

CALE



CALE Field Guide

Teachers helping teachers respond
to the big issues of our time



ENCORE LAB



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

WELCOME, TEACHER

Welcome to CALE! We are happy to know that you are interested to learn more. CALE was born out of a desire to empower our youth to solve the local and global challenges of our present and future. CALE was formed by researchers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. You are welcome to check out our website www.cale.org. On the website, you can make a free account and browse through lesson designs developed by other CALE teachers to understand the practical implementations.

1. What is CALE

CALE - the Critical Action Learning Exchange - is a global professional community for educators dedicated to empowering their students to contribute to solving urgent and complex social and environmental issues, such as climate change, social and environmental justice, economic inequality, threats to democracy, and more.

CALE recognizes that just teaching students the facts about the causes, mechanics, and effects of these complex problems may make students feel passive, acquiescing to undesirable situations without feeling empowered to make decisions or take action. Instead, CALE proposes that the school curriculum incorporates opportunities for students to learn the subject matter through a process that engages them with critical reflection and transformative action toward authentic and meaningful problems for themselves and their communities.

Get in touch! To learn more about CALE, ask questions about this field guide, or discuss potential collaborations, send a message to cale.oise@utoronto.ca or check our website at www.cale.org.

2. Teachers' Role as Transformative Intellectuals

To educate students to be thoughtful, active citizens, schools must recognize and empower teachers as fully-fledged transformative intellectuals. That means seeing teachers as much more than technicians who just implement curriculum provided by ministries and boards. Instead, **CALE** strives to fully leverage teachers' expertise and skills as critical educators who are dedicated to the crucial task of preparing the next generations for the challenges they will face.

As professionals with a profound, daily relationship with their students, teachers have an extraordinary understanding of their needs, interests, and potential. Teachers who join **CALE** find support in each other to leverage these unique perspectives and assume the role of proper curriculum designers, critical practitioners, and reflective educators.

3. Educating Future-Makers

“The future, after all, is not a province that is far away from me, far beyond me, waiting for me to get there. On the contrary, I am the maker of the future.” – Paulo Freire

CALE utilizes critical pedagogy principles to help teachers adopt approaches that strengthen students' Critical Consciousness. Critical Consciousness is *"the process by which people become aware of the social, economic, and cultural forces that shape their lives and realize their ability to change those conditions"* (Freire, 1975).

Critical Consciousness goes beyond just critical thinking; it helps students develop a deep understanding of their reality and empowers them to take action for positive change.

4. Why Critical Action. Why now.

Educators dedicate themselves to the mission of preparing the youth to succeed in the future. This includes helping them develop a solid base of academic knowledge and build good character. It also includes empowering each student to contribute to tackling the complex social and environmental challenges the future might bring.

CALE has developed a **Critical Action Learning** approach that strengthens students' sense of agency and community and combines theory, action, and reflection to promote social change and justice.

Using this approach, **CALE** teachers have developed lesson plans that engage students in transformative action toward a broad range of socio-environmental issues.



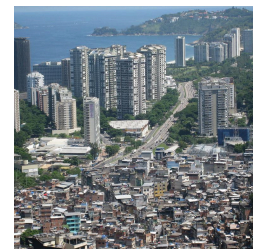
Climate Change



Mental Health



Equity, Diversity
and Inclusion



Economic
Inequality



Media and
Technology



Future of Work



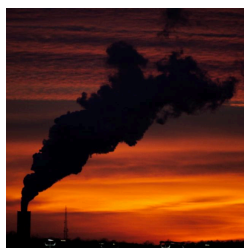
Health



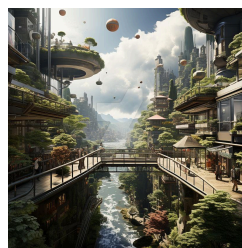
Democracy and
Governance



War and Conflicts



Environment



Future Cities

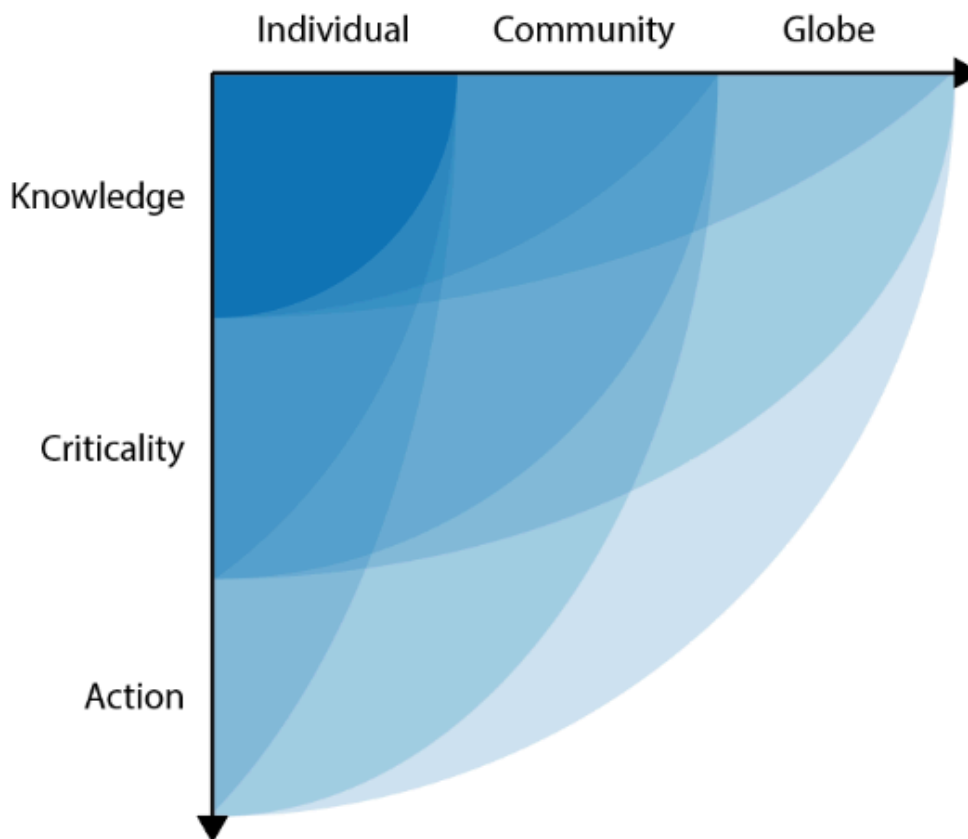


Violence

5. The CALE Curriculum Design Framework

The CALE Curriculum Design Framework is a conceptual tool for helping teachers design activities, lessons, units, and courses that incorporate critical action.

This framework will help you expand your lesson plan design in two dimensions: (1) “deeper” toward critical action and (2) “broader” to include a sense of collaboration and interdependency.



As the illustration above shows, the **CALE Curriculum Design Framework** includes six components divided into two axes.

Vertical Axis—*These are the components that will scaffold the students from the moment they start learning about the issue to the point in which they engage in action to help solve it.*

1. Knowledge: To be able to engage in effective critical action, students need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the issue they are addressing. For us to help them achieve that, we need to go beyond simply lecturing them about the topic. In this component, we will think about how we can help students develop their own capacity to find reliable information and build new knowledge.

2. Criticality: Critical action is about transforming the world for the better. Therefore, after developing a solid understanding of *how things are*, students need space to reflect, make their own value judgements, and propose *how things should be*. In this component, we will help students envision the positive transformation they want to make in the world.

3. Action: Finally, we will help students reflect on what they can actually do to make their vision a reality. Critical action can take many forms, and you will be able to explore some approaches to Critical Action Learning that can be used in different contexts.

Horizontal Axis - *The next components will help you not only ensure that every individual student is engaged, but also that they all work together as a group and integrate their actions with initiatives from outside the classroom.*

4. Individual: In this component, we will think about our students as individuals. How can we create opportunities for each student to explore their particular interests in the issue? How can they use their skills and background to make their unique contributions and find personal meaning and purpose in learning?

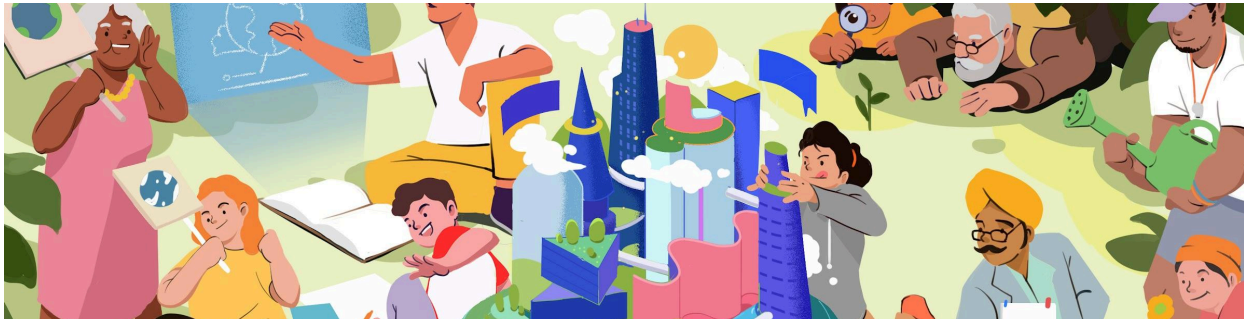
5. Community: Complex social problems often demand collective action. Let's reflect on how our students function as a community. How can they work collaboratively, integrate their individual

contributions and distribute the workload? Also, how will they make collective decisions, solve conflicts, and deal with different opinions?

6. Globe: Finally, let's acknowledge that problems such as climate change, social injustices, and economic inequalities are global, and efforts to find solutions must transcend our classroom walls. So, how can we help students' actions make an impact outside the classroom?

Tip: Did you notice the "wave" pattern in the illustration above? It is meant to suggest that, while our goal is to "advance" our lesson plan design in those two directions, it is ok if sometimes we can't cover all six components. Perhaps you don't have the resources to help students explore initiatives happening outside the classroom, as the *Globe* component suggests... Perhaps you don't have time for a hands-on activity, as in the *Action* component... That's all right! What we want is to provide as many opportunities for students to engage critically with complex, authentic problems as possible, considering the natural constraints of our classroom context.

Looking forward to starting to design? Great! We have developed a Design Guide that will help you seamlessly incorporate the CALE Curriculum Design Framework into your lesson plan. Let's explore it next...



CALE DESIGN GUIDE

Pedagogical Approaches to Critical Action Learning

CALE has formalized a series of approaches to Critical Action Learning. You may focus your lesson plan on one of these approaches or, perhaps, combine two or more of them in a creative and engaging way. Below, we provide a brief description of each of our five approaches. You may find more information about them on the **CALE** website, including: (1) how it implements critical action, (2) the requirements and roles for the teacher, (3) richly described exemplars, and (4) a clear set of design guidelines.



1. Arts-based Critical Action

cale.org/arts-based-critical-action

Arts-based Critical Action supports students' critical inquiries about issues in their daily lives and across cultural or historical contexts. It often includes a written and introspective component (such as an artist's statement) and offers a vehicle for students to communicate abstract or complex ideas, express their identities, and tell their stories in an intellectually and emotionally engaging way.



2. Community Engagement

cale.org/community-engagement

Community Engagement can empower students by allowing them to engage directly with the socio-environmental issues that concern them personally, their families, and the communities in which they reside. Through Community Engagement, young people engage directly with

organizations and members of their community to generate positive transformations.



3. Critical Making - cale.org/critical-making

Critical Making includes drawing, painting, sculpting, cooking, creating music, dancing, puppetry, textiles, wearable, embedded, ubiquitous computing, and much more. It builds on traditional makerspace methods by emphasizing the situated, context-specific, and material selection aspects of the design process.



4. Games for Critical Action

cale.org/critical-action-games

Games for Critical Action can help students develop a critical perspective on complex topics. Games can help students "put themselves in someone else's shoes", by positioning them in different perspectives. Also, by being immersed in critical exploration within a game's setting, students can develop insights about real-world challenges like societal inequality, or climate shifts.



5. Storytelling - cale.org/storytelling

Storytelling has been used to empower and engage students, particularly when implemented in a participatory fashion. This allows students to craft their own stories that connect learning with their own lived experiences. In addition, storytelling can bring forward multiple perspectives and artistic interpretations, allowing the teacher to build on the breadth of ideas in support of an inclusive learning environment.

Critical Action Curriculum Design Template

Use this template to design your lesson plan incorporating the **CALE Curriculum Design Framework**. You may print as many copies as you need, and use additional sheets of paper if you need extra space.

Team Members: _____

School: _____

Step 1. Getting started

Talk amongst your team about your possible curriculum ideas. Brainstorm some responses to the following questions:

1. What is a social or environmental issue that is important to your students and you would like to address in this curriculum design? (see Section 4)

2. How are your students affected by those issues? What would you like to help them understand or achieve in this curriculum?

Step 2. Overview

1. Give your design a creative title, just to get you started:

2. Short description of what you would like to design:

Step 3. Learning Goals

1. What are the most important takeaways for students? What topics, skills or processes would you prioritize?

2. How is this important to your students? How will it help them to solidify their studies and prepare for the future?

Step 4. Strategies and Resources

1. What are some strategies you have considered for this lesson? If you can't think of specific strategies, what are some of the important values or features that need to be present in your design (e.g., collaboration; use of real datasets; creativity, projects, etc)?

2. Can there be any role for parents, families and the local community? What kinds of information, summaries or updates, or even specific roles to play, should you keep in mind as you go through your design?

3. What are some specific resources or activities that you know you will include in this design?

Step 5. Start thinking about the activities

Brainstorm! What are some possible opportunities for critical action? Try to think about several alternative ideas or approaches. Be creative. What will students (and you) enjoy? What will they find fascinating? How will these various approaches help teachers and students make connections to the content and learning goals?

To incorporate the **CALE Curriculum Design Framework** (see section 5), you may use the following guiding questions.

Knowledge: What are some activities that could provide opportunities for students to build their understanding of the issue they are addressing, and advance some ideas?

Criticality: What are some activities that could provide opportunities for students to develop a critical perspective of the problem they are exploring (i.e., discuss what should be transformed to make the situation better)?

Action: What are some activities that could help students implement the actions they envisioned?

Individual: What are some activities that could help students reflect on their potential unique contributions to this issue, and develop a sense of direction in schooling and career?

Community: What are some activities that could help students collaborate, build knowledge, make judgments and decisions, and act together as a classroom or local community?

Globe: What are some activities that could help students connect their individual and collective action with other local, national, and international initiatives?

Step 6. Classroom Plan

Select and plan out which specific activities you will do with students in the classroom. Think about how long the activity will take, how students will work alone or together, what resources you will need, any homework assignments and more.

Activity: _____

Duration: _____

Description: _____

Activity: _____

Duration: _____

Description: _____

Activity: _____

Duration: _____

Description: _____
