

Participatory Systems Change for Equity

Valdez, A., Cerna, R., & Hashmi, S. (2023). *Participatory systems change for equity: An inquiry guide for child-, youth-, and family-serving agencies*. California Center for School Climate & Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. WestEd.



Working Definition



Participatory Systems Change:
*An approach to systems change
that centers community wisdom
and collective action to dismantle
oppressive systems and generate
conditions for equity,
opportunity, and well-being.*

Valdez, A., Cerna, R., & Hashmi, S. (2023).

Guiding Principles



- Share power and center self-determination
- Elevate community strengths, and attend to place
- Build individual and collective capacity, and recognize interdependence
- Promote culturally responsive and sustaining change
- Prioritize transparency and accessibility
- Illuminate oppression and take liberatory action

Valdez, A., Cerna, R., & Hashmi, S. (2023).

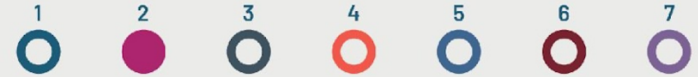
The Elements

1. Connect in Community
2. See the System and Center Community Experiences
3. Dream a Vision for the Future
4. Decide Priorities and Goals
5. Generate Change Approaches
6. Align to Hold Change
7. Learn Together and Grow Change



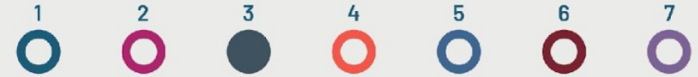
Element 1: Connect in Community

Meaningful, lasting change happens within community and is carried by trust. Attend to building community and growing relational trust throughout the course of the change process, including when new members of the community are introduced into the work. This involves creating opportunities for interpersonal connections, designing shared spaces that center belonging and that invite people to bring their full selves to the work, practicing active listening, and taking action that is responsive to community interests.



Element 2: See the System, and Center Community Experiences

Learn together with young people, families, and community partners about past and present community experiences. This involves exploring the history and impact of systemic oppression within a community, how systems have been designed and then experienced over time and by different groups, and how these systems are experienced by community members today at the individual, interpersonal, and systemic levels. This element also involves learning together about a community's local assets, needs, and opportunities, including historical knowledge, community expertise, and local organizations, partnerships, and resources.



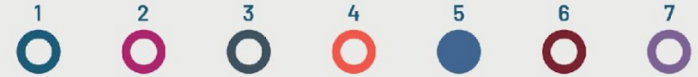
Element 3: Dream a Vision for the Future

Collaborate with young people, families, community partners, and system leaders to build a vision for the future that is based on a shared understanding of the system, both past and present, and on an understanding of community experiences, strengths, needs, opportunities, and motivations. This vision is the collective dream that a community has for itself, its young people, and its families.



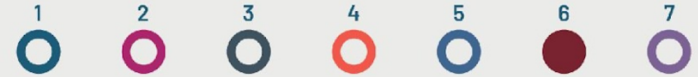
Element 4: Decide Priorities and Goals

Work together to determine priorities and goals that align with the community-defined vision and that are rooted in an understanding of the system and the community's experiences and aspirations. Priorities will help guide future investments, actions, and services, and goals will inform how the impact of systems-change efforts is measured.



Element 5: Generate Change Approaches

Work collectively to generate ideas for how to move from the current state of the system to the community-defined vision. This involves brainstorming and designing actions, services, and programs that interrupt inequitable system conditions and create opportunities for young people, families, and communities to thrive.



Element 6: Align Policies, Practices, and Resources to Hold Change

Change efforts are more likely to be effective and sustained when they operate within an aligned and coherent system. Work together with young people, families, and community partners to identify opportunities for alignment and coherence across policies, funding, communications, capacity building, data use, and goals. Practice participatory policymaking and participatory budgeting to support the implementation and sustainability of community-generated change strategies.



Element 7: Learn Together and Grow Change

Implement routines that provide opportunities for young people, families, community partners, and system leaders to learn together about what is working and what is not as change ideas are carried out. Rooted in principles of continuous improvement, this involves cocreating meaningful and practical measures of change and working together to iterate and scale change approaches over time.