The ELEVATE Framework

A framework for Christian-based community development work in schools

Connect ... Build ... Empower

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The ELEVATE Framework

Scripture Union's ELEVATE is a framework for Christian-based community development work in schools. It emphasises the importance of relationships, community development, teamwork and partnerships. The framework is inspired by the way Jesus engaged with his community and other well-tried strategic principles.

ELEVATE recognises that people are at different places and stages in their life. Driven by the desire to see them move to a deeper understanding of themselves, their community and their world, we seek to understand the different relational dynamics that are at play when we engage together.

ELEVATE is a framework which guides the development of unique program strategies designed to open up relational spaces and dynamics that will help people to understand their emotional, social and spiritual journey.

Through the work of ELEVATE, children and young people develop stronger community connections, build positive values and resiliency and are empowered to transform their world.

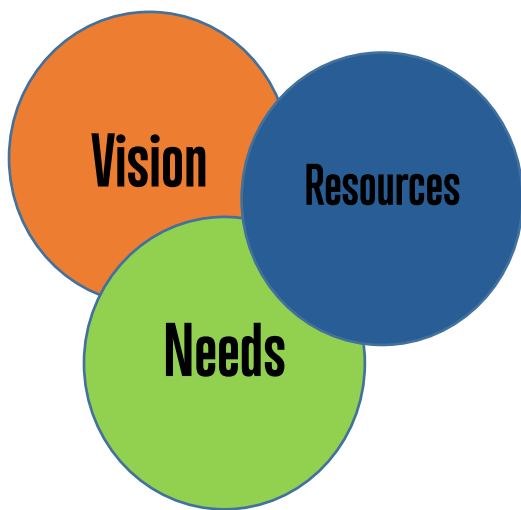There are 4 fundamental elements that make up the ELEVATE Framework

- Understanding and respecting different relational spaces
- The change potential of Asset-based Community Development
- The centrality of trustworthy relationships, teamwork and community
- Learning through fun

With these 4 elements working together, both volunteers and young people undergo an inner transformation, growing in confidence, empathy, generosity, and becoming more resourceful and resilient. Their lives can become a dynamic expression for good in the world!
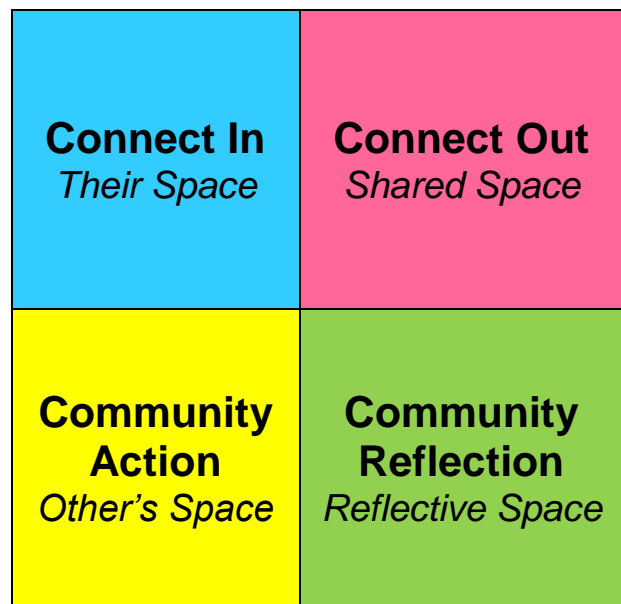
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The key elements of the Elevate Framework

Asset-Based Community Development

Vision

Resources

Needs

Relational Spaces

Connect In *Their Space*	**Connect Out** *Shared Space*
Community Action *Other's Space*	**Community Reflection** *Reflective Space*

Empowering a Team

Having Fun

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The power of Intentionality and Reflection
(Asset-Based Community Development)

The ELEVATE Framework is a reflective, purposeful and strategic process to identify what programs and actions might helpfully engage with the various relational spaces.

Three intersecting questions that facilitate this process are:

1. What is the **Vision** for the community's wellbeing?
2. What are the presenting **Needs** within the community?
3. What **Resources** are available to help respond to the needs and realise the vision?
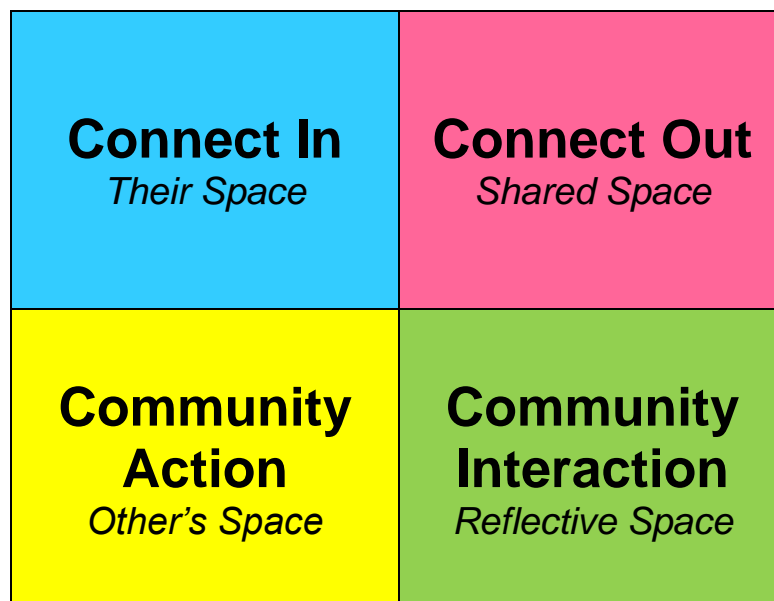
Engaging these questions in dialogue with community leaders and prospective volunteers is at the heart of asset-based community development, and can lead to a powerful collaboration and the development of creative and targeted responses.
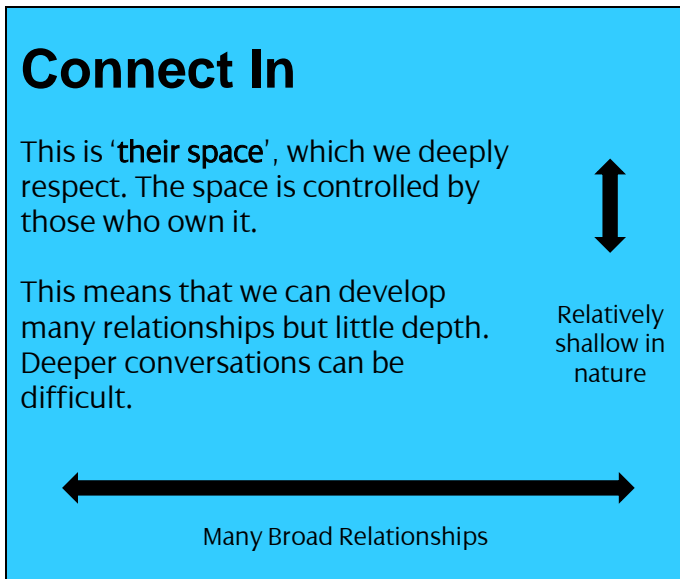
The ELEVATE Relational Spaces

Schools and other community settings are invariably complex, with many dynamics and stakeholders. The ELEVATE Framework recognises, utilises and even creates fresh dynamics for the benefit of the people and communities we work with.

ELEVATE is based on 4 key ways to engage people. We call these 'relational spaces', named *Connect In, Connect Out, Community Action,* and *Community Interaction.*

Connect In *Their Space*	**Connect Out** *Shared Space*
Community Action *Other's Space*	**Community Interaction** *Reflective Space*

The first space is **Connect In** (their space)

Connect In

This is '**their space**', which we deeply respect. The space is controlled by those who own it.

This means that we can develop many relationships but little depth. Deeper conversations can be difficult.

Relatively shallow in nature
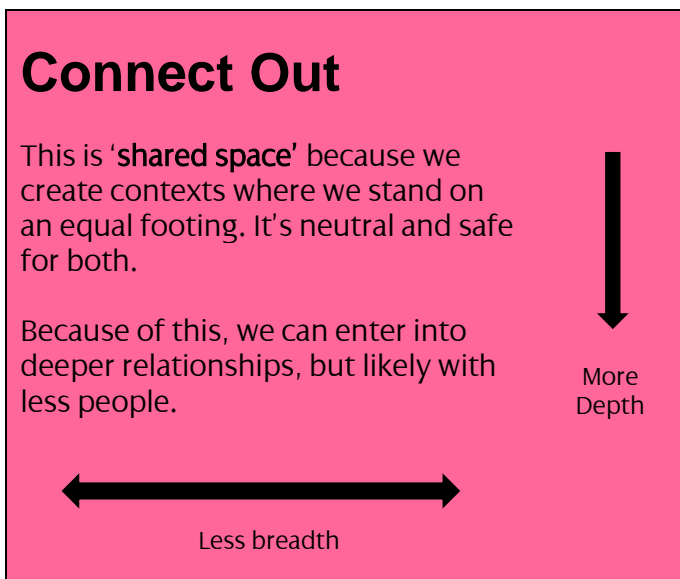
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Many Broad Relationships

Recognising that people are most comfortable in familiar spaces, **Connect In** allows for many relationships to be formed through fun, engaging and challenging activities. However, the breadth of relationships limits the depth that can be achieved.

Connecting In allows us to work toward establishing trusting relationships between young people, school staff and ELEVATE team members, as well as both modelling and developing healthy values and relationships.

Examples of Connect In activities include Breakfast programs, lunchtime games, mentoring programs, leadership development, gardening programs, etc.

The second space is **Connect Out** (shared space)

Connect Out

This is '**shared space'** because we create contexts where we stand on an equal footing. It's neutral and safe for both.

Because of this, we can enter into deeper relationships, but likely with less people.

More Depth

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Less breadth

Connecting Out creates a new and deeper dynamic in relationships, increasing the likelihood of transformational personal discoveries. In a shared, neutral space, people feel freer, more relaxed and relationships develop more naturally.
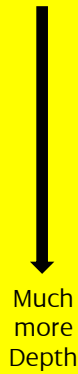
In this way young people become engaged in deeper community. However, Connecting Out often means working with fewer people in order to go on a deeper journey.

Examples of Connect out activities include camps, day trips (to the footy, city, etc.), after-school clubs, connecting with families, etc.

The third space is **Community Action** (other's space)

Community Action

This is where we invite people to join us in 'other's space'. It is providing the opportunity for people to experience and engage in acts of compassion and make a difference in their world.

Much more Depth

Less breadth again

When people are encouraged to imagine, create and engage in acts of compassion, something stirs deeply in them, like a call to a deeper purpose in life. Accompanied by reflection, the experience can be powerful and life changing for young people.

Ideally, community action is undertaken in a group context, where relationships are deepened through shared experience.

Community Action projects could include: Backyard Blitzes, making food for needy, working bees, supporting a cause through fundraising or advocating for change, international aid trips, joining an SU holiday program or student leadership on an ELEVATE team.

The fourth space is **Community Reflection** (reflective space)

Community Reflection

This '**reflective space**' helps us keep the intentionality of inviting people to reflect on their experiences and undertake healthy, holistic, lifelong growth.

Much deeper

Anyone who will take the journey

We believe that an unreflected experience is a wasted experience - a missed opportunity to learn and grow. Many young people don't take time out to regularly reflect on their own or with others. For this reason we provide opportunities for them to reflect on their experiences and explore life skills, values and spirituality within a supportive environment.

In all the other relational spaces, and especially in this space, the ELEVATE Framework seeks to encourage children and young people towards holistic and healthy space where relationships with self, others, their community and their environment are on a healthy journey.

Community Reflection is facilitated by programs and processes such as small groups, one-on-one mentoring, encouragement and affirmation, shared mealtimes, storytelling, conversations around the campfire, retreats, church, youth group or other faith-inspired activities and other action-reflection experiences.

The Importance of Team!

A single individual, however remarkable, cannot connect with everyone in a student cohort, or even a class, let alone build relationship with an entire school community! Also, one individual's interests and personality are not going to match a range of others. As a volunteer organisation, SU build and empower teams of people to impact communities with good news. So **TEAM** is key!

From the get-go, an ELEVATE person will be looking for and inviting other 'people of peace' into partnership with them in a school. Sharing the planning and visioning, delegating effectively and harnessing the interests and skills of diverse others is all part of the ELEVATE DNA.

Building connections to local communities, churches and businesses will strengthen the benefits to a school and improve the program's sustainability and local relevance.

The Importance of Fun!

The ELEVATE framework is intentional and strategic. It also invites us to explore meeting needs in ways that are joyful, enjoyable, playful, colourful, mischievous… **FUN**! People need fun when interacting, connecting, and sharing life with one another.

People experiencing struggle, hunger, isolation or boredom are blessed by laughter and delight. Volunteers gain energy and feel the task is worthwhile when they receive a smile or giggle for their efforts! If a program or plan is worthy but a bit serious, we encourage people to take the time to plan for and encourage enjoyment and fun throughout.

Conversely, if a person's strength is fun, it is important that they link their creativity to the broader purpose of the program for the best impact.

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For more information or to
ELEVATE your Community or School
Get in contact!

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