

CLASSROOM COMMUNITY BUILDING

Community building activities are started on the first day of school and should continue throughout the year. The goal of these activities is for students to take ownership of the learning environment and move from seeing the room as the “teacher’s classroom” to the “class’s room”. These activities are characterized by students having the opportunity to work with everyone in their class. They may be built around course content as the year progresses, however their primary focus should be students learning about each other.

CONCEPT	NAME	EXPLANATION	STRATEGIES
<p>Creating Norms We know a productive learning environment is a key to student success. These strategies help students take ownership in the environment they create.</p>	<p>“Looks like, sounds like”</p>	<p>Students decide what a classroom environment should look like and sound like. Ideas are shared out and posted in the room. Keeping student thoughts posted throughout the year provides a reminder for teachers and students of what the expectations are for the class. I can also generate a rubric by which teachers can assess student participation in the class by how they support these ideas.</p>	<p>Ask students to think about what they need in a classroom environment to be successful. Use a “think-pair-share” approach for students to discuss ideas with a partner, then share out with the class. Organize student ideas on a poster-size T-chart with one column for “Looks like” and the other for “sounds like”</p>
	<p>“Math Talk”</p>	<p>The teacher provides students with prompts that can be used to facilitate classroom discussions with a positive tone. It is helpful to have these posted in the classroom throughout the year as a reminder to students. They also serve to help students move to higher-order thinking in their discussions. The prompts are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain: “This is my strategy...” 2) Rephrase: “I think _____ is saying...” 3) Agree/Disagree: “I agree/ disagree because...” 4) Extend: “I would like to add...” 5) Connect: “This makes me think about...” or “Another way to think about...” 	<p>These prompts can be used with any classroom activity to provide structure to the discussion. Students will need reminders of this expectation. Teachers can also use these prompts in whole class discussions or when working with small groups of students.</p>

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<p>Getting to Know You It is important to understand as much as possible about students in a classroom. In a community, it is not only the teacher that needs to learn about students, but they also should make an effort to learn about each other.</p>	<p>“Questions Carousel”</p>	<p>The questions can vary in this structure and it extends nicely into a content area strategy. For the purpose of community building, use questions to help students learn about each other. You may want to focus on student interests but you can also concentrate on understanding the students as learners with the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What do you want others to know about you as a math student? 2) What supports do you need when doing math in a group? 3) What do you need from others in order to share your ideas? 4) What do you want others to not say or do? 5) What has helped you be successful in previous math classes? 	<p>Post each of the questions on a piece of chart paper at various locations around the room. You may want to offer students some “think time” before they start adding to the poster. Students may either write their responses directly on the poster or use post-it notes, which would allow the teacher to reuse the posters for multiple periods. An option if students write directly on the posters is to use post-its to allow students to respond to others ideas. All posts should be anonymous. A brief discussion of appropriateness may be necessary depending on the age of the students.</p>
	<p>“Inside-Outside Circle”</p>	<p>Students form two, concentric circles facing each other. Questions are either written on index cards and vary by student-pair or they are posed orally by the teacher. After each student in a pair has a chance to respond to the question, students in either the outside or inside circle rotate by a number of spaces designated by the teacher.</p>	<p>This strategy can also extend to include content area questions and makes a nice review. In building community, questions from the “question carousel” could be used as well as other ideas that allow students to learn more about each other.</p>
	<p>“Corners”</p>	<p>Students move to various corners of the room depending on their point of view. This allows students to identify classmates that share common thoughts, likes/ dislikes, or ideas about a particular topic.</p>	<p>Questions used in this strategy should have multiple responses. Once students are in the corners they should have to opportunity to share specifics about their choice. For example, a question might ask students if they prefer to work individually, with a</p>

			<p>partner, with a small group, or as a whole class. When students move to their corners they justify their responses.</p> <p>“Open-ended” discussions allow this strategy to translate nicely to a content area.</p>
	“Stir the class”	<p>Students stand in groups of 4, with each student in a group having a number (1-4). The groups form a circle around the classroom. The teacher poses a question and student “huddle” to discuss a response. As groups finish, members stand in a line to show the teacher they are ready to share. After responses are shared, the teacher selects one number to move to the next group, “stirring the class” for the next discussion.</p>	<p>This strategy can work in many areas. It works nicely to help students create classroom norms as well. Questions can focus on students as learners, the classroom environment, or a particular content area question.</p>
	“Interview”	<p>Students work in partners to interview each other and share ideas they have learned with the class.</p>	<p>This strategy is most effective if students are required to work with someone that they do not know. The teacher should provide guidance in terms of the types of questions to ask: hobbies, summer travel, career goals, favorite (fill in the blank), etc.</p>
	“Find someone who”	<p>Each student has a sheet of paper with various questions on it. Students must circulate around the class to “find someone who” can either answer the question or meets the criteria. That student must initial inside the box and answer the question. After a set amount of time, the class should debrief to discuss what they have learned.</p>	<p>Question types can vary in this strategy including information about students to content area questions. For example, “find someone who has traveled outside of the country”, or “Find someone who can solve this equation.”</p>