

## SEL Activity Building Our Community



grades 1-3



40 minutes

### Objectives

- Recognize the many similarities and differences within our community.
- Encourage students to share and express themselves in creative ways.
- Create a piece of art that represents unity and shows the importance of every member of the community.

### Essential Questions

- How can we make sure every student feels seen and celebrated?
- How do we begin to build a community where everyone feels comfortable sharing and offering support to one another?
- Why is it important to have both similarities and differences within a community?

### Vocabulary

**Community:** noun; a group of people connected by where they live or what they share, like interests, culture, or identity.

**Collage:** noun; a piece of art made by attaching various materials onto a background.

### MATERIALS + MEDIA

Garden Templates ([PDF](#))  
Space Templates ([PDF](#))  
Large paper (bulletin board, poster, or chart)  
Read-aloud book: [The Day You Begin](#) (7:11)

### SEL CORE COMPETANCIES

Relationship skills: Relationship-building  
Social awareness:  
Interconnectedness  
Relationship skills: Collaboration

### Before you Begin

- Prepare a blank bulletin board with paper for the background, or use a chart or poster paper.
- Choose a theme for your group collage (garden, space, or create your own) and print the accompanying templates—Garden Templates ([PDF](#)) or Space Templates ([PDF](#)) (1/student).
- Create a sample template to show students as an example for the Community Display.

### Program Connections

This activity focuses on community building—a theme that runs through our core programs. To learn more, visit our [PROGRAMS](#) page.

# THINK • GIVE

## What is a Community?

**Ask:** What is a community? Can anyone give an example?

Encourage a few responses.

**Explain:** We all belong to many communities—your family, your classroom, your sports team, your neighborhood. Communities can be big or small! A community is a group of people connected by where they live, what they share, or what they care about. We are a community because we are all part of this group/class. Some communities are huge, like a city or a school. Some communities are small, like a group of friends who like the same game.

**Ask:** Can anyone give another example of a community?

Let students share and briefly comment on each.

**Explain:** Sometimes, we notice differences between people in a community. That's okay! Differences make a community interesting and fun. But sometimes it can feel a little scary if you're different or don't know how you fit in. That's normal, and it's why sharing our stories and learning about each other is so important.

**Watch:** [The Day You Begin](#) (6:10) by Jacqueline Woodson. This story is about finding the courage to share your story and how sharing can help you connect with others, even if you feel all alone.

Before playing, say: "Listen carefully to how Angelina feels at the start and what happens when she shares her story."

**Discuss:**

- In what ways did the students feel different from one another?
  - Jacqueline Woodson asks, "What makes you so fabulously different from everyone else you meet?" What makes you fabulously different?
  - How did sharing her story help Angelina start to feel connected to her classmates?
- 

# CONNECT + CLOSE

## Activity: Make a Community Display

**Explain:** To celebrate our community, we are going to create a collage that shows how we, as individuals, come together to make our community special.

Choose a theme for your community display—a garden, space, or create your own. Hand out [Garden Templates \(PDF\)](#) or [Space Templates \(PDF\)](#) (1/student). Students should write their name and then use words and/or drawings that describe themselves and what they want to share.

Prompt students with questions to inspire their work:

- What activities do you enjoy?
- What is your favorite food?
- Do you celebrate any holidays?

Encourage students to include things that others might not know about them.

When everyone is finished, give students the chance to share about their collage piece.

**Discuss:**

- What colors, words, or drawings did you add? Why?
- How does this piece represent you and your interests?

As a group, assemble all the individual pieces into one large class collage.

Explain: The collage represents our group. Some parts may be similar, like activities we enjoy, and some parts may be different, like holidays celebrated. This is just like our community! No two of us are exactly the same, but we also have many things in common. Every student is an important part of the whole group.

**Discuss:**

- Did you learn anything new about your peers?
- Do you notice any similarities between you and your peers? Explain.
- Did you notice any differences? Explain.
- How can we create a community where everyone feels like they belong?
- Why is it important to be around people different from you?
- Why is it important to be proud of your differences?

## ACTION

Explain: Think about what you learned about your peers. What do you have in common with them? What is different? How can you use what you learned to make your connections with each other stronger and help everyone feel like they belong in our community?

## REFLECTION

Lead a class discussion or give students time to write or draw in their journals. Use these questions to guide their thinking:

- What part of making the collage did you enjoy the most?
- How did you feel while making the collage (e.g., creative, accomplished, inspired, connected, artistic)?
- Why do you think it is important to build a community?
- What are other ways we can build community while we are together?