

Learning in Libraries

Libraries and library staff need to support connected learning by locating their efforts within a broader ecosystem of youth learning and by actively supporting connections to and from their programs and spaces. Libraries, which have long been centers of community activity, are uniquely situated to become a nexus of connected learning because their mission centers on personalized and interest-driven learning. As guides to information and technical literacy, library staff are often already guides to connected learning. Libraries are also perceived in highly favorable ways by non-dominant populations as lifelines to learning, technology, and information. A recent Pew Internet and American Life study indicates that African American and Latino families are more likely than their white and Asian counterparts to place a high value on libraries.36 Libraries are well positioned to not only connect formal and informal learning, but also to do this for the populations that are most marginalized in terms of traditional academic programs and indicators.

Examples of Librarians and Library Staff Supporting Youth Learning

What can it look like when library staff support youth learning? The examples from a variety of library settings help to answer that question.

A Rural Library

At a rural library in Washington State, Samantha, a teen librarian, works to introduce teens to new ideas and interests, through informal learning, with potential for helping teens learn about career pathways. One example is a STEAM program that Samantha designed. For each day of the week, she creates a program for each letter of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math). Previously, Samantha conducted an art and science program, but was feeling a little intimidated by this expansion to her program. Samantha decided that she could either try something completely new or use an existing program she was familiar with. For example, Samantha had used Rovers—small Arduino-based robots that can be programmed by youth and then operated using the youth-created programming—and could build on the activity. She also connected more intentionally with parents and caregivers as a way to draw on their personal professional expertise.

The STEAM program was a success, and as the program grew Samantha developed opportunities for teen mentorship. She fostered relationships with teens and was then able to help them develop leadership skills. Samantha's process included going through a project plan with teens and then giving them the chance demonstrate the activity to other participants in the program.

Not only was Samantha helping teens gain leadership skills; she supported acquisition of 21st-century skills and computational thinking by providing opportunities for all involved to problem solve, iterate, and learn by trial and error. This approach clearly supported collaborative and peer learning.

For Samantha, creating this new series of programming was a rewarding experience. She notes that facilitating these programs taught her to experiment. Revising plans along the way is a necessity. She had originally planned to run the program every week but pared it down to six times a semester. Samantha warns that not everything is going to go as planned, but this is to be expected.

This type of programming was new for Samantha. Before designing this series, her philosophy of library programs centered on the idea that "learning was not the role of libraries." Samantha goes on to say,

"[That was] until STEAM programming [came along]." Samantha explains,
"STEAM lends itself to informal learning; [it] might be the kind of thing kids could do in their home already, but many don't. The family kind of learning that some families can't/don't do because of lack of resources, time, etc. There are many young families in my community with not a lot of money and not a lot of options. The library's role is to provide and facilitate learning opportunities outside of school. It is supplementary. Things that they wouldn't get in school."

Samantha also stresses the importance of offering teens real work experience, as she was able to provide in her STEAM programs. Leadership experiences in libraries, she says, "teach them about being on time, calling in when sick, structuring volunteering like a real job to give them that experience and possibly a leg up in the future." Actual coaching and mentoring became part of her programming; the teens needed feedback on their actions. She feels that it was easy to build into current programs, and that it was value added for the programs and the teens. She concludes that a lot of libraries are reluctant to implement STEAM programming. They are afraid of not being an expert. She points out, "You can make valuable experiences for kids and teens without being an expert."

Urban Library: Teen-Only Space
As a teen librarian in a southern urban library serving mostly African American youth, Juliette makes teen programming an important part of her practice. She offers one program a day, ranging from small programs like self-directed trivia questions to a large program once a month. These programs not only teach teens life skills but often impact youth outside of the library experience.

For example, Juliette offers programs that teach life skills and career preparation. The Kitchen Chemistry program fits into this category. Once a month, teens come to explore the intersection of food and chemistry. This program not only teaches youth the important skill of cooking, but also about the chemistry behind cooking. Juliette's Teen Fashion Apprentice program is an opportunity for youth interested in fashion to explore it as a career. She partnered with local community members who work in fashion and with institutions that provide hair and makeup training. These professionals come to the library to talk with teens, who are then offered the chance to have an internship working with a professional in their studio to learn about the day-to-day
work of a fashion career. These programs not only support career readiness; they also help develop lifelong learning skills from cooking to interviewing.

Juliette has a strong belief about the steps required to design programs of this type. First, she views her library as a "destination library." She works to create an environment where youth feel welcome and

want to hang out. This means she needs things for them to do. When designing programs, she focuses on meeting teens where they are. "You may have an idea of what teens would be interested in, but you have to understand that when teens are ready, they will take something in but it can't be forced." For her, it is about "creating lifelong learners." She says the most important part of her practice is "developing relationships so we can serve [teens] again wherever they are at as they go through life." She continues, "Learning is a two-way street. If we aren't learning from them, we aren't serving them well. You need to be flexible, be willing to shift roles and see it more like a community space, and support learning as a network."

Urban Library: Teen Media Space
Hyun, a teen librarian, runs a tech-driven media space in a library that shares a building with a high school. She creates opportunities for youth to lead interest-driven technology-based programs. Examples include a teen who organized a reception for a photography exhibit and another teen who organized a film screening. By organizing these events, the teens were able to explore what it means to be an artist, learning what it takes to create, promote, and exhibit work—all aspects of informal learning.

The teen librarian brokered a connection between an intern who wanted to be a photographer and a professional wedding photographer. Hyun set the intern up with an informational interview, giving the teen the opportunity to ask the professional about starting and maintaining a photography business. Working as an informal learning mentor, the librarian was able to leverage the intern's interest in photography into a professional opportunity where the teen could better understand what it is like to have a career in photography.

Hyun runs an internship through the lens of connected learning (CL). "I can practice CL because I've had the chance to get to know the interns so well. I know what their goals and strengths are, so I actively try to find resources that match those. [For example, I] encouraged [one of my interns] to lead the workshop and advocate for the [Media Space]. Another intern wants to be a doctor, so I had him do the tutoring and other workshops so he could practice his communication and presentation skills. Another is interested in photography; she took photos of staff members at work, and another intern interviewed each staff member and selected the best representatives for the project they were working on. [The teen photographer] took about 100 photos of each staff member. It was good for her because she got to work with people she had never met before, unlike previous photos she had taken that had mostly been of friends. It gave her the experience of working with clients and taking portraiture. The interns went through the library to photograph and interview library workers. After interviewing 15 librarians for three hours a week, they gained a good idea of how varied librarianship can be."

Branch Library, Urban System
Carol is a teen librarian with 23 years of experience working in a largely low-income Latino immigrant community. At the urban branch library where she works, Carol offers programs that focus on helping youth who come from non-English-speaking households to prepare for the future. The teens she serves face unique challenges, including being the first in their families to consider attending college. Along

with challenges related to being a first-generation college student, these students also face challenges related to documentation status.

To help the teens she serves navigate the complicated world of college readiness, Carol created a set of programs. First, she annually holds a five-week SAT study course. In week one, the teens take a practice test. For the following weeks, based on the results of the practice test, the teens have study sessions on how to improve their work in the English, math, and essay sections. At week five, the teens take the test again. The program has been very successful. The room can only seat 70, but usually more than 100 sign up for the program.

Carol also holds workshops for college preparation. This includes a workshop for parents and students on financial aid, including conversation about deadlines. She offers workshops on study habits and time management. Another program Carol hosts is a panel made up of previous volunteers who have gone to college and high school students who are applying to college. These youth are generally all first-generation college students and come from an area where going to college is far from being a given. The students on the panel talk about their experience with everything from filling out college applications and FAFSA to understanding financial aid packages and choosing a major. The panel creates an opportunity for candid information sharing and dialogue between college students and those considering going to college. The panelists often talked about how working at the library had an impact on their ability to envision college being within their reach and how Carol's mentorship allowing them to develop their interest in tech (through programs like teen-organized tech-petting zoos) helped them envision potential career opportunities.

Carol also has a very active volunteer program. All volunteers are required to apply for the program, and when accepted, one of the assigned tasks is to help run programs. "The way I approach the volunteers and their training and how I work with them is that I am very conscious that I am building their confidence and skills. And I tell them that. I give them a lot of responsibility and decision-making ability. I tell them they are a team. I give them a job to do immediately. I will have them set up the room in a certain way as a group and then leave. Depending on the group, they've either pulled together as a team and done it or are standing around. If they haven't set up the room, I give it to them again. Usually the second time they figure it out. If I have a volunteer helping a student on the computer who tells me a problem, I ask them, 'How do you think you can solve it?' I use the Socratic method a lot. Afterward I tell them very specifically 'that was really good leadership' or 'that was really good problem solving.' People forget how important feedback is—all people want to see their work valued. If a teen is showing natural leadership, I will put them in charge of something and then direct other teens to that teen. I will also encourage a teen who is hanging back to take leadership. With a teen who was acting immaturely, I had a conversation about his leadership and overall approach. I want these teens to see that they are running these programs and running the library. I want them to see they have these skills and can do it."

Carol continues, "Teens have the opportunity to become my administrative assistant. They are learning real life skills. One teen who had been working as my admin then got a job in an eyeglass lab as a senior because she had developed a lot of confidence working in the library. The teens learn a lot of problem-solving skills from the work." She says, "I've written so many recommendations for teens over

the years that help them on their journey." Carol has an approach that supports the learning of the teens. She explains that she supports her teens "whether it is fixing [a] car, learning to canoe, finding a job, or finding relief from domestic abuse."

Connected learning is a framework under constant development that offers principles and examples that can be adapted and remixed. Putting connected learning into practice provides a lot of opportunities for libraries and the teens they serve. Integrating the framework into library service can start as a small addition to an existing program and lead to a complete redesign of the way a library supports informal learning.

Conclusion

Supporting youth learning is essential to youth success. For youth, learning is not something that happens only in the six hours a day they are in school, but instead their learning expands beyond their formal learning environments into out-of-school locations such as the public library. The learning that teens participate in outside of their formal learning environment offers opportunities for them to expand their horizons.

Librarians need to bring connected learning into their practice and into their library. This can necessitate changes in approach and priorities, but as the examples included in this chapter illustrate, implementing connected learning does not require money—it requires a certain mindset. It is about creating relationships with teens and creating opportunities for youth to be exposed to and pursue interests, to leverage peer learning, and to connect interest to opportunity—all of these in turn support youth career and college readiness. Connected learning is not just a way to describe learning that is happening in interest spaces; it is also a model for design, intervention, and policy. It is at the intersections of youth learning where librarians have the opportunity for the largest impact. Connected learning is not about a technology or a technique; it is about focusing the learning on the learner.

Connected Learning Handout 6: Small Group Discussion

You have about 20 minutes to talk before we reconvene in the larger group. Don't worry if you can't get to every question but do try to respond to as many as possible in the time frame.

1. What are the similarities and/or differences between your library site and those described in chapter excerpt? What could a similar vision of Connected Learning look like at your site? (Think about your resources, population, and capacity)

2. Can you think of an example at your site where you have implemented programming based on youth interest? If so, what was it? Are there ways in which you can do so based on your current capacity?

3. How are you working with coaches and mentors and community partners to provide opportunities for teens to gain skills and learn about those things they are interested in?

4. In what ways do you build relationships with teens so to be able to learn about their interests?

Connected Learning Handout 7: Bringing It Home

Reflect on the principles of Connected Learning, strategies and actions we've discussed today. Consider the actions you will take to integrate or enhance the Connected Learning approach in your own programming. Use this template to make notes on your plans. Put a star by the principle you think needs the most attention now!

Principle of Connected Learning	What am I **already doing** to support this principle?	What can I do **this month** to support this principle?	How can I address this principle **this year?**
Interests			
Relationships			
Opportunities			
Production-centered			
Shared purpose			
Openly networked			