BUILDING COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM

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We acknowledge that McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. McGill honours and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.
The Game Plan
(Session Overview)

• Quick Introductions
• Develop a Working Definition
• Create Student Profiles
• Explore Strategies for Building Community
• Implement Strategies for Building Community
Quick Introductions

• Please share:
  • Your name, program, and role
  • Why you’re attending this session
  • One community to which you belong
Introduction to the Toolkit

Faculty of Arts Toolkit for Building Connections in the Classroom

A collaborative initiative between the Faculty of Arts and TLS, this collection of tools is designed for instructors in the Faculty of Arts. Arts instructors already use many strategies to foster a sense of belonging in their classrooms, so this toolkit aims to showcase and build upon the expertise of instructors in the Faculty.

Access the toolkit
Introduction to this Session: Content

Strategies we’ll discuss today
Introduction to this Session: Learning Outcomes

1. Understand how an instructor's choice of teaching and learning strategies influence the sense of community that students feel in the classroom.

2. Apply practical strategies for community building to realistic classroom contexts.

3. Reflect on the importance of community in the classroom as a principle.
Introduction to the Session: The Space and Session Norms

(Developed collaboratively)

- The closest accessible washroom is on the third floor.
- The closest gender neutral washroom is on the second floor.
- Feel free to move or position yourself in the way that you feel most comfortable.
- Ask questions at any time about anything.
- Use technology as you wish.
- If you no longer want to participate, or need to step out of the room for a moment, please do so – no explanation is required.
- Raise your hand and do not interrupt colleagues.
Working Definition: “Community in the Classroom”

What do students experience or feel when there is community in the classroom?

(Developed collaboratively)

• “A sense of belonging where all students feel best able to learn”
• A sense of ownership, and engagement in the course and learning (beyond being a passive receiver of information).
• Being able to be vulnerable with others in the classroom (e.g. being able to ask questions, being comfortable with not knowing something, being honest about how you’re feeling).
• Sharing a common goal.
• Feeling comfortable to belong to the community that you belong while among classmates, but not using your values to judge others.
• Made up of diverse persons with different abilities who have a willingness to learn from each other.
• People knowing each other and caring about each other.
Refining Our Working Definition:
“Community in the Classroom”

https://youtu.be/hF9AQKTcgJU?t=41
Create Your Student Profile

- What is their name?
- What do they study?
- What barriers to learning do they experience?
- What is their passion?

Electronic handouts available: tiny.cc/ltt2019
Explore Strategies for Building Community

1. Review your student profile.
2. Consider the following question:

   *Using our working definition, how can you build a community in the classroom for this student?*

3. Define your own context.
4. View suggested strategies and record your own strategies for before classes begin, the first day of class, and throughout the semester.
Explore Strategies for Building Community

Before class begins, explore potential supports for language learning. Meet with him to understand the history of the issue and what has worked before. (Hand in papers in mother tongue?)

Classroom guidelines: have students suggest effective learning strategies for them. (Breaks, videos, etc.) - anonymous suggestions?

Frequently change small groups; addressing that it gives everyone the chance to learn from each other.

Revisit classroom guidelines frequently and update together as necessary.
Explore Strategies for Building Community

**Before classes begin:**

- Upload materials before class
- Extra materials concerning community building

**First day of class:**

- Create a code of conduct: 1 item per student

**Throughout the semester:**

- Reflecting on the norms
- Providing constructive anonymous online feedback to work well or can be improved
Explore Strategies for Building Community

**CONTEXT**
Alex is attending a 'Technology in Learning' elective course.
The course consists of lectures and a lab component.
There are 50 students in the course.

**SUGGESTED STRATEGIES**

**BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN:**
- Sending welcome email (mentioning that classes will be in English & that assignments can be in French)
- Provide links to resources that can help students for whom English is a second language.

**FIRST DAY OF CLASS:**
- Start with an interactive activity of introductions
- Provide an option of writing what your native language is without sharing with everyone
- Say that you are open to listen to their concerns & feedback / open to help them

**THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER:**
- If you notice that the big challenge in their assignments is language, give them feedback and share resources
- Make it clear what you will focus on when grading / evaluating (language, ideas, etc.)
- Peer support (pairing together people who struggle with language & those who struggle with content)
Explore Strategies for Building Community

1. Review your scenario.
2. Consider the following question:

Using our working definition, how can you build a community in the classroom for the student(s)?
Reflections

• What thoughts, challenges, or questions came to light during this process?

• How was your understanding of community in the classroom changed since this session began?

Electronic handouts available: tiny.cc/ltt2019
Resources

- The Faculty of Arts Toolkit:
  - [https://mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/strategies/faculty-arts-toolkit](https://mcgill.ca/tls/instructors/strategies/faculty-arts-toolkit)

- Marcy Slapcoff and Kira Smith
  - [marcy.slapcoff@mcgill.ca](mailto:marcy.slapcoff@mcgill.ca) and [kira.smith@mcgill.ca](mailto:kira.smith@mcgill.ca)

- Further reading:
  - Literature review available upon request
Resources by Request
Sourced post-session by attendees’ request.


