

On Community Partners

In *Remix Podcast Episode 2*, Karen talks with [Ron Berger](#), Senior Advisor, Teaching & Learning for [EL Education](#), and [Margarida Celestino](#), a freshman at Colgate University and alumnus of Casco Bay High School (an EL school). Their conversations pushes more deeply on themes from the Science of Learning and Development (SoLD) Alliance Strategy session in which all three were panelists - [Design Principles for Schools: Putting SoLD into Action](#) - school culture, social emotional learning and the role of community partners and engagement in the community.



Karen: How does the EL Education approach in your school overlap with the community, places, and spaces where you might've spent your time when you weren't in school? Margarida, in our last conversation Ron mentioned that you had a long relationship with a Boys & Girls Club. How do those kinds of places fit into this conversation?



Margarida: I actually joined the Boys & Girls Club before going into high school. I was able to not just get help for the middle school Margarida, but they helped me grow as the high school Margarida. I remember my freshman year, they held a mini-class that was already talking about college essays. And I know that as a freshmen not a lot of people are really thinking about college, but I remember that that class is what really motivated me to think more about college, look at my options, and start thinking of life after high school.

The Boys & Girls Club really helps a lot of immigrant kids understand and learn more about scholarships, and I was able to college visits through the Boys & Girls Club. I did college visits with my school, but through the Boys & Girls Club, I was able to expand my options and I was able to visit even more colleges and learn more about colleges that were even outside of state that I wouldn't be able to learn within the school.

Through the library, I was able to join clubs that were outside of school. And I made connections with people that were not necessarily my guidance counselor or my teacher within the classroom. I made connections with people that helped me with my essays that were meant for school, but they were not my teachers. They were not my tutors. They were just at the library. I actually made a really good connection with one of the teen library staff members who helped me be part of the teen council at the library and through that I was able to improve on my leadership skills outside of school, which is something that I know a lot of students did not get opportunities to do.

Karen: Ron, as you're looking at how EL Education sort of plays out across the country, what are you seeing as other variations on the roles of, and the connections to these other kinds of places that are really set up for learning and development to happen? How do they fit into the mix? It's kind of the equivalent of, we're not just talking about teachers, we're talking about all adults. We're not just talking about those school as a focus place of learning, we're talking about these other institutions – libraries, youth organizations, rec centers, sports leagues, and museums. How do they fit in?



Ron: I love your vision, Karen, because the vision that you bring forward is that we have to be sort of a great web of support for kids in school and out of school, because we don't know which are those things that will be most instrumental in a student's life. I know for Margarida school was super important, but the Boys & Girls Club was as well.

And for some students outside organizations become one of the most important things in their lives. A big shift for us at EL is to stop seeing the teachers and the faculty of the school as the only experts that can help a student grow. And so we think of the teachers as the coaches, as the coordinators of student growth, but for every expedition, we bring students out to find experts in the community and we bring experts from the community into the school.



Karen: What you all have described, the kind of things that you want schools to take time for are often the kind of things that happen in summer for some kids, not for all kids, more for affluent kids than for kids from lower income families and communities. So, what should we do to help people understand that the learning, these kinds of learning experiences that you're talking about, we do sort of make time for them, but we actually make time for them when schools close.

There are so many phrases in education about expanded learning and extended learning and extended day and what you talked about, this pressure of time - how do we really think about time differently as we're looking at the day and the year to make sure that schools really have this time to blend with community in a different way?

Ron: I do feel, Karen, that for equity reasons, we have to build some of that time into the school day for students to make those connections. We need to make sure school is a place that also makes community connections for kids that they can pursue later - that helps them get internships, helps them get jobs, helps them know who else in the community they can connect with, help connect them with the Boys & Girls Clubs and the libraries and the youth organizations. Because if we truly have this new charge in America, that every kid should have the option of post-secondary success, we need to create time in school to make sure every kid can see all those opportunities for community support.

