

# grassroots community tours development guide



**Chicago Grassroots Curriculum**  
[grassrootscurriculum.org](http://grassrootscurriculum.org)

# Mission Statement

The Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce (CGCT) is working to revolutionize the traditional educational model of classroom learning by infusing the curriculum with local and relevant content from students' lives-- through their families, cultures, histories, communities, and experiences. As a local clearinghouse, the CGCT seeks to bring students, parents, educators, and elders to the table to compile, publish, and advocate for these culturally relevant materials in our schools (grades K-16). Fueled by community-crafted curriculum, and with an emphasis on local struggles, students engage in critical analysis and action, the arts, community building, and youth-led change in Chicago.

## Acknowledgements

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# Grassroots Community Tour Vision, Purpose, and Uses

## **Vision of Grassroots Community Tour (GCT)**

Students everywhere will design relevant community tours that uncover people's historical events in their surrounding area as well as crucial sites of present-day importance to youth. Students will become hosts of their local tours by welcoming adults and other youth to their community, educating participants, and raising awareness around lesser-known historical struggles / locations and present-day locations of youth significance. Imagine every community in the city documented by a Grassroots Community Tour both in virtual format and as a published tour guide co-designed and produced by students across the city. Imagine these tours producing tangible curricular contributions, breaking down historic barriers of segregation, building peaceful bonds between and amongst neighbors, and educating school staff about the local community through the eyes of our younger residents. This is the vision of Grassroots Community Tours.

## **Overall Purpose of GCT**

One of the main visions of the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce is to have classrooms focus on the struggles and stories found in local community history. We think teachers and students should study the neighborhoods in Chicago in order to better understand and connect with the community around them. Most teachers do not live in the neighborhoods where they teach and so they may not understand the history of that community as well as student/family realities. By truly understanding the character and the stories of the neighborhood, teachers and students will foster stronger connections. What better way to learn about neighborhoods than to walk through them and discover the history that lies under the surface?

## **Specific Potential Uses of GCT**

- ◎ Students produce a printed tour guide (4 to 8 pages) that documents lesser-known community struggles for justice and current community realities, issues, and spaces through the eyes of young people. Students incorporate research, photography, mapping, and other tools into the guide.
- ◎ Students produce an online virtual tour page (hosted by CGCT and any other interested websites) that presents the tour guide, along with any other information using multi-media sources such as digital voice recordings (e.g., Podcasts), video footage (e.g., YouTube), photographic journalism (e.g., Flickr), google maps, and anything else to bring the virtual tour alive. NOTE: Support is provided on the technical side of things.
- ◎ Students from the local area, preferably but limited to tour designers, become "tour hosts" for school staff, family, community members, and/or youth from the local area or other parts of the city. A consistent tour schedule is prepared with tours ideally offered during warmer months – and in the beginning of the school year for staff.
- ◎ Generated materials from these tours can enter appropriate courses at the local school(s) for further student analysis and contributions. In essence, students are contributing to the creation of relevant local curriculum to be studied by their peers.
- ◎ Student-generated research and materials will be highly prioritized for future CGCT publications. With appropriate permissions, student work enters the printed world and can be viewed, read, and learned by thousands of others.

# Project Introduction:

## Major Research Components of a GCT

There are two major research components of a Grassroots Community Tour:

1. **Historical Struggles:** Students identify, research, and document 4 to 6 important grassroots historical events for justice in the area surrounding the school (or identified community) - with specific location points, people involved, issues at hand, results, and impact of the event or struggle to be documented.
2. **Current Realities:** Students identify 4 to 6 current locations of youth culture and/or significance. This may include sites where critical issues related to youth occur, locations where youth congregate or find important, and/or key spaces youth want to feature on the tour.

## Critical Skills

During Tour Development: Skills include local research, surveying, prioritization, historical analysis, determining fact/opinion, interviewing, outlining, writing, editing, photography, videography, mapping, graphic design, web design, and other digital practices. Rich opportunities for mathematical applications, problem solving and reasoning also exist (e.g., geometry, area, distance).

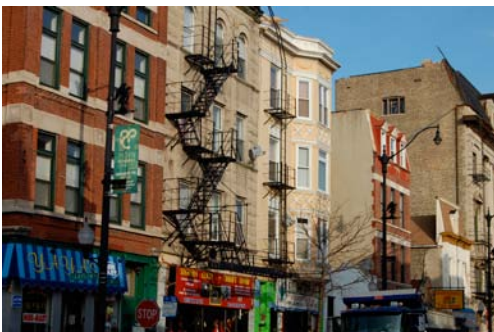
During Tour Hosting: Skills include effective communication, local geographic navigation, effective teaching and information presentation.

## Essential Questions:

1. What events/issues have affected/are affecting the community - but are lesser or unknown to most current residents?
2. What actions did the community take (or is taking) to deal with these issues?
3. What are the popular and lesser known locations for youth to congregate in the community?

## End Product Goals:

1. Tour Guide pamphlet with historic information about particular sites on your community tour
2. Webpage at CGCT's site featuring the information from your tour as well as other helpful critical web links, photography, and videos. The web page should help make the tour come alive for those who have not had the opportunity to take your tour in person.



# Initial Project Steps, Roles and Responsibilities:

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## **Five Steps to Get Started** (these are meant to provide a logical flow - not a mandate):

1. Initially **determine** who will take on the key roles. Some roles need multiple people – while other roles may not occur due to equipment needs or other reasons.
2. **Conduct** an all-group brainstorm of potential historical events and current youth issues / locations of significance in the community. Keep these notes and use them as a starting point for your research – making sure the researchers get these notes.
3. **Design** and conduct a survey and interview questions to gain data on both components of the tour. Students should survey local elders, family members, and/or longtime residents to identify potential historical events where people have fought for their rights, for equality, and/or for community upliftment.
4. **Identify** other sources of information that can shed light on local historical struggles. Try the local library, university libraries, local newspapers (e.g., *Chicago Defender*, *The Reader*, *North Lawndale Community News*, *Extra*, *La Raza*, etc.), former publications (e.g., *Chicago Crusader*), community centers, religious institutions, internet searches (e.g., Chicago Area Metro History Fair), documentaries, YouTube videos, the Chicago Historical Society, Vivian Harsh Research Collection at the Woodson Regional Library, the Harold Washington Library's Municipal Reference Collection (5th floor), and CGCT's *Urban Renewal or Urban Removal?* text.
5. **Recap** the initial brainstorm, surveys, interviews, and general research. Through discussions that help students prioritize, pinpoint, and defend their choices while being open to others, come to a conclusion on the 4 to 6 historical struggles and 4 to 6 current youth issues / locations of significance that the tour will document. Then move forward with confirming people for the key roles.

## **Key Roles** (specific responsibilities for each are listed on the following pages):

Grassroots Historical Events Researcher (3 to 5 people)

Current Youth Spots and Issue Researcher (2 to 3 people)

Tour Mapper / Organizer (1 to 2 people)

Photo Journalist (1 person)

Videographer (1 person)

Blogger / Web Designer (1-2 people)

Compiling an Extended Resource Guide (1-2 people)



# Grassroots Historic Event Researcher (3-5 people)

## Your work includes

1. Once the entire class (or designated group) has brainstormed a list of historic events focused around community struggles for justice, confirm that these events connect to issues of justice – not just interesting or trivial tid-bits of knowledge such as the Gothic architecture of a building. Review the issues below for a closer look (other issues may connect as well):

- civil rights struggles
- criminalization
- deportations / separation of families
- education issues / schools
- elderly care / rights
- employment rights / labor struggles
- environmental pollution / racism
- food deserts / poor food quality
- foreclosure crisis
- gang peace treaties / solutions
- health issues / crises
- housing rights / displacement / homelessness
- immigration rights / struggles
- LGBTQ rights / services
- park district programs / opportunities
- police misconduct / brutality
- political rights / voice for marginalized people
- poverty (struggles against)
- racial segregation (struggles against)
- women's rights / support services
- youth rights / programs / services



2. For the 4 to 6 events/people/locations selected, conduct enough research from credible sources to write an essential two to three paragraph summary. The summary should highlight the event, people involved, location, and issue at hand. Essential questions include: *What happened at this place? Describe the main issue or problem and people involved? What perspectives did people take? Why is this event important to the community? What current situations or realities connect to this history?*

3. One of the most important research methods for this project is **interviewing** – especially since many grassroots community histories have not been written. Identify people who have lived in and/or been active in the community for a long time. Ask them if they are willing to sit down for an interview. Follow these interviewing tips:

Agree on a specific date, time, and location that allows for good discussion and audio recording (not too loud). Prepare open-ended questions ahead of time. If possible, bring two people on the interview: one person can ask questions and the other can take good notes. Bring an audio recording device such as a phone, digital recorder, I-Pad, tape recorder, or computer to capture everything. If possible, have a videographer shoot some short clips of video.

Here's an example of how a student went about this process of interviewing a local figure for the Grassroots Community Tour of Uptown (see <http://www.grassrootscurriculum.org/index.php/curriculum/grassrootscommunitytours>)

◎ We knew about an event known as Tent City, where hundreds of people camped out on a vacant lot to protest against the lack of affordable housing in the community.

◎ We found *Chicago Tribune* articles and diary entries about the experience.

◎ Then we interviewed former Alderman Helen Shiller to get a firsthand perspective of what happened.

◎ We took our own video of what the Tent City site currently looks like so people can see that affordable housing was eventually built.

◎ By compiling the different stories about the event, we were able to get a more accurate account of this moment in history that many Uptown residents were not aware of.



4. Begin writing your grassroots historical event summary by following the essential questions listed above – or your course's own writing guide. Keep in mind that your summary will be published in the tour guide and online. We strongly encourage peer editing and review for more developed written products. We also encourage you to share your edited piece with community members – possibly the person(s) you interviewed.

## Current Youth Spots & Issues Researcher (2-3 people)

If your group already includes youth from the focal community, please skip to step 2.

1. Find a group of youth in the community, such as an after school program, a school classroom, or a local youth club. Ask the facilitator or group leader if they're willing to collaborate with your team to design this aspect of the tour. This can simply be a quick interview (30 minutes to an hour) or a more detailed partnership where the youth help with all steps (below).

2. Engage in the following questions and record responses:

What locations (specific spaces) do youth value in the community and why?  
In other words, where do youth hang out other than their own homes?  
What is the draw to this location / place?  
What issues, problems, challenges currently affect youth in this community?  
What places / locations can be connected to these issues?  
What are some of the root causes of the issues / problems?

3. Pinpoint locations in the community that represent youth focal points – as related to the places youth value / utilize and places where critical issues or problems occur? Write a short summary on the significance of each location.



# Tour Mapper / Organizer (1-2)

Your work includes three key components:

1. Identify good community maps that can be used to illustrate the boundaries of the community, as well as show the locations of historic events, landmarks, resources, and assets.

- A. Start by finding out the borders or boundaries of your community.
- B. Find out what maps already exist and see if your group could or should use them for the tour.



2. Once the historic locations are identified, organize the tour so that the route makes sense, the description of each site is clear, and the flow of the tour enhances the audience's understanding of the stories covered.

- A. Learn about the information from the historic event researchers.
- B. Decide what sites would be the most essential to understanding the grassroots event.
- C. Create a map and plot out a route that makes sense.
- D. Organize the information on each site. Bring together the visuals and the history to create a packet for tour-takers to follow along.
- E. If possible, take the tour with a group of friends to test it out.

3. Add sites of historical significance to your map that have not been highlighted before.

- A. Make a digital copy of the map by finding it online or scanning a physical copy.
- B. Add sites of grassroots history and action to the map.



C. Design the map so that the audience can clearly see where these events took place in the community. Make this map available online and in print.

D. Consider creating a second map that shows demographics of the area, assets, and other resources in addition to the tour sites. This will help provide a deeper context for the audience.



# Photo Journalist (1 person) & Videographer (1 person)

1. Learn about the community by finding out what sites the event researchers are focusing on and what visuals best define the community.
2. Figure out what will best highlight the character of the community.
3. Identify subjects and ways of shooting them to reflect the community. Make sure to capture the dignity and strength of the community, not just hardship.

For photographers:

- ☉ Start by shooting the historic sites
- ☉ Try to include people in the shots so we can see how people in the community interact with the site
- ☉ Find older pictures of the community so you can take good comparison shots



For videographers:

- ☉ Take footage that will help people get a feel for the sites without being there
- ☉ Walk through the sites so the audience feels like they are on the tour
- ☉ Consider filming somebody giving the tour

4. Take lots of pictures/shoot footage and keep good notes on each for later reference.

5. Digitize these photos and organize them into clearly marked folders.
6. When the tour organizers start to put together the site information, go through the pictures and find the best ones.
7. For photographers: Provide captions / short blurbs for each photograph selected. For videographers: If possible, add narration to the videos for the audience. Think about using audio clips from interviews focusing on that particular site.

# Blogger / Web Designer (1 to 2 people)

1. Learn how to utilize a blog (e.g. blogspot) to create an engaging portfolio that can be used as a helpful resource for the community tour. CGCT will help provide technical assistance for this work. Or, we will do the website technical work based on a vision (mock-up) that you design.
2. Keep a blog on documenting the process of learning about your community, doing research, and organizing the tour.
3. Talk to your classmates and find out what lessons they have learned and problems they have run into along the way. Reflect on the experience in the blog so the audience can learn about how they could go about creating a grassroots history tour of their own.
4. Once the tour is ready to be organized, create a page for each site on the tour and add photos and videos to enhance the portfolio. Ask others to go through the portfolio as a way of finding out if it flows well and really engages the audience.

## Compiling an Extended Resource Guide (1 to 2 people)



1. Document every source utilized to develop the tour.
2. List additional sources including books, publications, videos, music lyrics, people.
3. List key organizations (past and present) that have taken on issues of injustice in the community.
4. Compile all of these sources into a single file/document for easy access by students, educators, and community groups.
5. Annotate all sources with 1 to 2 sentences or more.

### Steps Once the Tour is Designed:

CGCT will assist with any of these steps. Simply reach out to us for support by email. We look forward to helping your group prepare all final products, provide additional resources, and ensure the Grassroots Community Tour your group created is placed on the website and printed. We may have to fundraise to accomplish these goals, but we're committed to assisting with these efforts. Here's some steps to work on from this point:

1. Use Microsoft Publisher or another simple graphic program to design a 4 to 8 page tour guide. CGCT can provide a template if requested.
2. Organize all work into digital files and folders so they can be preserved, improved, uploaded, and shared with the world. Present these files to CGCT for support and to share on the website in our Grassroots Community Tours section.
3. Present the edited tour to your school or group's administration in order to gain approval for your tour becoming a mainstay activity in the school or group - meaning every year the tour is hosted, added to, and enjoyed by more people in the school community.
4. Start hosting your Grassroots Community Tour, help another youth group kick off their tour, attend another communities' tour, and share community knowledge across Chicago!



# Curriculum from the Grassroots... Available Now!

*“Urban Renewal or Urban Removal? A Grassroots Look at Chicago’s Land Grabs and the Struggle for Home and Community”* provides:

- ⦿ Over 250 pages of powerful text covering 240 years of Chicago history
- ⦿ Over 120 visuals including original illustrations and photography
- ⦿ Over 50 contributors from Chicago’s communities

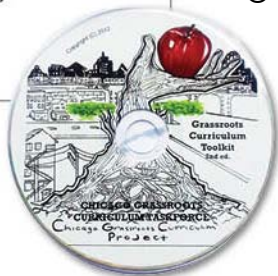


The accompanying *Student Learning and Action Journal* includes 50 classroom-ready activities in Literacy, Social Studies, Math, Science, Media Arts, Games, and Assessments. Also includes 3 major Project guides.



The Grassroots Curriculum Toolkit, ed. 2 gives you over 100 very practical documents including:

- ⦿ 7 step unit development process that involves your students
- ⦿ Curriculum maps for annual, unit and lesson planning
- ⦿ Content project and assessment ideas
- ⦿ Culturally relevant pedagogical support
- ⦿ Skills-based learning support and much more!



Great for pre-service teachers and current educators and community groups!



Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce Resource Center

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call 773.275.2428

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