

### Community-Centered: Classroom and School Communities

1	Title Slide	Welcome to this module, Classroom and School Communities, in the Community-Centered teaching series. To advance to the next slide, select the “forward” arrow located on the play bar at the bottom of your screen.
2	Introduction	<p>According to the National Research Council, the community-centered approach to teaching “requires the development of norms for the classroom and school, as well as connections to the outside world that support core learning values” (p.25). Research confirms that building a sense of community in classrooms and schools promotes academic motivation in students, in addition to the ability to act ethically and be able to socially and emotionally interact with others. A sense of community has also been shown to discourage students from participating in violent or illegal behaviors. Unfortunately, schools with a strong sense of community are rare (ASCD, ****).</p> <p>In this module, we will be discussing community-centered environments as it relates to classroom and school communities.</p>
3	Learning Objectives	By the end of this module, the learner will be able to incorporate community-centered teaching practices into their science-based classrooms.
4	Classroom & School Norms	<p>Let’s begin this module by first exploring norms that exist within our classrooms and schools. Individual classrooms and schools have the ability to shape the culture of learning within a particular school. Often, classrooms and schools have existing norms that send different messages to different students, whether these are encouraging or discouraging.</p> <p>A common discouraging norm in a classroom or school environment is for students to make mistakes or not know an answer to a question. This can make students timid in answering further questions or participating fully in classroom discussions. A learning environment that encourages students to make mistakes helps create a norm that places value on having freedom to make mistakes and search for understanding.</p> <p>Additionally, how teachers instruct their students, how students interact with others, and how learning is assessed can also make our norms either encouraging or discouraging. For example, teachers may unknowingly send the message that females should not participate in advanced math and science courses. Sometimes teachers carry a different level of expectation for some students than others. However, students can also contribute to these norms by how they treat other students or how their culture views others.</p>
5	Sense of Community in Classrooms	Much can be learned from teachers in Japan, who spend a considerable amount of time creating a sense of community in their classrooms. They do this by working with the whole class and asking students who made mistakes to share their thinking with the rest of the class. This is a valuable attribute in classrooms, because it leads to discussions that deepen the understanding of everyone. This practice works well in Japan because teachers have “developed a classroom culture in which students are skilled at learning from one another and respect the fact that an analysis of errors is fruitful for learning” (Hatano and Inagaki, 1996; as cited in NRC, 2000). Japanese students also value listening, so large class discussions are valued by students even if they do not have the opportunity to participate.

		<p>On the other hand, the culture of classrooms in the United States is very different, as many emphasize the importance of being right and making a contribution by talking (NRC, 2000). The National Research Council suggests that “teaching and learning must be viewed from the perspective of the overall culture of the society and its relationship to the norms of the classrooms” (P. 147). To attempt one or two Japanese teaching strategies will not be enough to produce desired results in American classrooms (NRC, 2000).</p>
6	Community-building Approaches	<p>So how can we build a sense of community in our classrooms and schools? Schaps (2003) suggests four different approaches in answering this question:</p> <p>First, we must “actively cultivate respectful, supportive relationships among students, teachers, and parents” (Schaps, 2003). Supportive relationships enable students from diverse backgrounds to be represented in the classroom by their personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Supportive relationships also encourage passive or uninvolved parents to take active roles in the school and their child’s education.</p> <p>Second, we must “emphasize common purposes and ideals” (Schaps, 2003). Along with academic achievement, schools with a strong sense of community stress the development of good character and citizenship, such as fairness, empathy, and personal responsibility. When everyone is a stakeholder in the school’s values, students are shaped daily by interactions with others.</p> <p>Third, we must “provide regular opportunities for service and cooperation” (Schaps, 2003). By learning the skills of collaboration, students develop deeper and wider relationships with others and have the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others.</p> <p>Lastly, we must “provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for autonomy and influence” (Schaps, 2003). Giving students ownership in the classroom agenda and climate is intrinsically satisfying and motivating, and will help to prepare students for life as a citizen in a democracy.</p>
7	Read & Reflect	<p>Now, let’s pause the module to read a brief article and reflect. This article, written by an eighth grade teacher, presents an interesting strategy regarding the cultivation of community in the classroom. After reading the article, we will reflect on our thoughts by answering the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would this strategy be feasible to use in a secondary science or agriculture classroom? Explain.</li> <li>• How could you modify this strategy to give students ownership in your classroom?</li> <li>• What are some other strategies that would be beneficial?</li> </ul> <p><b>See files</b></p>
8	Review	<p>As we come to a close, let’s consider all we have covered so far. We first discussed the community-centered approach to teaching. We highlighted how individual classrooms and schools have the ability to shape the culture of learning within a particular school. We then focused on the importance of social norms within the classroom and the</p>

school. We also examined how classroom procedures create a sense of community within the classroom environment.

Incorporating the concepts that we discussed in this module should help you incorporate Community-Centered teaching practices into your science-based classroom.

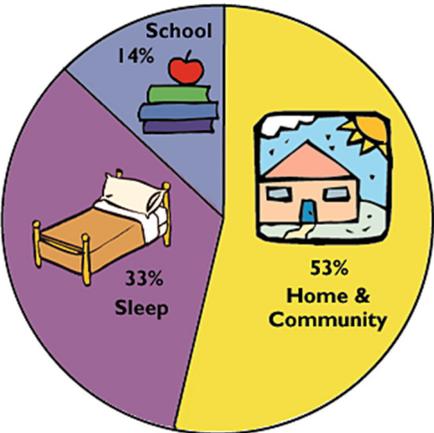
9 Sources

Deyhle, D., and F. Margonis. (1995). Navajo mothers and daughters. Schools, jobs, and the family. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 26:135-167.

National Research Council. (2000). *How people learn: Brain mind, experience, and school*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academic Press.

Schaps, E. (2003). Creating a school community. *Creating Caring Schools* 60(6): 31-33. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar03/vol60/num06/Creating-a-School-Community.aspx>

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[Figure 1.2 from NRC, 2000]