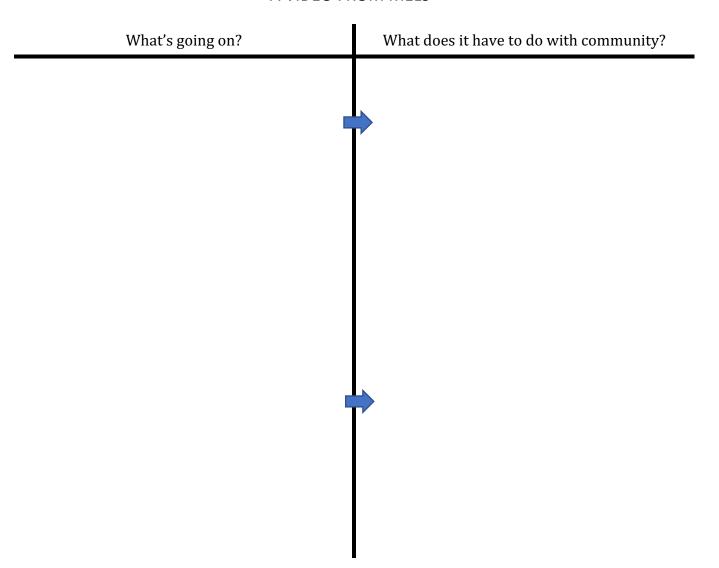
DESIGNING COMMUNITY MEETINGS WITH PURPOSE

Eric Shieh & Paco Hanlon, Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (New York, NY)

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OPENING A VIDEO FROM MELS



PARKING LOT FOR QUESTIONS

(There will be time for questions at several points during the session \ldots we promise!)

Three Approaches for *Doing* **COMMUNITY**

Adapted from Robert Chaskin (2013)1



spatial

A focus on how **boundaries** and **membership** are drawn. These may be tied to a physical place (ex. country), institution (ex. school), or symbolic name/identity (ex. athlete).

Key Concepts

- Cognitive maps Individuals develop cognitive maps of their communities as they interact with their environment.
- Individual differences Different individuals bring different experiences into their maps, so no one has the exact same view of their communities and how they relate to them. Social status is a particularly important factor.²

Key Questions

How does my school define community boundaries with and for students? How is this supported or opposed by individual experiences or societal definitions?



social

A focus on **relationships** among individuals. These are often based on common identity, experiences, shared norms, and concrete interactions.

Key Concepts

- Connectedness ("network closure") –
 The extent to which everyone knows
 everyone is important for mutual
 support and accountability.³
- Identity and interest Both shared social identities and shared interests are important resources for relationships. Common identities are often overemphasized: communities always contain differences.

Key Questions

How connected are the students? What common identity or shared experiences define their school or class community?



political

A focus on structures for **participation** and **collective action**. A community involves collective deliberation, mobilization, and action around issues of common interest.

Key Concepts

- "Strong" democracy Processes of participation and deliberation are important for sustaining community.
- Local knowledge and power The importance of "local" community knowledge (ex. student knowledge) must be recognized. Members have a right to exercise voice in issues that matter to them.

Key Question

What does student voice look like? How is this work *youth-led*?

Community Meeting Core Practices @ MELS

- 1. We share and celebrate our culture and community as a grade and as a school.
- 2. We take ownership of our community
- 3. We value community

- ¹ R. Chaskin, 'Theories of Community,' in *The Handbook of Community Practice* ed. M. Weil, M. Reisch, & M. L. Ohmer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013)
- ² K. Campbell & B. A. Lee, 'Sources of Personal Neighbor Networks: Social Integration, Need, or Time?' *Social Forces* 70, no. 4 (1992), 1077-1100.
- ³ J. Coleman, 'Social Capital in the Development of Human Capital.' *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (supplement), 95-120. See also R. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

Mapping my school's current approach to

EXAMPLE Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School A SCHOOL FOR A SUSTAINABLE CITY

DOING COMMUNITY—

Administrative Inputs: Resources & Efforts

School Community Meeting team: 1 schoolwide CM coordinator + 2 CM leaders in each grade (compensated)

Ongoing CM team focus areas (led by CM coordinator). Example areas include teacher ownership, student ownership, student excitement, and continuity between meetings. Weekly grade community meetings, monthly all-middle school and all-high school CMs

Monthly time for CM leaders to check in with Crew leaders about plans and support

Activities & Strategies

Rituals, songs, and chants

Student announcements.

appreciations, apologies

Student CM planning

committees

All-grade initiatives, activities, and competitions

Community "courageous conversations," debriefs, and discussions

Student organizing around social issues

Strong themes of differences and connection in activities

Student performances and presentations

Crew presentations / Crew-led meetings

Outcomes

We connect with each other across school and social divisions

We build a common culture and shared experiences

We celebrate each other and our work

We contribute our voices to community meeting

We have opportunities to make decisions that matter for our community

We address issues that impact our communities in and out of school We share and celebrate our culture and community as a grade and as a school

We take ownership of our community

We value community

School Context (ex. Age/Grade, Student Characteristics, Special Considerations)

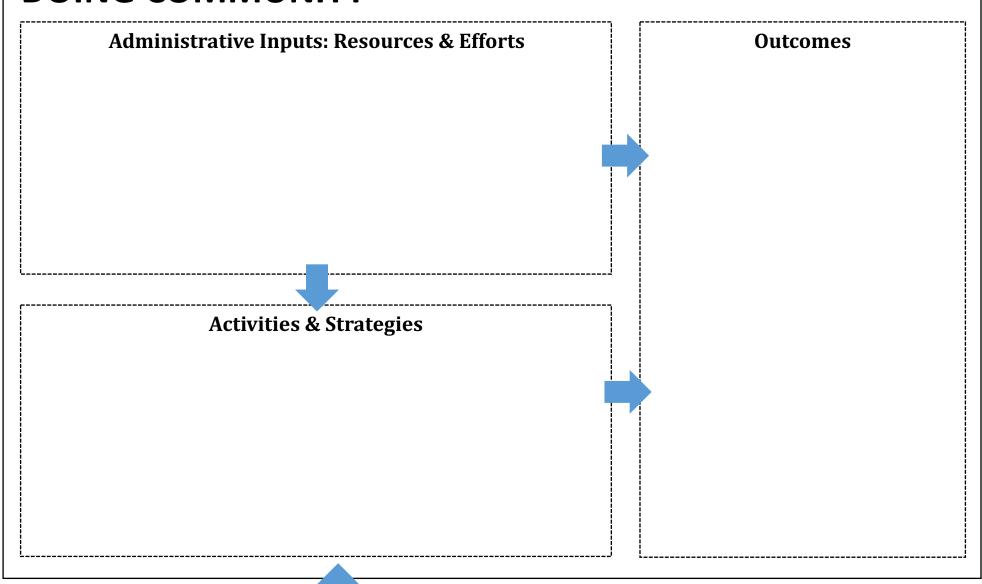
New York City; Grades 6-12; 120-130 students in each grade Demographics: 40% Hispanic | 16% Black | 22% Asian | 14% White 20% Special Education | 61% Free Lunch | 10% Reduced Lunch

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Mapping my school's current approach to

DOING COMMUNITY –



School Context (ex. Age/Grade, Student Characteristics, Special Considerations)

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GALLERY WALK & PRACTICES INVENTORY NOTES

Two recommendations:

OPTION 1

Deepen your thinking around the relationship between different kinds of activities and community outcomes. How does MELS connect these activities to our core practices? What other outcomes do you see?

OPTION 2

Push your own Community Meeting practice by thinking how some of these activities might live in your school. What purposes might they be put toward in terms of doing community? How might they be adapted?

1. We share and celebrate our culture and community

2. We take ownership of our community

3. We value community

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

COMMUNITY MEETING PLANNING

| Plan a <i>next step</i> or aspirational |
|---|
| Community Meeting for your school. |

Consider the school's context and current work. What is the community practice or outcome you wish to develop? What activities and inputs are required?

| - | Meeting Outcome — | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | What community practice do you wish to focus on? | | | | | | | |
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| — Administrative Inputs ———— | | | | | |
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| | What resources or efforts are needed to bring this meeting about? | | | | |
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