

Communities I

Purpose

The purpose of lesson 1B is to make the students aware that a strong community – in the class as well as online – is important and will benefit everybody at school. There is a difference between a formalized group and what is considered a community. It is not necessarily about making everybody good friends, but that everybody gets a sense of belonging. In this lesson, you will also make some energizers for the students to loosen up – and laugh a little together.

Content (45 min.)

- Introduction to communities (20 min.)
- Make energizers 'Are you awake' and 'Pass on the clap' (10 min.)
- Exercise: 'Atoms and molecules' (15 min.)

Preparation

- Familiarise yourself with the exercises used in this lesson so that you are ready to present them to the students.

Introduction to communities

Being together physically or online is not necessarily enough to get a sense of community and belonging. We often use the word community colloquially about just being together, but it is not until a group is experienced as a community that we get a positive effect. For this reason, it is helpful to distinguish between being together and experiencing being part of a community.

When you attend the same class, are together in a group, or are students at the same school, you are part of a formalised group where you do not choose who you are with. It is important that you function well and thrive in that group – if not; it can have negative consequences. In order to function and thrive in a formalised group, you need to feel a sense of community in this group; which means a group where you legitimately belong.

It is important to note that you do not have to be close friends with everybody to experience a sense of belonging with them. Close friends are the ones you choose yourself based on a relationship that builds over time. In a class, you must show good collegiality, including taking care of each other and accept those who are different from you.

The teacher's role in the classroom community

As a teacher, you have an important role to play in ensuring that the formalised group is experienced as a community for everybody. You can set the bar for what is good behaviour in the group, and you can set

requirements for the students to treat each other like colleagues (which means to accept each other and to treat each other with respect). Your perhaps most important job is to create a sense of security among the students. You can do this by welcoming the students with place cards, an assigned buddy and buddy group and to lead by example by speaking properly about colleagues and other students.

The example you set for the students in class gives them the possibility to create an experienced community in as well as outside of the classroom.

A strong community across classes and year groups

A mutual and experienced community across classes and year groups creates a strong community at the school as whole. It makes it less vulnerable if the community at times does not work so well – and it can open up to building strong relationships with students from other classes. Your role as a teacher is to inspire the students to create strong communities across classes and year groups by activities that bind classes together and remind the students that they need to be supportive of the activities the school plans for them.