

Student Curriculum Club

Teacher Advisor Guide



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Preface

About this Guide

The Digital Promise Center for Inclusive Innovation supported the co-design and development of this guide with students, community members and teachers from the Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson, AZ, as part of a national initiative to tackle pressing challenges in adolescent writing for historically and systematically excluded students. The initiative addressed the challenges in secondary writing by providing an opportunity for students to have a voice in selecting social studies inquiry topics, which have social, cultural and historical relevance to their lives, and choice in exploring those topics from multiple perspectives using accessible, diverse sources and varied assignments and formats. This teacher advisor guide is designed and intended to be used to support teachers in the implementation of a student curriculum club.

Acknowledgements

We recognize and celebrate the Inclusive Innovation team from the Sunnyside School District and community who committed their time and creativity to creating models and resources to ensure historically and systematically excluded students are heard, seen and valued in adolescent writing.

The creation of this guide was made possible through the dedication of:

- **The Team Leads:** Sunnyside School District lead, Frank McCormick, community co-lead, Darlene Cortina and CTE teacher, Elizabeth Skeggs
- **The Phase 1 Team:** Manny Leon, Diana Jimenez-Young, Sarai Juarez, Kathy Dong, Michele Kelly-McDonough, Stephanie Ponce, and Ricky Echanove
- **The Teachers:** Andrea Aguiar and Rene Teyechea
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Welcome to the guide for creating and running a Student Curriculum Club! This guide will provide you with a step-by-step plan for designing your club – from creating a mission statement to identifying teacher advisors to recruiting students and launching your club!

Let's get started.

What is the Student Curriculum Club?

A Student Curriculum Club (SCC) is a student-led group that collaborates with district curriculum leaders and/or teachers to advise, inform, and contribute to curriculum topics and content. The SCC helps districts and schools create curriculum that is reflective of the needs and interests of students and relevant to the world that students are experiencing. Students are valued as collaborators for their voice, perspective and contribution to the curriculum process – and are advocates for their peers in creating engaging learning experiences.

Why create a Student Curriculum Club?

Historically, the design and creation of curriculum has been largely informed by academia, education organizations and standards bodies. School districts and teachers either adapt what has been created or create original curriculum that is reflective of local teaching models and practices. Generally, students are not involved in the process of informing, designing or writing curriculum, and if they are, their role is usually at a high level where their feedback is primarily through focus groups or surveys.

While the curriculum that is developed by districts and schools is of high-quality and standards-aligned, without students at the table as collaborators, the relevance, currency and real world application of learning is a challenge. We live in a world where students are engaged in information and knowledge on a continual basis. Whether through video streams, social media or text messaging, students are reading, listening, watching and sharing



content constantly. Students are more aware and connected to news and media – domestically and globally – and, as result, are contributing their voice and perspectives in a variety of ways outside of school. Students today want learning experiences in school that are meaningful, connected and reflective of their vibrant and diverse worlds.

Most importantly, districts and schools benefit when students are advocates for learning. By inviting students to participate in informing their learning experiences, selecting the topics for discussion, creating writing assignments – students become more engaged because their voice and perspective is needed and valued. And, when students are engaged, their agency as learners thrives. Districts and schools who create SCCs believe that it is important for students to be active creators of their learning, collaborators with teachers to inform curriculum and advocates with their peers to engage in learning.

What are the teacher and student benefits?

An SCC provides many benefits to the participating teachers and students by offering a new model for working together to support all students in being successful.

For teachers, the benefits are:

- Having access to students who are invested and committed in supporting teachers in creating engaging, relevant learning experiences
- Collaborating with students on an ongoing basis to inform the creation of units, lesson plans and classroom content
- Inviting students to source informational resources, articles and tools to supplement curriculum content
- Engaging students as leaders in advocating for the learning experiences with their peers

For students, the benefits are:

- Learning from curriculum leaders and teachers how curriculum is designed and created
- Serving as trusted advisors to teachers on creating learning experiences
- Building knowledge and skills that can be applied to college and career
- Receiving recognition for contribution of their voice and perspective to curriculum development

What are opportunities to ensure all students can participate?

Curriculum should not be monolithic or homogenous; it should be representative of a multitude of voices and perspectives. To be successful and impactful, it is important for the SCC mission, values and student membership to reflect the diversity of the student body to ensure all students are able to participate.

In designing the SCC, priority should be placed on creating a model and mechanisms that will encourage, incentivize and reward students to participate. Additionally, the model should invite teachers who have deep relationships with students, to nominate students to the SCC who are typically not selected for advisory roles.

Think of how the SCC can be modeled to meet the needs of students furthest from opportunity:

Design the SCC to level the playing field on whose voice is valued by casting a wide net in recruiting student members. Consider the students who have been historically marginalized – students of color, students experiencing high-poverty, multilingual learners and students with learning differences. Also, consider the students who may not be performing well academically, who are navigating social-emotional challenges or who may be socially isolated. Many times, it is assumed that these students are not interested, engaged or able when the reality is that they may not know their voices are valued.

Design the SCC to reduce or eliminate barriers to student participation by adapting incentives. Many times the students described above are not able to participate for reasons that include job and family responsibilities. Consider creating a model that will support the needs of these students.

- For students that would benefit from their role on the SCC contributing to building the credits on their transcripts, explore the idea of offering homework or credit recovery as an incentive. Engage with district leaders to understand how the SCC participation model can be designed to enable students to earn credit.



- For students who would benefit from compensation to support their or their families needs, consider the possibility of SCC participation qualifying for a paid internship which would enable a student to spend the necessary time and effort – and feel valued and respected for being compensated in their leadership role.
- It is important to create many avenues and opportunities for students to participate. An SCC that is authentically representative of the student body will ensure that the curriculum is reflective, engaging and effective.



Roles

The success of the SCC is anchored in the people who are participating and their roles. To ensure every voice is heard and valued, it is important to consider the following roles:

Students

Designing a club that is student-centered is key. The students are leaders of the club in that they create the agendas, work with the teachers to determine the projects, build the project plans and work collaboratively to ensure their work is completed. The students main role is to provide input, feedback, advice and guidance to the curriculum leaders and teachers. At the launch of the club, the students will work with their advisors to create project plans. The students will meet on an ongoing basis with their advisors to inform the work and be accountable to completing their responsibilities. The students will also be advocates with their peers by sharing about their contribution to the curriculum and inviting students to engage in research and feedback opportunities.

The students' main role is to provide input, feedback, advice and guidance to the curriculum leaders and teachers.

Advisor

The teacher advisor is the mentor and ensures that the SCC is engaged and participatory. The teacher advisor leads the communication and promotion of the SCC within the district or school, as well as the student recruitment and selection process. The advisor is responsible for establishing the meeting schedule and the process for engaging with the teachers who are creating the curriculum. The advisor will interact with district-level and building-level personnel to ensure the SCC is supported and sustained. The advisor will mentor the students by helping them learn about the process of curriculum development and guide them in providing feedback and input. The advisor is a champion of the SCC with their administrator and teacher peers to ensure universal support and recognition for the students' work.



School Leadership

The school leader is the advocate and supporter for the SCC in that their role is the primary supporter of the teacher advisor in ensuring that the SCC is productive and successful. The school leader ensures that the time and space is available for the SCC to meet, confirms the budget and resources for the SCC and advocates for the SCC at the district level and with building level peers.

Curriculum Leadership

The curriculum leader is the district-wide champion for the SCC and evangelist for the work across the district. The curriculum leader role is to navigate the district level hurdles and resources that are required including ensuring students can be recognized and rewarded for their participation through credit recovery, internships or other means. The curriculum leader ensures that the work of the SCC is valued and respected within and across the district to include the superintendent. The curriculum leader shares the work and outcomes of the SCC and celebrates the students, teachers and school leadership within the district.

Teacher Advisor

Who can be an advisor?

Teachers from any content area who are passionate about elevating student voice. (See Table 1 item 1 for Sunnyside Reference)

Your Role in depth

Serving as the advisor for the Student Curriculum Club is essential to raising student voice and empowering priority students to have input into their learning. Here are some tips to mentor and coach the students as they pursue the mission of this club.

Be a Mentor

- **Model and be an active listener**—Students participating in this club, especially priority students, need a safe and supportive environment for their voices to be heard. Take note of issues that are raised but aren't addressed. See if you can redirect the group to hearing what each person has to say.
- **Value the students' input**—the students may be interested in topics that you are unaware of or are not directly related to any of the current curriculum in place. Individuals may surface topics that you or others in the group have no prior knowledge of. When a student brings up a topic that no one understands or can relate to, dig deeper. Ask probing questions to find out what is and encourage the group to engage in discussion.
- **Maintain confidentiality**—During group discussion students may bring up topics that require maintaining confidentiality of a student's identity. It is important to honor and respect the students if they choose to remain anonymous.
- **Let the students lead**—help the students solve problems rather than make decisions for them.

Coach the Students

- **Instruct students on key skills**—the purpose of the SCC is for the prioritized student to have an opportunity to recommend topics, raise questions and provide feedback to fellow students and to their teachers. Your role would be to instruct students on how to gather information from their peers and analyze data they have gathered.
- **Ask good questions**—asking students open ended questions or questions that push their thinking can help the group have a more productive discussion when deciding which topics to recommend. Additionally, open ended questions can model how to word recommended questions for inquiry units.
- **Provide positive and constructive feedback**

Know when to step in

There will be times wherein it is necessary for the advisor to step in and help students negotiate specific situations. Some situations are listed below:

- When there is a conflict of perspective between students,
- When a student recommendation is outside of school or district policy
- When a student topic recommendation is too broad to be covered in an academic school year.
- When decisions are above the role of the teacher advisor (e.g. need to go to the curriculum council)

Responsibilities

Recruiting

To start, the club should have about 6-8 students. Try to recruit a diverse group of students from the same grade level with a balanced mix of priority students and students who are interested in providing input, feedback, advice and guidance on curriculum to teachers.

Guiding students on:

Gathering and analyzing input from their peers.

(See Table 1. Item 2 for Sunnyside Reference)

- **Methodology:** Think about what procedure you will put into place for analysis.
- **Cataloging data:** Think about what methods you will teach students to effectively catalog the information they received. Where will they store the information? Would it be on a shared digital document? On a whiteboard in a classroom where their work would go undisturbed?
- **Facilitating discussion:** Guide students through an effective discussion on topics that have been surfaced and helping them stick to the purpose of the club and a consistent timeline.



Building consensus in the club

During this phase students will come to an agreement on which topics to recommend to the curriculum council.

Recommend chosen topics/themes, inquiry questions, and text sources or writing prompts to curriculum leads.

During this phase you will guide students on crafting their recommendation presentation. (See Table 1. Item 3 for Sunnyside Reference)

Communicating recommendations back to peers (closing the loop)

- **Notification templates:** We recommend crafting a template for notifying students that their suggestions were approved or denied for recommendation.
 - Approved
 - Denied/ Backlogged
- **Appeal Process**

Facilitating recommendation sessions with SCC and curriculum leads in the spring

- **Scheduling the spring design sessions**—a key aspect of this role is serving as a liaison between students, faculty, curriculum leads and school leadership. Confirming a date at the beginning of the school for all stakeholders to attend a curriculum planning meeting is essential for establishing and maintaining a timeline for the SCC to be prepared and have a comprehensive curriculum recommendation presentation.
- **Set the agenda**—The advisor is responsible for creating the agenda for the curriculum meeting.

Optional: facilitate curriculum co-design sessions with CTE or interested SCC students during the summer (See Table 1 item 4 for Sunnyside Reference)

Lead

Getting your club started

- **Read this guide**—Here you will find tips and resources for a successful launch and implementation of the Student Curriculum Club at your school site
- **Read the advisor monthly checklist in the advisor tools section**—This will give you a suggested timeline of what tasks to focus on each month so you can plan ahead.
- **Connect with school and/or district administrators**—It is crucial that you have a clear line of communication with the school leaders. Making sure that the students' hard work that they accomplish during their time in the SCC with the approval of the curriculum leads and administration is your number one priority.

Club Membership

Who is your priority student?

Priority student

The priority students for membership to the SCC are historically marginalized students who may have become disengaged from their learning due to the lack of relevance, accessibility and real world application of the curriculum to their lives. Membership to the SCC empowers these students with an opportunity to provide input, guidance and advice to teachers and school leaders on curriculum.

Priority students for membership to the SCC are historically marginalized students who may have become disengaged from their learning...



Consider the following attributes for recruiting priority students:

- Students of color
- Students experiencing high-poverty
- Multilingual learners
- Students with learning differences
- Students who may not be performing well academically
- Students who have significant family obligations such as having to work to help support their siblings
- Students who are navigating social-emotional challenges or who may be socially isolated
- Students who are not interested, engaged or able when the reality is that they may not know their voices are valued

Balance is key

Once you have identified your priority students it is important to include students from diverse backgrounds and academic standing that are motivated and interested in the further the mission of the club. (See Table 2. Item 1 for Sunnyside Reference)

Who else should I recruit?

We suggest recruiting an upper grade level student to serve as a teacher assistant. The teacher assistant, or TA, will be a liaison between the lower grade level students in the club and the advisor. Younger students may feel hesitant to speak directly to their advisor or may use slang that the advisor may not understand.



But how do you get kids to join the club?

Nominate students by reaching out to your teaching colleagues to help identify them. Distribute the nomination form and sample recruitment flyers found in the Advisor Tools Section. This will give teachers a better idea of who the club is for. Then, reach out to the students. Talk to them about this great opportunity to have more say in their learning in an orientation meeting.

Club structure

When would the club launch?

When first starting the club it may take some time to recruit students and get buy-in from your fellow educators and school leaders. So, for the first iteration of the club at your site we recommend starting a month or so after the school year begins.

How frequently would club meetings be held?

Club meetings should be held once a week. Typically during study hall, homeroom or other school time so as not to impact the priority student's after school activities. (See Table 2. Item 2 for Sunnyside Reference)

Setting up your first meeting

Once you have all of the students recruited, you would contact school administrators and relay the names of the students enrolled in the club. They in turn would notify the students' CCP teachers to let them know the day of the week they will be attending SCC. Once that is confirmed send out the date for the first meeting with students.

Governance

Establishing norms

Establishing norms should be the one of the first activities the club members participate in. Even though it is created on the first day it can be added onto throughout the school year.

Here are some tips for establishing norms as a club

- Step 1:** Ask students about a time when they felt really successful in a group
- Step 2:** Have them take notes of what made that experience a success
- Step 3:** Have them share out in a group and refine the collective statements into a set of norms
- Step 4:** Have students consider a time when they had the worst experience working in a group
- Step 5:** Have them write down some ways that could have made the experience better.
- Step 6:** Have them share out in a group and refine the collective statements into additional norms.
- Step 7:** Review the norms as a group and ask students if there is anything else they can add or refine to the set of norms.

Establish Rotating Tasks

At each session of the SCC, students will rotate tasks that need to be completed. The students will work in pairs of 2.

- The first pair will gather the topics and themes suggested by their peers. This could be done by writing suggested topics on sticky notes.
- The second pair will then begin to sort the sticky notes into categories. This could be done on a whiteboard or poster board that they keep in the classroom that they work in.
- The third pair would act as note takers. They will write down the minutes of each session, note the topics suggested and discussed, and summarize the decisions made along with the rationale.
- The last pair will work on crafting the CWA suggestion prompt and codifying the topics to be brought up during the spring curriculum meeting.

At each session of the SCC, students will rotate tasks that need to be completed.



Fundraising

Crafting an age-appropriate and community-relevant fundraising strategy is a good way to sustain engagement, and fund student incentives or compensation. Take for example the ideas proposed by students in Tucson, Arizona. The students had suggested seasonal packs that their classmates might need during the school day.

- For the early fall and monsoon season, the SCC could sell umbrellas and disposable raincoats.
- In the winter, the SCC could sell hot chocolate and heat packs or hand warmer packs.
- In the spring, the SCC could sell tissue packs for allergy season and small hand sanitizer bottles.
- And in the early summer, the SCC could sell ice cream, popsicles or chilled disposable hand towels to keep cool.

It is important to take into account your school's fundraising policy and consider fundraising ideas that will be profitable enough to fund the compensation or incentives for the participating students.



Advisor Tools

Rubrics for selection

1. Students
2. Advisors
3. Topics and/or themes

Monthly Checklist

August

- Reach out to curriculum team
- Launch modality for students to suggest topics or ideas

September

- Recruit students or connect with nominated students
- On board students
- Organize student leadership nominations

October

- Guide students on gathering inputs from peers
- Coach students on providing constructive feedback
- Codifying feedback in an effective manner

November

- Prepare students towards building consensus as a club
- Instruct students on how to draft a recommendation of how they would like to incorporate a topic in the classroom or on drafting a writing prompt

December

- Coordinate times with students and curriculum leads to meet for SCC recommendations

January

- Guides students through communicating recommendations back to peers (closing the loop)
 - Notification templates
 - Approved
 - Denied/ Backlogged
 - Appeal Process

February

- Facilitate sessions with SCC and curriculum leads

March

- Guide students on cataloging backlogged input and feedback
- Meet with curriculum team and subject matter teachers on potential student co-design opportunities in summer
- Recruit students for summer co-design sessions

May

- Host student recognition events
- Onboard and enroll summer interns

June

- Guide students on
 - How to align standards
 - How to choose reputable sources

July

- Facilitate co-design sessions with interns and teachers

Table 1. Advisor Role Sunnyside Implementation

<p>Item 1:</p>	<p>Who can be an advisor</p>	<p>Advisors should also be familiar with Secondary English Language Arts writing standards. Here are some potential candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Teachers • World History Teachers • American History Teachers • Journalism Teachers • Instructional Coaches • AP Literature Teachers • AP History Teachers
<p>Item 2:</p>	<p>How to gather and analyze input</p>	<p>Students will be gathering input from their peers through the Digital Village Square (DVS). Once they have gathered the data they will analyze which topics should be recommended for Compact Writing Assignments (CWA's) and which topics should be codified Inquiry Unit recommendations.</p> <p>Setting up data gathering intervals may be helpful, so as not to overwhelm the students.</p>
<p>Item 3:</p>	<p>What form would recommendations from the SCC look like?</p>	<p>CWA Recommendations could be delivered to teachers in the form of a template for compiling CWA writing prompts per grade level or subject area, that is emailed to teachers every two weeks.</p> <p>Inquiry Unit Recommendations will be in the form of a pitch presentation for curriculum leads during the Spring Semester planning session. This is a larger project that would require a method for codifying recommendations and feedback for specific aspects of the curriculum over the course of the first semester.</p>
<p>Item 4:</p>	<p>What other optional responsibilities are there for the advisor?</p>	<p>During the summer, the advisor would engage with incoming SCC members and teach them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to align standards • How to choose reputable sources and diverse writers • How to craft a single lesson plan

Table 2. Getting your club started

Item 1:	Who should be members of the club?	Read the user persona created by the core team. We recommend reserving one or two seats of the club for students enrolled in education CTE classes or students who enjoy writing or engaging in student body activities.
Item 2:	When would meetings be held?	Meetings will be held once a week during the CCP period.



Center for Inclusive Innovation | Digital Promise

1001 Connecticut Avenue NW | Suite 935 | Washington, DC 20036

702 Marshall Street | Suite 340 | Redwood City, CA 94063

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Designed by Winter Group