

Community Learning and Outreach

Community Learning & Youth University: Brock University

Our Purpose

Our overall goal is to build individual and community capacity and wellbeing by fostering a culture of life-long learning in the Niagara Region.

Our specific goals are to:

- Develop in everyone a sense of themselves as learners
- Encourage the development of personal identity and a sense of community
- Provide all members of our community non-traditional opportunities to learn and try new experiences
- Encourage learning not only as a means to a career but also a pathway to well-being and compassionate citizenship and engagement
- Help build an awareness of, and participation in, the wide variety of community based learning opportunities and resources available in Niagara

Our Philosophy

Our programs and approach are built on the following philosophies:

Personal Identity is fundamental to learning. Learning involves an element of risk and stepping out into the unknown. This requires a level of self-confidence and self-awareness.

Community is an important part of developing personal identity. In community we discover our strengths and interests as well as give to others. As we live together and share experiences community also provides the opportunity to develop an understanding and appreciation of others. Our connection to the global community begins with participation with our local communities.

Learning is a part of our day-to-day experiences. When we think of learning this way it becomes something more accessible and unifying than traditional ideas of education. By experiencing, thinking and talking with others in community we have the opportunity to try new things, share ideas and see our world from other perspectives.

From these philosophies we draw our core beliefs which guide our educational approach:

- We believe that learning should be an active and social process
- We see all people as learners AND teachers
- We root our programs in hands-on learning, dialogue, and collaboration
- We value diversity and difference as necessary for learning and development

Our Work

We engage in research, provide programs and initiatives, and partner with others in five focus areas of interest:

- Priority schools
- Adult and family learning
- Access to post-secondary education
- Social inclusion and cohesion
- Community dialogue and capacity building

Brock Community Learning Programs

Conversation Café

Conversation Cafés are hosted conversations held in a public setting focusing on topics which are open-ended and reflect important issues of our times. Each conversation has a moderator who is responsible for the structure and flow of the discussion and a community guest who gets things started by framing the issue and sharing his/her experience and knowledge on the question at hand.

OneWorld Project

The OneWorld project is an on-going series designed to provoke thought on issues of sustainability and globalization. It is led with a combination of information sharing and discussion.

Community Discovery

Community Discovery are short hands-on learning experiences designed to expose people to new interests, experiences or aspects of our region and build awareness of the wide variety of organizations that offer learning opportunities in Niagara. Each program is designed to foster belonging and build a community of learners.

Family Learning Adventures

Family Learning Adventures provide opportunities for the whole family to share, experience new things and work together. Family Learning is open to moms, dads, grandparents, caregivers and children (8 and older). Family adventures encourage inter-age learning and a culture of curiosity within the family.

Youth University Community Outreach Programs

Community Events

Youth University engages with local youth by participating in a number of community events. Volunteers lead activities at the Water Festival and the Niagara Wine Festival each year.

[Click here for volunteer opportunities \(link to Volunteer Opportunities page\)](#)

Priority Neighborhood Access Initiative

The Priority Neighborhood Access Initiative is a long term engagement commitment to schools in priority neighbourhoods. This program involves mentoring, tutoring and after school programming and is designed to follow youth from grade 5 into high school. Our focus is research based and directed toward building self-esteem, relationship and communication skills, critical thinking, a sense of belonging and an enjoyment of learning. We help youth see how their passions and interests connect to careers, civic engagement and educational pathways, and help parents and youth learn about preparation for PSE from an early age. We will also help support literacy and numeracy skills for those in need of development. This program is currently being run at Fort Erie Public School, with a new program beginning in 2011 in Niagara Falls, and an abridged version for the DSBN Academy.

Your Future Program

Research has identified that a major motivational barrier to PSE is that youth have trouble connecting their interests and skills with career possibilities and educational pathways. In this short 100 minute program youth engage with quick hands-on activities that represent different interests, causes and careers and then hear from Brock students from diverse backgrounds who speak about their career path, causes and

educational choices. This program will target youth in grades 6-8. We are attentive to transportation barriers by providing both in-school and at Brock options

In School Technology Field Trips

This program will bring a technology-based field trip to priority schools that are limited in their access to field trips due to barriers such as funding or transportation. It also focuses on providing access to technology that priority schools may not be able to afford. The in-school "field trip" will be led by Brock University student volunteers and will be available as a half day adventure.

Teen Esteem

Youth University supports the Business Education Council's unique, school-based program, called 'Teen Esteem'. The Teen Esteem program offers a series of school-based lunch sessions to teens in grades 6-8 at a time when their self-esteem is most vulnerable. Each lunch session is led by volunteers from the community who have experiences to share about their own career and life choices. The 4 sessions culminate with an event to be held at Brock University where session leaders and other volunteers will present hands-on career-based activities to the participants and answer questions about education and career possibilities.

Youth University Scholarship Fund

To support access to post-secondary education, Youth University has created a \$300 entrance bursary to be awarded annually to a first-year Brock University student who has participated in Youth University programs and who qualifies to receive financial assistance.