Recognizing a Supportive Community

This modelling the tools is incorporated into critical challenges at grade 2, however, it can be adapted for use at all grade levels.

Overview

The detailed activities that follow help students learn that an important feature of a community is positive interaction among its members. As an introduction, students observe three role-plays by older students, each illustrating a different theme–no interactions, positive interactions and negative interactions. Students role-play these different forms of interaction in a typical classroom situation. Based on these experiences, students learn that a supportive community requires interaction among members and that the interactions must help people meet their needs. Using a story and accompanying drawing about a group of people, students identify the people, places, things and activities in the scene. They must then decide whether or not the group's interactions are positive. After a practice example, students consider new situations and determine which groups represent a community with mutually beneficial interactions and which do not.

Preplanning

Arrange a role-play.

- Arrange, with a higher grade classroom teacher, for a few students to perform three simple scenarios for your class. In all three role-plays, the students are to play the same game, e.g., marbles, cards, but perform it, each time, with a different twist:
    - *first role-play:* students play the game separately with their backs to each other; i.e., no interaction
    - *second role-play:* students play the game together in a very collaborative manner; i.e., interaction with each other
    - *third role-play:* students play the game together in an uncooperative manner; i.e., negative interaction.

Select communities to study.

- The following activities use a sample community, e.g., the Brown Family, to introduce the concepts and criteria for a community. Depending on your purpose, you will want to extend the lesson by selecting picture books with examples of interactive and noninteractive groups. Alternatively, find pictures of groups within an actual community, such as the classroom, and create stories to supplement the pictures.

Session One

Present role-plays.

- Explain that a group of older students will role-play three situations to help the class learn more about what makes a community. As they watch each situation, encourage students to look for the people, places, things and activities that are present. Without much comment, ask the intermediate students to perform the three scenarios for about 30 seconds each.

Discuss role-plays.

- Ask students to comment on what was similar and different about the three situations in the role-plays. Begin with people and ask students to identify who was involved in each situation. Proceed with the three other features of a community. Record students' comments on the chalkboard to create a chart, such as the one below. Guide students to understand that the people, place and things did not change, but the activities did.

What we Saw and Heard

	People	Places	Things	Activities
1	- *three students*	- *classroom*	- *marbles*	- *playing game by themselves, not playing together, not talking to each other, may not be having very much fun*
2	- *three students*	- *classroom*	- *marbles*	- *playing game together, talking together, having fun*
3	- *three students*	- *classroom*	- *marbles*	- *playing together, arguing, fighting, not having fun*

Introduce kinds of interactions.

- Ask students to explain, in their own words, the differences between the activities in the three situations. Draw out the following ideas. (The exact terminology is not essential.)

- *No interaction:* In the first situation, students did not have anything to do with each other–they did not interact with each other; they did not bother each other or be nice to each other.
- *Positive interaction:* In the second situation, students had a lot to do with each other–they interacted with each other; they were nice to each other; they did not bother each other.
- *Negative interaction:* In the third situation, students had a lot to do with each other–they interacted with each other; they did not help each other; they only bothered each other.

Practise role-playing.

- Ask every student to take out a book. Explain that you want them to model what it looks like when students interact with each other in three different ways, just as the older students demonstrated earlier.
  - Ask everyone to read his or her book without any interaction. Coach students so that they do not look at or smile at each other.
  - After a brief while, ask everyone to read his or her book while interacting positively with the students around them. Coach students on what this would look like; e.g., sharing ideas, pointing to each others' books, reading to each other, asking questions.
  - Finally ask students–either the entire class or one table at a time–to show, without hitting, shoving or throwing, what it would look like to interact negatively with the students around them; e.g., making noise so others cannot read, criticizing their books, putting a hand over the page.

  Discuss how students felt in each situation. Ask students to indicate which situation is the best situation if everyone is to learn and feel good about themselves and about other students. Suggest that when people are a supportive community, they interact in positive ways to help each other meet their needs. Identify contexts where interaction may not be supportive; e.g., during silent reading, times when students need or prefer to work independently.

Session Two

Introduce picture and story study.

- Explain to students that they are going to learn about a group of people. Display an overhead transparency of the picture and story of **The Brown Family** and distribute a copy to each pair of students. Invite students to assume a detective role. Their task is to decide if the Brown family is a supportive community. The students' first step is to determine community features present in the drawing and the story of the Brown family. Create a chart, such as the one below, on the board or on a large sheet of paper on the wall.

The Brown Family

People (who)	Places (where)	Things (what they have)	Activities (what they do)

Focus on the drawing.

- Begin with the drawing. Isolate one section of the overhead transparency by covering the other parts of the picture with paper. Ask students to identify what they notice in the visible section about the people, places, things and activities. Record each observation on an index card or slip of paper (or ask students to do this) and place the cards in the appropriate columns on the chart. Inquire what difference it made in students' observations when you covered all but one part of the picture. Did students notice features they had not seen before? Provide materials for each student to make a tube or distribute toilet paper rolls to every student. Invite students to look at different sections of the picture through the tube to help them focus on the details. As students notice features, either you or the students should record observations on cards and attach them to the chart.

Read the text.

- Read the story aloud to the class. Ask students to identify new features. Reread the story and ask students to stop you by raising their hand any time they hear new information about the features of the Brown family. Record these on cards and attach them to the chart.

Review criteria for a community.

- Remind students of the previous day's role-plays and what they learned about the qualities of a supportive community. Invite students to share their ideas. Draw out two qualities of a supportive community:
  - People interact with one another–they work and play with each other.
  - The interactions are positive contributions–people help each other meet their needs.

  Present these two criteria in the form of questions that students are to use when deciding whether or not the Brown family is a supportive community:

  - Is everyone interacting ? (Are people working and playing with each other?)

o Are all of the interactions positive ? (Are people helping each other meet their needs?)

Write the two questions on the board and ask students to respond to them. As illustrated below. Add the words yes, no and maybe beneath each question.

Is Everyone Interacting?
(Are people working and playing with each other?)

YES	MAYBE	NO

Are all Interactions Positive Contributions?
(Are people helping each other meet their needs?)

YES	MAYBE	NO

Identify possible conclusions.

- Invite the class to use the information from the The Brown family chart as clues to answer these two questions. Begin by asking if students see any information or clues that might suggest the conclusion that everyone in the Brown family is interacting. Ask students to select these cards from the Brown Family chart and place them in the Yes column, under Is Everyone Interacting? Ask if any clues suggest that the Browns may be or are not interacting with each other and place these cards in the appropriate column. Repeat the procedure for the second criteria–Is Everyone Contributing? If students notice that information already placed on the conclusions chart applies to this question, create a second index card to attach under the appropriate option. Leave aside cards that are not relevant to any of the possible conclusions.

Pose the critical challenge.

- Present the critical task:

Decide whether or not the Brown family is a supportive community.

Ask students to decide which conclusion is suggested by the clues: Is the Brown family a supportive community: Yes? No? Maybe? Point out that everyone need not reach the same conclusion. Ask several students to state their conclusion and give a reason.

Session Three

Present practice challenge.

- Announce to students that because of their successful detective work the previous day, they have been asked to find out whether another group of people is a supportive community or not. Share the picture book or annotated pictures you have assembled. Distribute a copy of **What We See and Hear** to each pair of students.

Focus on the drawing.

- Ask students to look at the first picture for information about the people, places, things and activities. Encourage students to use their tube to help them notice details about the people. Instruct students to record this information in words or simple drawings–one piece of information per box–on **What We See and Hear**. After a short while, invite students to share their information about the people, places, things and activities with the rest of the class. As was done previously, record their suggestions on cards or paper and attach to a chart on the wall. Invite students to add new information on the class chart to their sheets.

Examine the story.

- Read, with students, the text under the picture. Ask students to add any new information in the relevant boxes on their chart. As before, share these ideas with the rest of the class by pasting cards or paper with the information to the class chart. Invite students to add information to their sheets that they had not already noticed.

Model making a decision.

- Show students how to sort through their information to see which conclusion is supported by each piece of information. Distribute an enlarged copy (e.g., 11" x 17") of **Is This a Supportive Community ?** to each pair of students. Walk students through the procedure of cutting out the information boxes on **What We See and Hear**, sorting the slips of paper according to the conclusion each supports and pasting them in the correct column on **Is This a Supportive Community?** Model the procedure by taking a slip of information from one student's chart and showing where it would be pasted on the conclusions sheet. After sorting and pasting the relevant slips of paper, each pair of students should then decide what overall conclusion is most consistent with the clues; i.e., yes, no or maybe. Students indicate their conclusion by placing a check in the appropriate

box at the bottom of **Is This a Supportive Community?** Remind students that everyone does not need to reach the same conclusion.

Debrief practice session.

- Ask several students to explain their conclusion and to give a reason. Discuss any difficulties experienced during this activity. Collect the completed charts on **Is This a Supportive Community?** to determine how well students match clues to the implied conclusion.

Session Four

Present additional challenges.

- Distribute additional pictures and stories and present the critical task:

    Decide whether or not the people in the sketch and story are a supportive community.

    Direct those pairs of students who successfully completed the practice challenge to work independently on a group selected from the above collection of scenarios. When completed, quickly review their work before directing them to select a new scenario. Meanwhile, gather those students who struggled with the initial practice challenge. Repeat the practice procedure, using less challenging scenarios. Encourage all students to find as much information as they can from each drawing and story, and to use this information to decide whether their group is a community or not.

Evaluation

Assess understanding of community.

- Assess students' ability to identify different community features in various group scenarios, using the first criterion on the rubric **Assessing Understanding of Community**. The sources of evidence are students' responses in class discussions and as recorded on **What We See and Hear**.
- Assess students' ability to decide when a group is a community, using the second and third criteria on this rubric.
- Use students' responses in class discussions and recorded on **Is This a Supportive Community ?** to assess their ability to provide relevant information in support of various conclusions and to use this information to decide whether or not a group is a supportive community.

Note: Reaching the basic understanding levels on the rubrics may be appropriate for many primary students who are new to the study of community.

Credits

This lesson is adapted from *Contributing to Family and Community*, edited by Mary Abbott, Roland Case and Jan Nicol (Richmond, BC: The Critical Thinking Consortium, 2002, ISBN 0-86491-262-5). Permission granted for use by Alberta teachers.

Documents

The following documents are referenced in the above modelling the tools.
They can be adapted for your needs and re-saved.

Graphic Organizers

- **What We See and Hear**
- **Is This a Supportive Community?**

Assessment

- **Assessing Understanding of Community**

Lesson Material

- **The Brown Family**