



National Network of ABCDE Learning Sites

(ABCDE) – What is it All About?

Asset Based Community Driven Efforts (ABCDE) is a global philosophy and practice related to asset focussed, place based and community driven initiatives. While practiced intuitively by many community builders for a long period, it was the work of John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann over a 40-year period and their creation of the ABCD Institute at Northwestern University, Chicago, USA in 1995 that gave it its name and prominence. Today, a wide diversity of impressive ABCDE initiatives can be found across the world.

ABCDE is not a recipe, but a place based framework that incorporates such principles as:

- Meaningful and lasting community change always originates from within. The wisdom of the community always exceeds the knowledge of the community.
- Building and nourishing relationships is the fundamental action in community building.
- Communities have never been built by dwelling on their deficiencies, needs and problems. Communities respond creatively when the focus is on resources, capacities, strengths, aspirations and opportunities.
- The critical developmental process involves highlighting, mapping, connecting and celebrating the diverse range of community assets; and harnessing these connected assets for action that creates and strengthens caring and inclusive communities.
- The strength of the community is directly proportional to the level that the diversity of its residents' desire, and are able to contribute their abilities and assets to the well-being of their community. Every single person has capacities, abilities, gifts and ideas, and living a good life depends on whether those capacities can be used, abilities expressed, gifts given and ideas shared.
- In every community, something works. Instead of asking "what's wrong, and how to fix it," ask "what's worked and how do we get more of it?" It generates energy and creativity.
- Community residents must be valued as co-producers and citizens, rather than being viewed as clients, consumers and customers. They act responsibly when they care about and support what they create.
- Creating positive change begins simply with the act of conversation.
- Having fun must be a high priority in all community-building efforts.
- The central factor in sustainable change is local leadership and its continuous development and renewal.
- The starting point for change is always mindset and a positive attitude.

To understand ABCDE further, watch Cormac Russell, a world renowned proponent of ABCDE:

<https://youtu.be/a5xR4QB1ADw>

'Go to the people. Live among them. Learn from them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build on what they have. But of the best leaders when their task is done, the people will remark – "We have it done it ourselves"'

(Lao Tzu, 530 BC, China)

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