

Additional Community Exercises

The kind of community we intend is heart centered, which is, at its core, has supportive, nurturing, and compassionate relationships. Learning thrives when students feel valued, connected, and supported by their school community members (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Community Exercise: *Learning About Heritage and the Community Beyond School*

The following activities are exercises in community building by way of students sharing and learning about their own cultures and others'.

- **Holding a culture fair:** Students are invited to develop exhibits, which could include posters, or even skits or dances, that portray their ancestry.
- **Getting to know families:** Invite parents, grandparents, extended family, and guardians to present as a panel, covering such topics as their culture, family traditions, work, holiday celebrations, and more. Middle or high school students may be able to serve as moderators. You can modify the exercise so that students interview these people and report to classmates.
- **Getting to know community members:** Middle and high school students could interview community workers about their lives and jobs.
- **Inviting business representatives:** You could hold a career fair for middle and high school students or invite individual businesspeople to share about their careers or hobbies.

Community Exercise: *Strengthening the Classroom and School Community*

The following activities are exercises in community building by way of students sharing about themselves and working together.

- **Sharing about themselves:** Students can write thoughts about themselves to share aloud. The thoughts can be funny or serious, and students should be prepared to talk about themselves based on that thought, to share information either in small groups (of between four and eight) or with the whole class. Students can prepare and write down their thoughts and either broaden their presentation (by preparing a speech or poster, for example), or everyone can put the written thoughts into one box from which the teacher draws during the following weeks. You might draw two thoughts a day for a so-called **student moment**. Elementary students, instead of writing a note, can draw a picture. As they are shared, the teacher can post the thoughts, drawings, and presentations in the classroom.
- **Encouraging classroom leadership and governance:** In addition to the more traditional classroom duties (such as line leaders), you can establish positions such as art director, science director, or music director. As a month proceeds, the assigned directors and teacher together plan ways to incorporate these subjects into classroom activities. This might involve the director helping lead activities, providing background music, or co-designing a task or activity with the teacher. The directors might be able to help coach students as you implement the subjects' activities.

Community Exercise: *Coffee Cart*

This activity, appropriate for students in grades 5–8, is adapted from the Alternative Continuum of Education program at a public school in Kitchener, Ontario. Teacher Sarah Willet started a coffee cart program that gives students with varying abilities the opportunity to interact with their larger community (S. Willet, personal communication, November 27, 2018). While Willet's students make and sell coffee to teachers and students, you can adapt the exercise to sell anything, such as cookies or snacks. The most important element of this activity is involving students in every step of the project.

This activity requires some special materials, including a portable cart, cash box, and whatever your cart's specialty.

1. Determine what you want to sell, as well as when and where you want to sell it. Look for opportunities to get community members involved and reach out to local cafés.
2. Have students make grocery lists and determine what materials they will need.
3. Make posters and feature students on schoolwide announcements.
4. Borrow or buy a portable cart, a cash box, money to make change, and other necessary materials.
5. Delegate roles to students. Sarah uses the following roles as examples.
 - ♦ Greeter: Responsible for saying "Good morning" to all teachers and students
 - ♦ Cashier: Responsible for taking the cash and making change for customers
6. Choose a day and time that work for your class and the rest of the school community.
7. Distribute coffee to teachers and students, and watch the connections form.

Bergin, C., & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the classroom. Educational Psychology Review, 21(2), 141–170.