

Trust and Community Building

Purpose: Creating community in a course creates student interaction, participation, and academic engagement. This resource offers strategies to build a meaningful classroom environment using class community and team agreements, interactive discussions, and feedback practices. These approaches promote trust, collaboration, and sustained involvement throughout the course.

Steps for Implementation

1. Class Community Agreements

- a. Co-create community agreements with the whole class (tools: Google docs, Canvas course home page)
- b. Ask: “How do we want to create a community in our class? What can it look like?”
- c. Have a list of 3–5 key agreements on a shared document and ask students if there is anything else they would like to add:
 - i. Open to diverse perspectives
 - ii. Ensure equity of voice
 - iii. Be present & engaged

2. Team Agreements

- a. Have groups create team agreements (tools: Canvas groups)
- b. Encourage students to define roles & responsibilities:
 - i. How do we want to work together as a team?
 - ii. How do I want to be part of the team?
 - iii. How do I want to contribute?

3. Interaction via Discussion Boards

- a. Topic Driven
 - i. Open ended questions about readings
 - ii. Focused prompts on specific part of reading
 - iii. Students post their breakout room work on discussion boards

iv. Required Weekly Posts:

1. Date to post individual reflections
2. Date to post responses to 2 classmates (whose posts and not been responded to):
 - a. 1 thing you appreciate about what someone wrote: I appreciate...
 - b. 1 thing you think someone can consider: I think you can consider...
 - c. 1 thing you are curious to know more about: I wonder...

b. Social Driven (for students to connect with each other)

- i. Class Water Cooler: Students share course related ideas/questions

c. Help Driven (for instructors and TAs to support students)

- i. Q & A Space: students to ask course related questions

4. Assessment & Feedback via Online Forms

a. Formative Assessment

- i. Evaluates learning throughout the course (low – medium stakes)
- ii. Quizzes (tool: Canvas quizzes,
- iii. Reflection papers and annotated drafts (tools: Perusal & Feedback Fruits)

b. Summative Assessment

- i. Evaluates cumulative learning from the entire course (high stakes)
- ii. Exams, final projects, and presentations

c. Course Feedback (Mid-semester and entire course evaluations)

d. Surveys Throughout (tools: Canvas quizzes, Qualtrics, Google forms)

- i. When did you feel most engaged in class?
- ii. When did you feel most disengaged in class?
- iii. What is your comfort level with the course content?

- iv. What would be helpful for you?
- v. What else do you feel you need to be successful in this class?

e. Implementing Feedback

- i. Communicate You Read Feedback
- ii. Adapt Course Based on Feedback

Instructor Planning Guide

1. Beginning of Course

- a. Set the tone early by co-creating community and team agreements.
- b. Introduce discussion board expectations and assign early posts.
- c. Establish how students will provide ongoing course feedback.

2. Throughout Course

- a. Revisit community agreements and encourage student ownership.
- b. Use breakout groups and team agreements to support collaboration.
- c. Review discussion board posts for participation and emerging themes.
- d. Collect and respond to student feedback regularly.

3. After Class Sessions

- a. Analyze feedback survey results and identify areas to adapt.

4. Beginning of Following Class Session

- a. Summarize feedback and let students know how you will adjust the course.

Instructor Checklist

- ☐ I've co-created class community with my class.
- ☐ I've guided students in creating their own team agreements for group work.
- ☐ I've structured topic-driven and social-driven discussion board posts.
- ☐ I've implemented ongoing student check-ins through short surveys.
- ☐ I've acknowledged and adapted based on student feedback.

Resource: [Six Check-in Ideas to Build Community in College Classrooms](#) (Faculty Focus)