

# Curriculum Shaping Circles

## An Implementation Guide



### Purpose Statement

We shape our course learning and curriculum visions and practices together, as reflected in the syllabi, course map, lesson plans, and most importantly, in daily learning and assessment. We do so by reflecting, critiquing, surveying, and building upon what students, parents, communities, and educators see as relevant, critical, and of interest to learn about and act upon through students' coursework. From this process comes re-imagined, re-designed, and greatly enhanced courses of study co-led by students with support from families and the school community. Re-designed student-based courses seek to make an impact on real problems/challenges both inside and outside of school walls through creative problem solving, skills applications, and project-based action.

### Significant Questions

Even though some teachers may say, sometimes unknowingly, "my curriculum" or "my classroom" or "the required coursework" or "the standards", the questions become... ***Whose curriculum? Whose classroom? Who should have the right to help determine learning and curriculum? How much of a voice should students and families have in shaping their own learning? What kind of a course would students shape so they meet required standards through their own self-determined learning journeys (inquiry-to-action units of study)?***

### Target Audience

Current, past and future students and their families in the course(s) under discussion, the teachers, and all other interested school community members.

### Session Breakdown and Agendas

**Session 1 Overview:** Set our goals; agree on our criteria for shaping course topics/projects; conduct a review of current course syllabi (make notes of what works well); offer input into determining the overall goals/purposes of each course; conduct a review of parent input gathered last year in the KAPAC (Kenwood Parent Adv. Council); gather new student/parent input into what's necessary to learn more about based community issues, student interests, and other real world factors.

#### Session 1 Agenda:

- (5 m) Share our purpose and goals around co-creating curriculum together - get feedback and peoples hopes
- (20 m) Introductions - name, grade, community and 2 words that express how you feel about the average school curriculum/learning experiences
- (20 m) Each teacher introduces themselves and gives a 3 to 5 min overview of the curriculum currently taught (esp. major themes, content overview, key projects) - students/parents listen, think, reflect on notecards
- (20 m) Activity: What is relevant learning to us at this school, in this community, city, and current time?
- (20 m) Discuss, review, tweak, and launch curriculum inquiry processes including a Critical Learning Survey, the Relevant Learning Activity, and/or any other form
- (5 m) Review next week's plan / goals

**Session 2 Overview:** Continue last session's brainstorming, then prioritize / narrow down topics of most relevance and interest; then place these in the most logical order for each course; then confirm alignment to overall goals/purpose of the courses.

#### Session 2 Agenda:

- (5 m) Share our purpose, goals, work around co-creating curriculum together - get feedback and peoples hopes

- (30 min) Groups: Survey data crunching to pinpoint most popular issues, topics, and ways of learning
- (10 min) Survey Results: Categorize and determine top 5 to 6 issues/problems to build units around
- (20 min) Groups: Conduct a critical systemic analysis of root causes per issue
- (20 min) Groups: Theme Teams: Begin mapping out unit ideas
- (5 m) Review next week's plan / goals

**Session 3 Overview:** Brainstorm and design powerful course projects for authentic assessment that reach the community, position students as change-makers, and bring learning to life; consider designing a Student Learning and Action Conference where they present their new learning (e.g., presentations, proposals, actions, etc.) to the larger community (other high schools have models to learn from).

**Session 3 Agenda:**

- (5 m) Share our purpose, goals, work around co-creating curriculum together
- (10 min) Recapping our work so far including survey results
- (30 min) Theme Teams: in small groups, build out the student-chosen themes using CGCT maps
- (20 min) Theme Teams share out and get feedback (hold a tuning protocol with discussion, clarifying questions, recommendations)
- (15 min) Theme Teams regroup to fine tune their unit ideas
- (10 min) Final share-out of any tweaks made to the units
- (10 min) Debrief the process and any next steps

**Note: Another session similar to session 3 may be necessary to finish.**

**Session 4 or 5** (much later this year - maybe May/June): Cooperating teachers report back to the group the new syllabi changes for their courses based on all the input from students and parents. This becomes a small celebration also!

## Expected Accomplishments

- **Students survey each other and their families on critical issues, learning interests, learning styles, and ideas of fairness and justice**
- **Students and families re-think and re-imagine the course(s) under discussion**
- **Students and families generate recommendations for meaningful course improvement**
- **Teachers agree to make meaningful adjustments to the course based on student/familial input**
- **Student ownership, interest, teaching time, accountability, productivity, retention, and learning all increase substantially**
- **We have fun, learn from each other, and work as a team.**