Discovering Our Community Assets

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Abstract

This unit is designed for a seventh grade English and social studies class in a public neighborhood school in West Philadelphia. The purpose of this unit is for students to learn about our community through an intersectional and asset-based lens. This unit is embedded within a broader service-learning and social justice curriculum design framework that takes place over the course of a school year. In this unit, students will gather information about community assets from classmate interviews, family interviews, community guest speakers, historical maps, historical photos, and a community walk. For the culminating project, students will work in small groups to select a community asset to research in depth. Students will use their research from multiple sources to write and record a podcast episode about a community asset of their choice. The final goal is to create a neighborhood walking tour composed of the students' podcast episodes in order to highlight the assets of our community.

Keywords

community, assets, service-learning, English Language Arts, social studies, Philadelphia

Content Objectives

In the words of Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, "Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world" (Freire 1987). As a seventh grade English and social studies teacher, I strive to facilitate learning opportunities in which students "read the world." As an example, over the past few years, I have facilitated community walks with my students as part of our English and social studies curriculum. However, in the past, these community walks through our community have felt shallow and incomplete.

I write "our community" very intentionally because my students and I live in West Philadelphia. That said, we each experience West Philadelphia very differently due, in part, to our positionality and wide range of experiences. On one hand, some students have deep roots in West Philadelphia. Henry C. Lea Elementary was established in 1914 and there are some students whose family members have attended Lea for generations. On the other hand, some students are first-generation immigrants from countries including, but not limited to Senegal, Mauritania, Sudan, Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, China, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. Moreover, there are over 14

languages spoken across our school. Approximately 25% of my students are multilingual and speak languages including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Fulah, Soninke, Mandingo, and Spanish. 80% of my students identify as Black, 16% identify as Asian, and 4% identify as Latinx. 45% of students identify as male and 55% of students identify as female. According to the School District of Philadelphia School Profile, 100% of students are eligible for free breakfast and lunch. Several students are actively involved in the Rainbow Club at our school both as allies and students who identify as LGBTQ+. When I think about my identity as a white, middle class, cisgender female who lives and teaches in West Philadelphia, I know I undoubtedly experience West Philadelphia differently from my students. Therefore, how can I facilitate authentic learning opportunities in which students "read the world" of our West Philadelphia community when we approach "our community" with such different lenses?

Given the range of student perspectives in our classroom, I realized I was missing an opportunity to use community mapping to leverage the multifaceted perspectives in our classroom. During the seminar, "Cities through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender" with Dr. Rickie Sanders, Geography and Urban Studies Professor from Temple University, my inquiry question crystalized: How can I facilitate meaningful learning experiences so that my students "read the world" of our Philadelphia community as geographers through an intersectional and asset-based lens?

Curriculum Design Influences

Ubuntu, a Zulu proverb, is often translated as "I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours." South African Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu as, "the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness" (The Clinton Foundation, 2012). With this proverb in mind, I hope to create a classroom space where my students are challenged to think about our interconnectedness locally. In short, I strive to create a curriculum that is connected to the West Philadelphia community because our humanity is inextricably tied together.

Henry C. Lea Elementary's vision statement supports this interconnected, community-oriented approach. It reads: "Our school community is dedicated to building creative spaces where critical citizens are inspired and empowered to change the world. We believe all students can learn." With this vision statement in mind, over the years I have developed a curriculum that centers changemakers. I refer to my students as changemakers and our classroom motto is "Changemakers learn to read and write so that together we can change the world." Over the course of the school year, students study young changemakers from around the world, changemakers throughout history, and engage in service-learning as changemakers themselves. I rely on two overarching frameworks to guide my approach to curriculum development: Dr. Bree Picower's (2012) *Using Their Words: Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom* and Need In Deed's *My Voice* framework.

First, in *Using Their Words: Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom,* Picower outlines key elements of curriculum design in which "teachers lead students to value themselves, respect the diversity of the world around them, understand how diverse people have been treated differently and often unjustly, recognize that ordinary people have worked to address such injustice, and take action themselves" (Picower 2012).

Image 1: Sheryl Davis from The San Francisco Human Rights Commission created the graphic below which highlights the six elements of Picower's framework Using Their Words: Six Elements of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom (Picower, 2012).

The second overarching framework I use is from Need In Deed, a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia that is committed to "the transformative experience of service-learning that connects the classroom with the community" (Need In Deed, 2018). Need In Deed utilizes a service-learning framework titled *My Voice* in which students "explore community issues that they care about and to take action" (Need In Deed, 2018).

Image 2: The five steps in Need In Deed's My Voice Framework
are outlined below (Need In Deed, 2018).

The Need for an Intersectional Approach

In the Need In Deed *My Voice* framework, the first stage is "Value Your Voice" in which "students recognize their gifts and talents and then decide on a broad issue for their service-learning project" (Need In Deed, 2018). In this stage, students are asked to reflect on questions like, "Who am I? Who are we as a class? What combination of gifts and talents makes me who I am?" (Need In Deed, 2018).

Given the wide range of student perspectives in our classroom, we have an incredible opportunity to have meaningful classroom conversations around these "Value Your Voice" questions. Each year, students start the school year creating change maker mission statements in which they write about their beliefs and values as changemakers. Then, students create and share identity charts with one another (Facing History and Ourselves, 2021). As part of this identity work, students learn about the term intersectionality by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw and how identity markers such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, citizenship, ethnicity, religion, family structure, ableness/disability, age, body image/appearance, and education overlap and intersect with one another (Crenshaw, 2016). This process leads to conversations about when, where, and why we foreground certain aspects of our identity.

Note: If a teacher is planning on implementing this unit, I strongly recommend they teach about intersectionality and define each identity marker before starting this unit. If students have the opportunity to reflect and share about their personal identity before this unit begins, students will be better prepared for the discussions and reflections in this unit that ask students to consider how their positionality affects how they and others may interact with the community. In short, individual identity work lays the foundation for students' inquiry into how their positionality shapes their interactions with community assets.

The Need for an Asset-Based Approach

Using the Picower and Need In Deed frameworks as a guide, my students have chosen to study a range of topics over the years including, but not limited to gun violence, climate change, racism, sexism, food insecurity, and bullying. I have seen firsthand how valuable this level of student choice and inquiry is for students in order to see themselves and others as changemakers in our community.

That said, I have found that over the years student-led conversations about our community often trend towards a deficit-based perspective. In other words, I have observed that when students are thinking about our community, they often ask themselves "What is missing? What do we not want?" instead of asking "What is already successful? What can we build upon?" While I want to continue to value student voice and choice in my curriculum, I realized my curriculum was missing an explicit asset-based approach.

For decades, scholars have argued for asset-based teaching approaches that center students' lives, families, and communities in the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the term Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Gay and Hammond (2010) advocated for Culturally Responsive Teaching, Paris and Alim (2017) made the case for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies, and Muhammad (2020) created a framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy. Over the years, I have worked to create a curriculum informed by these scholars, but this work is never complete. In this unit, I want to leverage my students' interests in order to facilitate meaningful, student-driven research about the assets within our community.

For example, in the "Value Your Voice" stage within the Need In Deed framework, students are asked to consider, "What are the strengths of our community?" (Need In Deed, 2018). Picower expands upon this idea in the first element of her framework:

> "Element One, self-love and knowledge, provides students with the historical background knowledge to recognize the strengths and resiliency of their communities...When students are supported to learn more about their own history, they are better able to identify, deconstruct, and not internalize harmful stereotypes about their identities. This allows students to operate from a place of pride about their communities rather than fall victim to messages that claim that their communities are the cause of their problems" (p. 2 & 5).

Therefore, the Picower and Need In Deed *My Voice* frameworks both reinforce this need for an explicit asset-based approach.

This Unit Within the Context of a School Year

My goal is that this unit facilitates opportunities for students to think about our West Philadelphia community from an explicit intersectional and asset-based perspective in order to deepen my application of the Picower and the Need In Deed frameworks.

That said, I envision this unit will take place during the second quarter of the school year. As a visual, I see each of my units over the course of the school year as concentric circles. In the innermost circle, students start their inquiry with themselves and their personal identity. The second innermost circle is learning about our classroom community and the third circle is an inquiry into our neighborhood community. In other words, students need to reflect on their personal identity and our class community before we begin our inquiry into our West Philadelphia community.

West Philadelphia as a Social Institution

In our first "Cities through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender" seminar, Dr. Sanders introduced the five concepts of geography: location, region, distance, scale, and space. As

a teacher, I often refer to my students as readers, writers, and historians, but during this class I realized I had never referred to my students as geographers before. Dr. Sanders' lecture sparked an idea that I could design a unit in which students act like geographers and analyze our West Philadelphia community. Dr. Sanders emphasized that geographers often ask "How did this come to be?" so I began thinking how I could design a unit in which my students asked similar questions about West Philadelphia.

One of the first readings in our "Cities through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender" course was from American urban historian, sociologist, and urban planner Lewis Mumford. In *What is a City?* published in *Architectural Record* in 1937 Mumford writes, "The city as a purely physical fact has been subject to numerous investigations. But what is the city as a social institution?" (p. 28). This line stood out to me because in the past I too had designed a curriculum that focused on the physical aspects of West Philadelphia and had overlooked the opportunity to have students analyze the community as a complex "social institution". Mumford goes on to explain:

> "The city in its complete sense, then, is a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity...One may describe the city, in its social aspect, as a special framework directed towards the creation of differentiated opportunities for a common life and significant collective drama" (p. 29).

Mumford's definition of a city spurred me to re-envision the city as a series of social networks. Furthermore, it encouraged me to wonder how I could facilitate opportunities for students to describe West Philadelphia as a "social institution"? Given the multifaceted perspectives of my students, what are the "differentiated opportunities" that each student sees within West Philadelphia? Each student is likely to identify different "social institutions" in West Philadelphia so these questions could lead our entire class to a more nuanced understanding of the assets present in West Philadelphia.

West Philadelphia in the Media

That said, I want this unit to go beyond theory and our classroom walls and situate this unit within reality. There is an ever-evolving discussion about West Philadelphia in the media and my students have varying degrees of interaction with these media narratives.

In our eighth class together, we discussed the work of Jamaican-born British sociologist and cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall. In the 1973 text titled, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse" Hall defines encoding as the process by which a text is constructed with ideologies and decoding as the process in which the audience understands and interprets a text. Notably, Hall believed that all texts are polysemic. In other words, texts are read differently based on the audience's background, experiences, and identity including, but not limited to race, class, and gender. Within the encoding and decoding model miscommunication is inevitable. In fact, Hall writes, "Communication

between the production elites in broadcasting and their audiences is necessarily a form of 'systematically distorted communication' " (p.1). In applying Hall's theory to this unit, I wonder what students notice and wonder about the media's portrayal of West Philadelphia within this "systematically distorted communication"?

West Philadelphia as a "Single Story"

In her famous TED Talk "The Danger of the Single Story" Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains that a single story is when we "show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become." In this unit, students will watch Adichie's TED Talk in order to provide students a framework for discussing media stereotypes of West Philadelphia. Adichie continues:

> "All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story...It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power... How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity."

In using Adichie's TED Talk as a framework, this unit will ask students "What is the media's "single story" about West Philly?" and "What is missing from this 'single story' of West Philadelphia?" In *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*, high school language arts teacher and Director of the Oregon Writing Project Linda Christensen writes, "Creating assignments that do the double duty of teaching students to read and write while also examining the ways race and class function in our society is absolutely fundamental today" (p. 72). In *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*, Linda Christensen goes on to describe a writing assignment that "pushes students to analyze how their lives have been shaped by the 'single stories' told about them" (p. 72). Inspired by Linda Christensen's work, I want my students to "talk back" to the "single stories" the media tells about our West Philadelphia community. Like Christensen, I see this unit as an opportunity for students to "talk back" to these media narratives.

West Philadelphia as an Asset

In the introduction to *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets,* community organizers, community development leaders, and ABCD Institute Co-Directors John Kretzmann and John McKnight outline "two divergent paths" within community development: a traditional needs-driven and

deficit-oriented path versus a capacity-focused and asset-oriented path. This second, asset-based community development path "starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area-not with what is absent, or with what is problematic, or with what the community needs" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 5).

Although the audience for Kretzmann and McKnight's work is undoubtedly not middle school students, I think it would be very powerful to have my middle school students add their perspective to the assets that exist in West Philadelphia. Using this framework, I can ask students, "What assets are present within West Philadelphia residents?" and "In your opinion, what associational and institutional assets exist in West Philadelphia?"
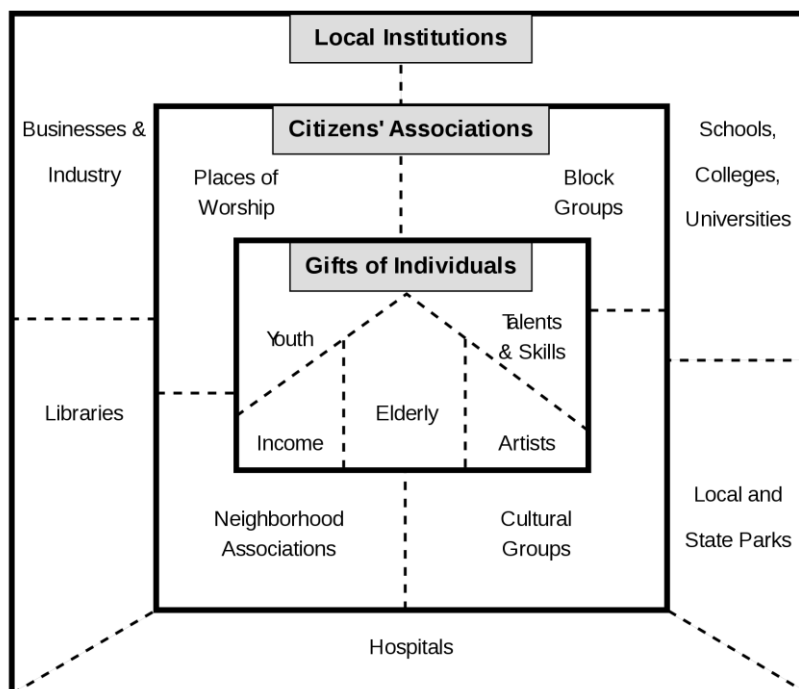
Image 3: Kretzmann and McKnight claim there are five key assets: individuals, associations, institutions, physical assets, and connections. The image to the left shows how these assets are categorized into three categories: Gifts of individuals, Citizens' Associations, and Local Institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

West Philadelphia through an Intersectional Lens

In Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw's TEDTalk entitled "The urgency of intersectionality" Crenshaw explains how she "began to use the term 'intersectionality' to deal with the fact that many of our social justice problems like racism and sexism are often overlapping, creating multiple levels of social injustice" (Crenshaw, 2016). In previous years, I taught about the term intersectionality, but the majority of our classroom conversations were limited to assignments and discussions about personal identity.

However, as a student in Dr. Sanders' "Cities through the Lens of Race, Class, and Gender" seminar, we discussed Dr. Crenshaw's work through the lens of geography. In the third week, Dr. Sanders' asked us to each "name three aspects of your identity; which

do you foreground – where/when/why?" Of course, we all foreground various aspects of our identities depending on where we are, and yet I had never before considered layering intersectionality and location with students.

Given the diverse identities of my students, if I ask students to consider how their positionality affects how they interact in our community, there will be a wide range of responses. An understanding of intersectionality leads to asset-based community development from multiple perspectives. In short, each student is likely to identify different assets based, in part, on their positionality. As an example, a first-generation female Muslim student is more likely to identify their family's masjid as a community asset while a Black male Christian student is more likely to identify their family's church as an asset.

These differences in perspectives, leads to interesting questions such as "How does a student's multifaceted identity affect assets they see in the community?" and "How does a student's multifaceted identity shape the assets they engage with/do not engage with?" Furthermore, what do students think are the "obvious" assets known to the general public? What do students think are the "hidden" assets known only to select pockets in the community? How does each students' identity shape the assets they identify and interact with regularly? Thus, the multifaceted perspectives of my students lead to identifying a wide range of community assets in West Philadelphia.

West Philadelphia as a Place of Activism

In "Intersectionality and planning at the margins: LGBTQ youth of color in New York" Clara Irazábal and Claudia Huerta (2015) use an intersectional lens to describe how a FIERCE, a "social justice advocacy group for LGBTQ youth of color...comprise[d] mainly Latino/as and African Americans between the ages of 13 –24 living in the New York Metro" advocate for the LGBTQ community through a student-led walking tour of the West Village (p. 720). Throughout the walking tour, FIERCE student guides share a "FIERCE Fact...which was either a community development success story or related to an issue they were currently advocating for to fulfill a community need" (p. 722).

Irazábal and Huerta (2015) go onto explain:
> "As LGBTQ YOC took turns during the tour to serve as guides, they conveyed to participants a personalized account of the geography of the neighborhood. In relational, affective, temporal, and political terms, they explained to us what the buildings and spaces meant to them individually and collectively, and in relation to their past and present conditions, as well as future possibilities" (p. 724).

As a result, this reading helped me to think about how our class could adapt this idea to a West Philadelphia walking tour centered on community assets.

Irazábal & Huerta (2015) highlight how the FIERCE tour "aligned with

hooks' (2003) 'teaching to transgress' and 'pedagogy of hope' concepts, which encourage the expansion of co-learning beyond school settings to include community organizations and other public arenas" (p. 724). Reading about the FIERCE student-led tour made me wonder how I could facilitate opportunities for students to also research resistance and resilience in West Philadelphia. In other words, many neighborhood assets exist today in spite of systems of oppression so resistance and resilience themselves are both assets. Therefore, documenting community assets is an opportunity to document community resistance and resilience. Furthermore, this focus on resilience and resistance weaves directly into our overarching focus on changemakers throughout the school year. In short, a focus on community assets is also a focus on changemakers in our community.

Lastly, thanks to the Irazábal & Huerta article, I began to wonder how my students' experiences and insights about community assets could be communicated to a wider audience beyond our school. Although the constraints of a school day may limit students' ability to lead walking tours throughout the week, I began to consider how students' ideas could be shared on a digital platform such as a podcast.

Unit Objectives

This unit is designed to take place over the course of twenty days. The primary unit objectives are listed below. *Note: Some days have more than one objective and some objectives span more than one day.*

- **Day 1:** Students will be able to reflect on the word community in order to generate a multifaceted definition of the word as a class.

- **Day 1:** Students will be able to reflect on the word community from multiple perspectives in order to consider how the idea of community may change based on one's identity.

- **Day 2**: Students will be able to define the word asset in order to create a list of community assets from their unique perspective.

- **Day 2 & 3:** Students will be able to generate interview questions for their classmates and family members about community assets in West Philadelphia.

- **Day 2 & 3:** Students will be able to interview their classmates and family members in order to identify community assets in West Philadelphia from multiple perspectives.

- **Day 2 & 3:** Students will be able to identify community assets from multiple perspectives in order to consider how these assets may change based on one's identity.

- **Day 4:** Students will be able to analyze nonfiction text features from local media outlets and social media in order to identify the "single story" of West Philadelphia.

- **Day 5:** Students will be able to contrast their student-generated list of West Philadelphia assets with the media coverage in order to understand how the media coverage of West Philadelphia is an incomplete "single story".

- **Day 6 & 7:** Students will be able to analyze historic and current West Philadelphia maps, photos, and walking tour brochures in order to analyze whose stories the primary sources reveal and obscure. (Note: The resources for this objective will be curated by a series of guest speakers.)

- **Day 8 & 9:** Students will be able to generate and ask interview questions to guest speakers (community leaders from neighborhood associations, small businesses, and school alumni) in order to learn about resistance and resilience in the community and how community assets have evolved over time.

- **Day 10:** Students will be able to analyze West Philadelphia firsthand during a community walk in order to make observations, create questions, and identify assets present in West Philadelphia.

- **Day 11:** Students will be able to present their community walk observations, questions, assets, and photographs to their classmates in order to notice similarities and differences across various areas of West Philadelphia.

- **Day 12 & 13:** Students will be able to identify and research a community asset of their choice.

- **Day 14-18:** Students will be able to follow the writing process (including multiple drafts, revising, and editing) in order to write a podcast script about the community asset of their choice.

- **Day 19:** Students will be able to record and publish their podcast episode in order to share what they have learned with the class and an audience beyond the classroom.

- **Day 20:** Students will be able to listen to one another's podcast episodes and share the podcast with community members as part of a writing publication celebration.

Teaching Strategies

1. Reflection on a Word: Patricia Carini (2009) describes reflecting on a word as a "quiet, solitary work, each person delving into her memory for phrases, words, and images evoked by the word, writing these down as they come to mind" (p. 82). In this spirit, students will reflect on the word "community". Carini (2009) highlights that "the point of a reflection is not to winnow or define a word. The point is to uncover some of the richness of layered meaning the word embodies" (p. 82). After students share their initial responses, the teacher may prompt students to think about the word from a variety of perspectives. For example, the teacher may ask, "If someone has lived in the same neighborhood for 80 years, how might they describe the word community?" or "If someone has just moved to a new neighborhood, how might they describe the word community?" Teachers are encouraged to ask students to think about communities that are united by a common location, interest, or circumstance.

2. Peer & Family Interviews: Students will have opportunities throughout this unit to conduct peer interviews and family interviews. In both circumstances, the teacher will assign the interview topic (community assets) and the students will collaborate to create a list of interview questions. First, during the peer interview stage, students will interview one another and brainstorm a list of assets in West Philadelphia. At this stage, students have the opportunity to both share their perspective and listen to the perspective of their classmates. Second, students will interview a family member of their choice and document the community's assets from the perspective of their family member. Students will then share their family interview findings with one another and search for themes and patterns among the findings.

3. Online Research: Students will search "West Philadelphia" in a variety of online media sources including, but not limited to the Philadelphia Inquirer, The Philadelphia Tribune, and West Philly Local. Students will use these sources to identify what "single story" is associated with West Philadelphia.

4. Media Analysis: Students will use resources from the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) to analyze media messages about West Philadelphia. Questions include, but are not limited to:
        a. Who made this?
        b. Why was it made?
        c. How might different people interpret this message?
        d. What is missing from this message?
        e. Who might benefit from this message?
        f. Who might be harmed by this message?

5. Graphic Organizers: Students will use graphic organizers throughout the unit. For example, students will record notes from their peer and family interviews in a graphic organizer. Additionally, students will record their online research observations and questions in a graphic organizer. Once students have completed their interviews and online research, students will contrast their student-generated list of assets with the media coverage using a third graphic organizer. Students will use these graphic organizers in order to consider how the "single story" of West Philadelphia can change based on one's identity markers.

6. Small Group Community Walk: In small groups, students will walk around West Philadelphia with a chaperone. Each small group will be responsible for a different area of West Philadelphia (areas to the north, south, east, and west of the school). This way, the class will be able to cover a larger area of West Philadelphia than if the class was traveling together in one large group. Moreover, a small group enables the students and chaperones to have small group conversations during the community walk about their observations and questions. During the community walk, students will brainstorm questions using ideas adapted from the Historical Thinking Chart by the Stanford History Education Group.

7. Gallery Walk: After the community walk, each small group will compile their community walk observations, questions, and photographs onto a poster. Each small group will then hang their poster boards around the classroom "gallery style" so that students can disperse evenly around the room. Then, each small group will rotate around the classroom and they "travel" around West Philadelphia in order to analyze each poster.

8. Project Zero Thinking Routines: Students will have opportunities to use thinking routines throughout the unit. These thinking routines were developed by Project Zero, a research center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The thinking routines for this unit may include, but are not limited to:

> a. Facts or Fiction: In this thinking routine, students will analyze nonfiction text features from local media outlets and social media depicting West Philadelphia.

> b. Parts, People, Interactions: Students will use this thinking routine to better understand the complex nature of a single neighborhood and how a change to one part of a neighborhood system affects the various parts and people within the neighborhood.

> c. Creative Questions: This thinking routine will help students generate questions for classmate interviews, family interviews, and guest speakers.

> d. See, Think, Wonder: Students will use this thinking routine during their community walk in order to make insightful observations and ask thoughtful questions.

e. Circle of Viewpoints: By leveraging this thinking routine, students will consider how the idea of community and community assets may change based on one's viewpoint and/or identity markers.

f. Projecting Across Time: In this thinking routine, students will analyze primary sources such as maps and consider how the past affects our present-day community assets and implications for the future.

h. Peel the Fruit: Students will use this thinking routine in order to document their learning and track their exploration throughout the unit.

i. I Used to Think...Now I Think…: Students will use this thinking routine as part of their journal reflections at various stages during the unit in order to document how their thinking evolves throughout the unit.

9. Guest Speakers: Students will generate questions for guest speakers about the history of West Philadelphia. Guest speakers could include community leaders from neighborhood associations, historical associations, and school alumni. The student-generated questions will be shared with the guest speakers in advance so that the guest speakers are prepared to respond to student questions and can bring primary source materials for students. After each guest speaker, students will write thank you notes and apply their new understandings to further inquiry.

10. Journaling: Students will journal throughout the unit. The journal prompts will give students the opportunity to pause and reflect on their research (i.e. peer interviews, family interviews, guest speakers, community walk, online research) throughout the unit. The journal prompts will encourage students to activate prior knowledge, make connections, ask questions, or reflect on how their thinking has changed throughout the unit. Students can choose how they want to respond to the journal prompt (i.e. prose, poetry, lists, maps, or drawings). Journaling time will often be paired with the Think, Pair, Share teaching strategy in which students have time to write and then share their journal responses with a partner, small group, or the class, depending on the journal topic.

11. Voice and Choice: This is a key element in the Need in Deed *My Voice* Framework. Educators know that when students have a voice and choice in what they are learning, they become more deeply engaged in the learning process.

12. The Writing Process: Students will identify and research a community asset of their choice. Students will write a podcast script about their community asset following the writing process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing). Peer feedback and teacher feedback will also play an important role in the writing process.

13. Mentor Texts: Students will analyze mentor texts such as walking tour guides and walking tour podcast episodes. Students will use these mentor texts as inspiration and to better understand the writing moves these authors use in order to describe the community asset of their choice and engage their audience.

14. Modeling Writing: The teacher will model writing a podcast script as a scaffold to help students write their podcast scripts. Each day, the teacher models drafting, revising, or editing a specific part of their podcast script and uses a think-aloud to highlight a specific writing strategy. Then, the teacher encourages students to use the same writing strategy in their podcast scripts during writing workshop.

15. Writing Conferences: Students will meet with the teacher regularly for one-on-one writing conferences as they work on their podcast script. Writing conferences are an opportunity for the teacher to differentiate their writing feedback to meet the needs of each student and challenge each student as a writer.

16. Publication Celebration: Students will record and publish their podcast episodes at the end of the unit. This celebration is an opportunity for students to share their work with one another and community members beyond our classroom. This event will both celebrate student work and provide students time to reflect on what we have learned as a class from this unit.

Additionally, the following evaluative tools will be used to assess student progress throughout the unit.

1. Journaling
2. Student Self-Reflection Questions
3. Editing & Revision Checklists
4. Writing Portfolio
5. Rubrics & Student Self-Assessments
6. Student Presentations
7. Exit Tickets

Classroom Activities

This unit is designed to take place over the course of twenty days. The three lessons below are excerpts from the larger overarching unit.

Lesson for Day 1: Reflection on the Word "Community"
Timeline for Completion
One 60-minute class period
Essential Question
What is community?
Objectives
- Students will be able to reflect on the word community in order to generate a multifaceted definition of the word as a class.   - Students will be able to reflect on the word community from multiple perspectives and consider how the idea of community may change based on one's identity.
Common Core State Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.3:** Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) Social Justice Standards
Anchor Standard #7: Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups. **Anchor Standard #9:** Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

Materials
1. Student Journals 2. Chart Paper 3. Markers 4. Exit Tickets

Step-by-Step Completion Guide

1. The teacher will write the word "community" on a piece of chart paper posted at the front of the classroom. Students will have five minutes to write down as many words, images, and phrases that the word "community" brings to mind in their journals.

2. As students brainstorm ideas, the teacher will circulate around the room in order to answer students' questions and/or provide additional guidance to students. If students need additional support, the teacher may ask prompting questions such as:
   a. What <u>physical</u> communities do you and/or your family belong to? (examples: block, neighborhood, city, country)
   b. What <u>social</u> communities do you and/or your family belong to? (examples: religions, sports, cultural organizations, language groups)
   c. What <u>education</u> communities do you and/or your family belong to? (examples: schools, after school clubs, trade schools, universities)
   d. What <u>activist</u> communities do you and/or your family belong to? (examples: Philadelphia Student Union, Black Lives Matter)

3. When five minutes have ended, the teacher will invite all students to sit in a large circle with their journals.

4. The teacher will ask for two student volunteers to take notes on the chart paper at the front of the classroom.

5. The teacher will remind students that they can choose to share a portion or all of their journal reflection. One by one, each student will share their reflections on the word "community" out loud with the class. *Note: Some students may not want to share their reflection on a word if they hear their idea already shared by another classmate. So, before students begin sharing, it is important that the teacher emphasizes that part of the reflection on a word process encourages students to look for patterns. Therefore, even if a student's idea was already shared, it is important that students share their ideas because the repetition of ideas highlights patterns.*

6. As each student shares, the two student volunteers will take turns writing the students' ideas on the chart paper at the front of the class. This way, the class will both hear and see each idea as it is shared. If students are familiar with concept maps, the student note takers are encouraged to take notes in a concept map format. *Note: Depending on the class size, the teacher may choose to have students share their ideas using the Graffiti Board teaching strategy followed by a Gallery Walk. For more information on these teaching strategies, please see the bibliography.*

7. After each student shares their reflection, the student will "pass the mic" to another student in the classroom. In other words, the teacher is not calling on students one at a time to share. Instead, the students are inviting one another into the sharing process.

8. Once every student has had the opportunity to share, the teacher will then invite students to look carefully at their classmates' reflections on the chart paper and look for patterns. The teacher explicitly asks students to focus on patterns and themes. During this second round of sharing, students repeat steps six and seven. *Note: Using a different color marker to take notes during the second round of sharing may help students visualize the patterns and themes more clearly.* If students need additional support, the teacher may ask prompting questions such as:
    a. What comments did you hear repeated from several students?
    b. What patterns do you notice from your classmates' reflections?
    c. What themes do you notice from your classmates' reflections?
    d. What ideas listed on the chart paper sparked a new idea in your mind?
    e. How can you build off what has already been shared?

9. After students complete the second round of sharing, the teacher will briefly recap and highlight main patterns and themes from the class.

10. During the third and final round of sharing, the teacher will prompt students to think about the word community from a variety of perspectives. Teachers are encouraged to use the Circle of Viewpoints thinking routine and sentence starters.
    a. I am thinking of the word community from the viewpoint of…
    b. I think ... describe the topic from your viewpoint.
    c. A question I have from this viewpoint is ...
    Note: If students have engaged in identity work before this unit, teachers are encouraged to ask students to think about the word community through the lens of various identity markers.

Step-by-Step Completion Guide (continued)

11. The students will conclude the lesson with a Think, Pair, Share. First, the teacher will prompt the students to review their initial journal response and compare it to the chart paper with their classmates' ideas. Then, the teacher will encourage the students to think about how their ideas about the word community have evolved as a result of the reflection on a word activity.

12. Students will complete an exit ticket with the <u>I Used to Think... Now I Think...</u> thinking routine framework. After students have had time to write, they will have the opportunity to share their ideas with a partner and then with the class.

Evaluation Tools

1. Student Journals

2. Chart Paper Concept Map

3. Exit Ticket Prompt: I Used to Think... Now I Think…

Lessons for Day 2 & 3: Defining Assets & Interviews

Timeline for Completion

Two 60-minute class periods

Essential Question

What are community assets in West Philadelphia according to our classmates and family members?

Objectives

- Students will be able to define the word asset in order to create a list of community assets from their unique perspective.

- Students will be able to generate interview questions for their classmates and family members about community assets in West Philadelphia.

- Students will be able to interview their classmates and family members in order to identify community assets in West Philadelphia from multiple perspectives.

- Students will be able to identify community assets from multiple perspectives in order to consider how these assets may change based on one's identity.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C: Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) Social Justice Standards

Anchor Standard #8: Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.

Anchor Standard #9: Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.

Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) Social Justice Standards
Anchor Standard #10: Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

Materials
1. Student Journals 2. Document Camera or Chart Paper

Step-by-Step Completion Guide

1. The teacher begins by asking if students know the definition of the word "asset" and/or have heard the word "asset" before. If yes, ask students to share their ideas.
 	
2. The teacher defines the word community asset: a person, place, or organization that is positive, valuable, or helpful to members of the neighborhood. *Note: The teacher may want to use a document camera or chart paper to display the definition at the front of the classroom as students take notes.*
 	
3. The teacher then expands upon this definition by referencing the work of Kretzmann and McKnight.
    a. There are five key assets within a community: individuals, associations, institutions, physical assets, and connections. These assets are categorized into three overarching categories: Gifts of Individuals, Citizens' Associations, and Local Institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). See Image 3 on page 9 for a visual developed by Kretzmann & McKnight.
 	
    b. The teacher emphasizes that assets can be physical places (examples: parks and libraries) and social networks built on relationships (examples: sports teams and neighborhood associations).
 	
    c. *Note: If the teacher thinks students would benefit from brainstorming ideas together as a class first, the teacher could provide an additional scaffold here. For example, the teacher could ask the students to brainstorm the Gifts of Individuals, Citizens' Associations, and Local Institutions associated with their school community. See Appendix A for an example.*

4. The teacher will then explain how the students are going to interview one another about the assets in our West Philadelphia community. The teacher will ask students, "If you were to interview a classmate about the assets in West Philadelphia, what questions would you ask them?"

5. Students will brainstorm interview questions. *Note: The teacher may want to have students brainstorm independently, in partners, or in a small group.*

6. As students brainstorm questions, the teacher will circulate around the room in order to answer students' questions and/or provide additional guidance to students. Students will often start questions with who, what, where, when, why, and how. If students need additional support brainstorming questions, the teacher could suggest sentence stems such as:
    a. What is your favorite place to...?
    b. If it is a school day, where...?
    c. If it is the weekend, where...?
    d. If you want to...where...?
    e. If you could go anywhere in the neighborhood and... where...?
    f. If you wanted to go somewhere for free and...where...?
    g. If you had money to spend on...where...?

7. If the teacher notices students need additional support brainstorming questions, the teacher may also consider using the Creative Questions thinking routine.
    a. What would it be like if...?
    b. What would change if...?
    c. How would it be different if...?
    d. How would it look differently if...?
    e. Suppose that...

8. After students generate a list of interview questions, students will share their question ideas with the class. The teacher or a student note taker can record the list of student questions using the document camera or a piece of chart paper at the front of the room.

9. As a class, the students will then narrow down the list of questions and determine the final list of questions they want to ask one another during the classmate interview. *Note: Depending on the class size, the teacher may choose to have students share their ideas using the Graffiti Board teaching strategy followed by a Gallery Walk. For more information on these teaching strategies, please see the bibliography.*

10. Before the classmate interviews begin, the teacher will ask students to think about community assets in West Philadelphia. Students will then have five minutes to write, list, or draw as many assets they can think about from their perspective in their student journals. The teacher will remind the class that each student will create a unique list of community assets and that community assets can change depending on one's identity markers. *Note: As an additional scaffold, the teacher may want students to brainstorm ideas using a graphic organizer. Teachers could use the image developed by Kretzmann and McKnight as a graphic organizer, or teachers may want to adapt this image to create a graphic organizer to best meet the needs of their students. See Appendix B.*

11. Students will then divide into partners. The teacher may want to have students pick their partner or assign partners.

12. Students will then interview one another about the assets in West Philadelphia. Students will use the student-generated interview questions. First, Student A will ask the interview questions while Student B answers the interview questions. As Student B answers each question, Student A takes notes. Then, Student A and Student B will switch roles. Student B will ask the interview questions and take notes while Student A answers the interview questions.

13. If time allows, the teacher may want to have each student interview more than one classmate. This is up to the teacher's discretion.

14. When everyone has completed their classmate interview(s), students will take turns reporting out their interview findings. Depending on time, students may share their findings in a small group or whole group setting. The teacher or a student note taker can record the findings using the document camera or chart paper.

15. For homework, students will interview a family member of their choice about community assets in West Philadelphia. Depending on the questions students generated for their classmate interviews, the teacher may want to give students time to generate additional interview questions that are specific to their family members. If so, please repeat steps 5, 6, 7, and 8 with the family member interview in mind.

Step-by-Step Completion Guide (continued)

16. The following day in class, the students will share the results of their family interview and repeat step 14. The teacher may choose to have students share their family interview findings with a partner, in small groups, and/or with the entire class.

17. Students will use the Circle of Viewpoints thinking routine in order to consider how community assets may change based on one's identity markers.

Evaluation Tools

1. Student Journals

2. Student-generated Interview Questions

3. Notes from Classmate Interview

4. Notes from Family Member Interview

Please scroll down to see another sample lesson.

Lessons for Day 10 & 11: Community Walk - Before, During & After
Timeline for Completion
Two 60-minute class periods
Essential Question
What are community assets in West Philadelphia according to our community walk?
Objectives
- Students will be able to analyze West Philadelphia firsthand during a community walk in order to make observations, create questions, and identify assets present in West Philadelphia.   - Students will be able to present their community walk observations, questions, assets, and photographs to their classmates in order to notice similarities and differences across various areas of West Philadelphia.
Common Core State Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C: Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance) Social Justice Standards
Anchor Standard #8: Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way. **Anchor Standard #10:** Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

Materials

1. Small group community walk routes
2. List of students assigned to each small group
3. Community walk graphic organizers (Appendix C) with clipboards
4. Community walk question sentence frames (Appendix D)
5. Cell Phone or Camera (one per group)
6. Poster Board or Chart Paper (one per group)
7. Post-it Notes
8. Field Trip Paperwork (This will vary depending on school context.)
9. Letter to Families (This will vary depending on school context.)
10. Student jackets and/or water bottles (This will vary depending on the weather.)

Step-by-Step Completion Guide

1. In preparation for the community walk, divide students into small groups. Each small group will have one chaperone and approximately 4-6 students.

2. Design a different walking route for each group. For example, if there are four small groups, the teacher may want to design a north, south, east, and west route. This way, each small group can observe a different area of the community in relation to the school. *Note: Due to chaperone constraints and/or class size, the teacher may need to create larger groups. However, it is advised that the class does not go on the community walk as one large group. The purpose of the small groups is to allow students to cover different areas of the community in a relatively short amount of time.*

3. Before the day of the community walk, hold a meeting with all the chaperones to review the following:
   a. Context
      i. The purpose of the community walk
      ii. What students have learned in preparation for this activity
      iii. What students will do with the information from this activity
   b. During the Community Walk
      i. Student expectations
      ii. Chaperone expectations
   c. Logistics
      i. Time and date of the community walk
      ii. Map with the community walk routes for each small group
      iii. Highlights and key areas along each community walk route
      iv. Materials needed for the community walk
      v. The students assigned to each group
      vi. Teacher and chaperone contact information

Step-by-Step Completion Guide (continued)

4. If the teacher wants the students to have additional practice making observations, creating questions, and identifying assets before the community walk, the teacher may choose to add a lesson in which students analyze photographs of the community. The teacher may choose to take photos or choose photos from the internet that are not already part of the community walk.

5. On the day of the community walk, the teacher will meet with the class briefly to review directions before the exploration begins.
   a. Explain that the students will be geographers and the role of geographers in this activity is to make observations, create questions, and identify assets as they explore the community.
   b. Remind the students that a community asset is something that is positive, valuable, or helpful to members of the neighborhood. Assets can be physical places (i.e. buildings and parks) and relationships (i.e. networks of community groups and neighborhood associations)

6. The students and chaperones will divide into their small groups and embark on their community walk route. Each group will have approximately 45 minutes for the community walk. *Note: Each group will have a map and suggested community walk route designed by the teacher. That said, the chaperone has the discretion to adjust the route as necessary (i.e. student interests, construction, time constraints).*

7. During the community walk, the chaperones will strategically stop along the route based on student interests and key assets. Students will make observations, create questions, and identify assets using a graphic organizer (Appendix C). If students need additional support, the chaperone could also prompt students using the See, Think, Wonder thinking routine. *Note: If students need additional support with creating questions, they can use the Community Walk Sentence Stems (Appendix D).*

8. Additionally, during the community walk, one student per group will be in charge of taking photos of important assets during the community walk. If the chaperone feels comfortable, students can take photos using the chaperone's cell phone. Based on experience, it works best if the photos are all on one phone and the chaperone texts/emails the teacher the group's photos after the community walk. That way, the teacher can easily print out the photos for each group. The next day, the students will use these photos when making their poster displaying their community walk experience.

Step-by-Step Completion Guide (continued)

9. For homework, the students will complete the "After the Community Walk" columns in the community walk graphic organizer (Appendix C).

10. The following day in class, the students will divide into their community walk small groups again. As a small group, the students will transfer their observations, questions, and assets from their community walk graphic organizers onto a poster or chart paper. Students will also add the photos from their community walk to the poster/chart paper.

11. Remind students that the purpose of the poster/chart paper is for each group to synthesize their experience for their classmates. Each small group went on a different route, so each poster/chart paper will showcase a different area of the community. The poster/chart paper will help show the rest of the class their unique observations, questions, assets, and photographs.

12. After each poster/chart paper is complete, each group will hang their work around the room in a gallery style. Students will then rotate between each poster/chart paper in order to learn about each group's community walk experience and notice similarities/differences across various areas of West Philadelphia. *Note: If time allows, the teacher may want to have each group present their poster/chart paper one at a time in front of the class.*

13. As students rotate around the classroom, students can use post-it notes to leave comments and/or questions on another's poster/chart paper. *Note: If the teacher would like the students to document their comments and/or questions during the gallery walk in one place, the teacher may want to create a graphic organizer for students to fill out as they rotate around the classroom.*

14. The students will conclude the lesson with a Think, Pair, Share. First, the teacher will prompt the students to review their poster/chart paper with the new post-it notes. Then, the teacher will encourage the students to think about how their ideas about community assets have evolved as a result of the community walk and gallery walk.

15. Students will complete an exit ticket with the I Used to Think... Now I Think... thinking routine framework. After students have had time to write, they will have the opportunity to share their ideas with a partner and then with the class.

Evaluation Tools
1. Community Walk Graphic Organizer (Appendix C)
2. Small Group Poster/Chart Paper
3. Exit Ticket Prompt: I Used to Think... Now I Think…

Please scroll down to see the resources and appendix.

Resources

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Below is a list of resources referenced throughout this curriculum unit.

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Additional Resources
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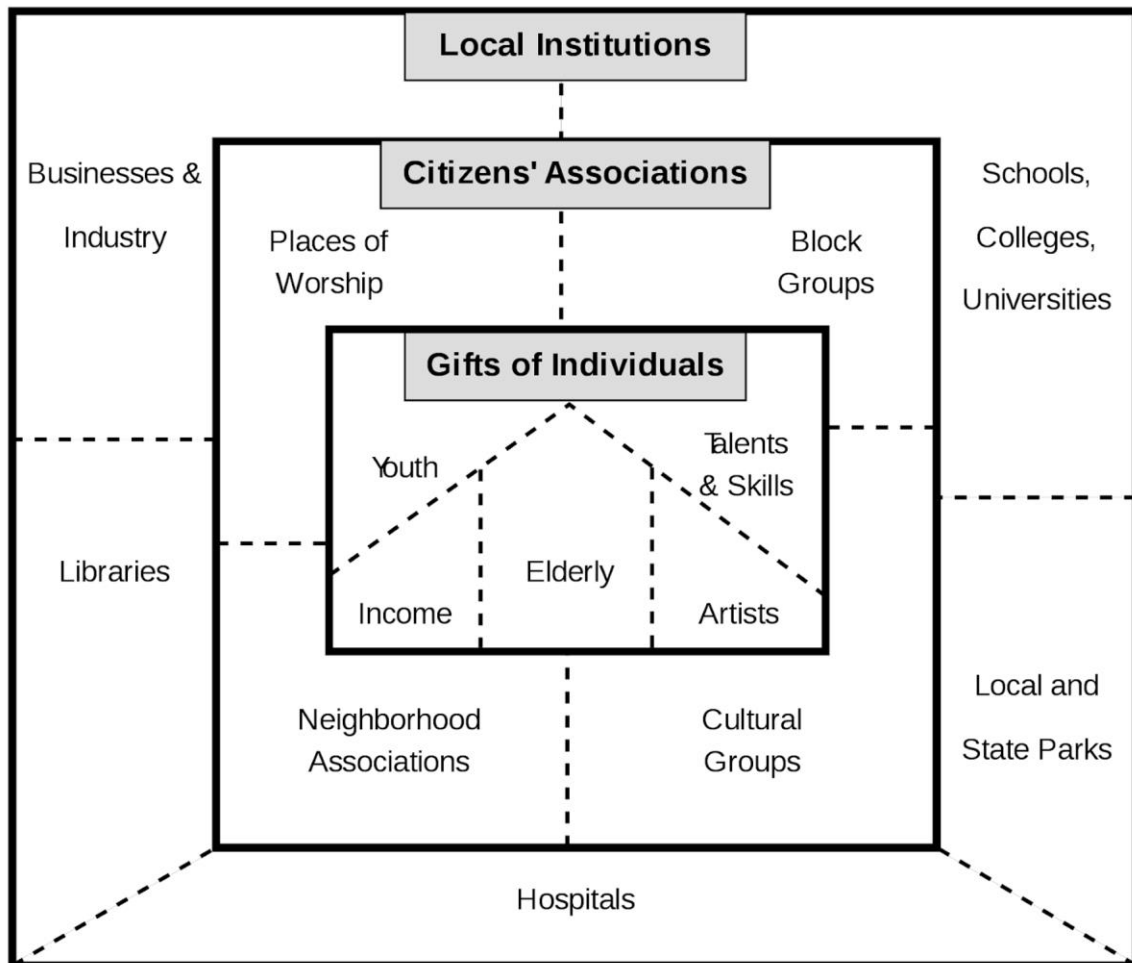
Appendix A

The teacher may want to provide an additional scaffold if they think their students would benefit from brainstorming community asset ideas together as a class. For example, the teacher could ask the students to brainstorm the "Gifts of Individuals, Citizens' Associations, and Local Institutions" associated with their school community before brainstorming community assets associated with West Philadelphia (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Below is a sample with a few student ideas that may come from a class brainstorming activity.
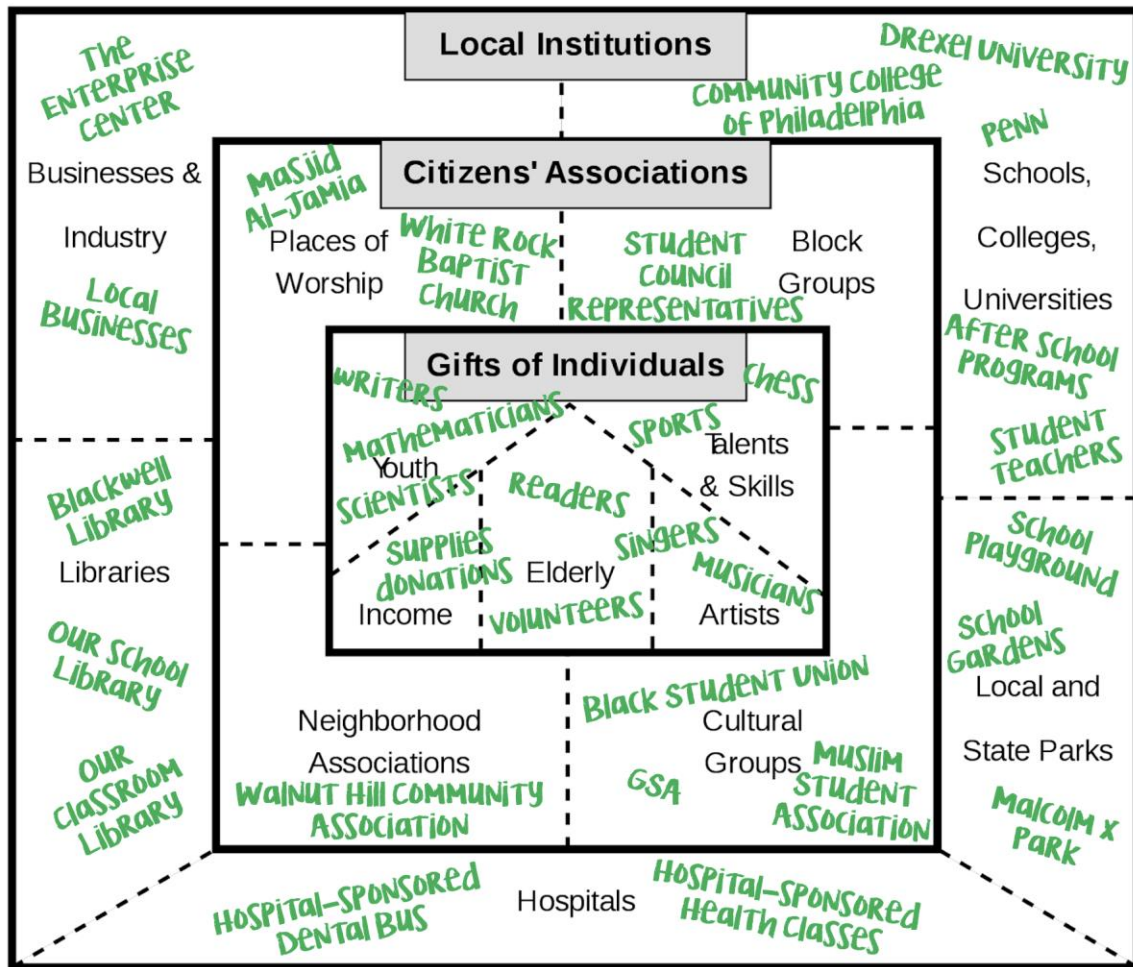
Appendix B

Below is a copy of Kretzmann and McKnight's image for community asset mapping showing "Gifts of Individuals, Citizens' Associations, and Local Institutions" (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Teachers may want to use this image as a graphic organizer or adapt this image into a graphic organizer to best meet the needs of their students in order to help students brainstorm community assets.

Appendix C

Student: _____ Chaperone: _____ Homeroom: _____

	Community Walk Graphic Organizer			
	During the Community Walk		After the Community Walk	
#	Make Observations What do you see?	Create Questions What do you wonder?	Identify the Assets Why is an asset?	Audience Who may see this as an asset?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Appendix D

Community Walk Question Sentence Frames
Reminder: A community asset is something that is positive, valuable, or helpful to members of the neighborhood. Assets can be physical places like buildings and parks. Assets can also be relationships like networks of community groups and neighborhood associations. **Directions:** As geographers, one of your goals during the community walk is to ask questions as you explore community assets. If you need additional support creating questions, use the sentence frames below.

Sourcing Ask questions about who created the asset and why.	**Contextualization** Ask questions about the time period and the location of the asset.	**Corroboration** Ask questions about how people may view or interact with the asset.
Who designed...and why? Who funded...and why? Who created...and why? What is the purpose of...? Why is...named...? Why was...renamed?	When was...designed? When was...built? What was different at the time... was created? What was the same at the time... was created? When was...named? Why was...created at this location?	What might...think about...? Who else may agree that...? Why might others agree...? Who else may disagree about...? Why might others disagree...? Who may have a different perspective about... and why?

Adapted from the Historical Thinking Chart by the Stanford History Education Group