

Inviting innovation in pedagogical practices

Creative Ways to Build an Inclusive Learning Community in the Classroom and Engage Students

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How to Build Community
in the Classroom

Part 1

What is **Community**?

How can we define ***community***? (Think-Pair-Share Activity)

A ***feeling of fellowship with others...***

Something we can comfortably participate in **Community**

= Inclusivity

Building Community Helps Students Learn_A

student's ability to learn is tied to their sense of belonging in our classes

- **Community Engaged Research Projects** that dismantle “systemic sources of racial and social injustice” create a critical **sense of belonging** for undergraduate college students. Especially when the research focuses on issues experienced by students in their home or communities. (Beckett, Lu, & Sabati., 2022; Gordon da Cruz, 2017;

- A student's **sense that they are**

accepted, respected, included, and supported in the learning environment **is connected to persistence and achievement.** (Strayhorn 2012).

- The **relationship between psychological well-being and academic motivation** has been documented (Osterman, 2000; Tierra, Lynley, & Jane, 2007) (Brady et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015)



What does it actually mean to be **included**?

Think of a time when you were [redacted] and a time when you were [redacted]...

1. Take a minute and focus on what made you feel this way. (language, actions, rules, culture, norms, values, group identity, individualized attention)
2. Write what made you feel **included** and **excluded** on separate post-it notes and stick them to the wall. (be specific)

[redacted] (5 min.)

Building Community is Equity Work

Vulnerable and socially stigmatized populations may benefit the most

Students of color (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016; McGee, Thakore, & LaBlance, 2016, Newman, Wood, & Harris III, 2015) **first generation students** (Yeager et al., 2016) **economically disadvantaged students**, (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009) **LGBTQIA+**, (Grisset, Kaufmann, Greenberg, & Hilton, 2016) **immigrant populations** (Stebbleton, 2016) and **veterans** (Sportsman & Thomas, 2015).

build community

experience

of the learning

co-creators

learning experiences that

are

inclusive

6 Basic Ingredients...





Basic Ingredients

1. Democratize the Classroom
2. Model Expert Learning
3. Counter Belief Erosion
4. Honor Student Realities
5. Challenge Stereotypes & Diversify Representation
6. Identify Your Own Blind Spots

Do you use any of these ingredients in your classroom?

1. Democratize the Classroom

- Don't oppress student voices. Amplify them!
 - Discussion Debate Games classroom learning experiences
- Allow students to participate in the creation of rules (syllabus, assignments)
- Allow students to be co-creators of knowledge

2. Model Expert Learning

- Normalize the struggle of learning something new
- Share stories from your life, humanize yourself ●

Allow multiple revisions

- Address distractions, share challenges in learning
- Discuss strategies, build study habits

3. Counter Belief Erosion



Students believe they are or can be expert learners.



- Offer micro-affirmations

Students believe [redacted] [redacted]
[redacted] in their success

- Make sure students know intelligence is a skill, not a trait
- Affirm students with personal messaging
- Discuss the inevitability of making mistakes, loss of confidence

4. Honor Student Realities

- Try being a student
- Learn about student realities
- Learn about your students and what they need to be successful
- Be flexible

- Everybody faces a challenge that you know nothing about

5. Challenge Stereotypes & Diversify Representation

- Who are the **experts you reference?** (authors, speakers, past students, images)

- **Counter stereotypical assumptions** and oversimplifications ●

We often teach what we were taught without examining it for bias ●

Teach a **contrapuntal history** of your subject.

- Representing only a **limited set of groups** communicates to students (who may not share these identities) who the expert learners are and (by omission) who they are not.

6. Identify Your Own Blind Spots

- What assumptions do you make about students?
- Assumptions about coursework?
- Assumptions about your teaching?

Small Group Work

- 1. Create 6 sets of small groups, each group will work with [REDACTED]**
- 2. Discuss and prepare to [REDACTED] you can use it in your teaching practice.**

- What has worked for you?

- What could you do?
- Any potential challenges?

How to Connect the Classroom to the Community?

Part 2

1. Research + Engage with a social issue in your community

- a. Select a topic
- b. Connect with a local organization

2. Create an opportunity to address a social issue you care about.

- a. Volunteer
- b. Interview

3. Share what you learned with me, the class, and the community

- a. Reflection paper
- b. Letter to representative

c. Present or organize

A Community-Based Final Exam

How can we use sociology to address issues in our community?

