



Indicators of Community Embeddedness

Co-Created by the [Rootwork Cohort](#)

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What do we know about the qualities of authentic work in art education by/with/for our communities?

- We hold by/with/for as sacred and central.
- This is radical realness.
- This is working at the speed of trust. (Credit to adrienne maree brown)



What is the work of embedded community practice?

- We emphasize the right to healing.
- We move within a collaborative decision-making structure that is not paternalistic.
- It is the work of curiosity.
- It is the work of blurring the lines between who is a participant and who is a provider. This language, these terms become interchangeable and irrelevant. (We see that these terms are bound in saviorism and distance.)
- Everything we do is process focused.



What are the indicators of embedded practice?

- Iterative, reflective practice is an indicator. There is no one solution because it is counter-intuitive to this work. This work is about practice. It must be constantly revisited.
- Space holding as an indicator. When we are willing to do the work of undoing trauma, we can show up and hold space for others.



Who is accountable? How so?

- In community, we are accountable to each other.
- We recognize who is there on the daily. We look to see who is there on the outside, and who is not there. This is not about exclusion. We work to know what we don't know, and in this to be inclusive.

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What does it LOOK like?

- It's the people that matter.
- We prioritize people over institutions.
- It looks like centering and valuing relationships.
- It looks like being responsive to our community/ies. We meet each other with what we all need in the moment.
- The role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible! We can come as an undeniable light, resonating at a high frequency. People will find truth— It will set you free or it will burn you up! We are our own leaders. We are role models. We must embody the work.
- We are transparent for transformation to take place for ourselves, for our community/ies, and for others that look to us.



What does it SOUND like?

- We recognize the power of no and we avoid the seduction of yes. So, sometimes this sounds like saying no. We recognize that by saying no we are saying yes to what is most important. We know why we do what we do. This is the ground and this opens us up to the real work.
- This sounds like telling our stories. By telling our stories, we establish our direction and we become a beacon for others. We tell our stories because we know that our stories influence those around us and ripple effects are far-reaching. We tell our stories to identify allies who can champion and talk about our work, too.
- This also sounds like listening.
- What arises from the community is natural and self-evident. It stems from, “Hey! I am a part of the community, and we need this.”
- This also sounds like leading with our voice, pushing through, and speaking truth to power. We seek to help others hear and understand what we’re saying.
- This sounds like humility. We talk about what we don’t know. We are clear about our discomfort.
- We talk about our failures, because we honor that learning from failure brings growth.

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What does it FEEL like?

- We work towards life-giving affirmation and joy.
- We lead with empathy. We feel our full humanity.
- It is about reimagining. It's revolutionary as hell!
- We know that growth comes from discomfort, from getting out of what comforts us.



What does it mean? What are you willing to sacrifice? To give up?

- We give up perfectionism.
- We work with transparency.
- We are clear about what we don't know, and we lean on the expertise of others.
- We involve our community by centering their experiences in our designs. We give up control. (We don't just include community feedback after the fact.)
- In regards to raising our awareness of the characteristics of White Supremacy Culture (WSC), we note how we've absorbed and reflect characteristics of the dominant culture that surrounds us. We work consciously to give up dominant, unquestioned practices. We work to be aware of our power and positionality.
- We look beyond intention to impact. We think through the impact of our actions and our behaviors, personally and system-wide.