



Instructional Plan: **Building a Literacy Rich Classroom Community**

Day 1

Community Membership (60 Minutes)

Two Truths and a Lie

15-20 minutes

Students get to know their classmates through this fun ice-breaking game.

Sharing information about themselves as part of a structured learning activity is a great way for students to get to know each other. Model this ice-breaking activity by telling your class three things about yourself but only two of them will be true. One example might be 1. I have a twin sister. 2. I have studied in Italy. 3. I love pizza. (The lie is that I hate pizza). Take a classroom vote and reveal the truth. It is your students' job to guess which item is a lie. Have them write down their guesses. Ask a few students to explain which item they think is untrue and why. After your students have determined which two of your three items are true, give students an index card to write down their own three items. Give your students a few minutes to share their three items with a partner and identify the truths and the lie. Then, ask volunteers to try to outwit the class.

Community Membership

15-20 minutes

Students learn about communities and what it means to belong to a community.

Write the word "community" with a one line definition on the board. Ask your students what they think it means to be part of a community. Chart their responses. Pass out an index card to each student. Ask each student to write down two or more communities to which he or she belongs. Examples might include: neighborhood community, city community, scouts community, etc. Have each student pick one community and write three things he or she does as a member of that community. Chart the types of communities and the roles the students have in the various communities.

Common Core Connections

See how these key elements purposefully link to the standards.

L6: Building vocabulary knowledge by discussing the meaning of the word "community" meets L6.

Teacher Letter 10-15 minutes

In the unit preparation section, we suggested you email a letter to your class introducing yourself and setting some personal goals for the year, e.g., I want to learn to cook all sorts of pies. Project your email so that it is easy for all to see. Some items you may have included in your letter: (1) what you like to do, (2) your interests and hobbies and (3) what you would like to learn this year. Label your letter with the elements of a friendly letter. (Date, Greeting, Body, Closing, Signature). Use this letter to introduce and explain the second supporting question, what do I want other people to know about me?

Introduce Essential Question 10-15 minutes

Introduce the Essential Question: What does it mean to be a part of a learning community? Post this essential question in a prominent place in the classroom as the center of a web. Add relevant student comments to the web daily. Explain the concept and definition of essential questions. Ask students what they know about questions. Discuss the difference between questions like “Can I have an ice cream cone for dessert?” and “Why are there so many hungry children in the world?” You might also compare “What is four times two?” to “How do numbers affect our lives?” Label these larger questions as “essential questions.” Remind students that essential questions are big, overarching questions that do not have a “single” right answer. They are questions that encourage us to think deeply. Let your students know that they are important members of the class community, and that, over the next week, they will be joining you in a learning journey to find answers to this question.

SL1: Participating in a conversation about the essential question meets SL1.

Read Aloud: Essential Question Connections 10-15 minutes

Suggested Book: *Regarding the Fountain*, [by Kate Klise](#)
Regarding the Fountain is a rich humor-filled resource that demonstrates how a class forms a community and builds relationships through written conversations. Set in a

classroom community, it supports classroom discussions related to the essential question.

Note: The book contains 138 pages. If you allow time to read 30 pages per day, you will easily complete the book during the course of the week.

Introduce the Book and Read pages 1-30: Remind your students that an essential element of a community is communication. Connect this reading to the email that you sent your students and the enlarged letter that that you shared earlier in the day. Explain that *Regarding the Fountain* is told exclusively through various modes of written communication. During the story, a fifth grade class develops a pen pal relationship with a fountain designer. Read aloud the first thirty pages, stopping to show students the illustrations of various forms of communication and asking your students how Sam N.'s students might answer the essential question.

R.1. Participating in conversations about a book, and answering questions about the text promotes R1.

Day 2
All About Me (60 Minutes)

Introducing Me Graphic Organizer 10 minutes

Finding words to describe one’s self may be hard for students, but this graphic organizer can help. Have each student complete the Introducing Me graphic organizer that highlights his or her distinguishing characteristics.

Introducing Myself and What is Important to Me 15-20 minutes

To help you get to know your students and to help them become active participants in their own learning, ask students to each email you a letter. The letters should include: (1) what they do well, (2) their interests, (3) their challenges and (4) what they would like to accomplish this year. Remind students to use their graphic organizer to help them write their emails. Model what you expect from students by again sharing your own letter that tells them what you care about, your skills and your goals for the class.

! Great Informal Assessment Opportunity ! [See the assessment chart](#).. This particular lesson is a great opportunity to observe and record your students’ writing and thinking skills.

Learning Community Concept Map 15-20 minutes

Now that your students have begun to see themselves as part of a community, it is time for them to think about what it means to be a learning community. Use the essential question to generate a class concept map and identify student understanding of “community” and “learning community.” Solicit student input as they share ideas to support the concept of a learning community. Look for commonality in responses, and highlight these clusters. This map will inspire deep, critical thinking as students work to investigate the answer. Post the map by the essential question so that students can review and internalize the concepts at their leisure. Let the class know that a major focus of this unit is to learn more about each other. Then you will move forward to talking about how they work together to form a classroom community.

W.6. Using email to communicate meets W6, communicating using technology.

W.10. Writing a letter to a teacher meets W10, writing for a specific audience and purpose.

L6: Building vocabulary knowledge by continuing to discuss the meaning of the word “community” through a concept map meets L6.

Read Aloud: A Cast of Colorful Characters **15-20 minutes**

Regarding the Fountain by Kate Klise: Read pages 30 – 60.

The book contains many unique characters, just like the different personalities and people in the classroom community. Point out that the book tells a special story about a classroom community that uses friendly letters in a humorous way to build relationships. Savor the story as you discuss the development of these relationships. Use the book to reinforce the essential question continuously, and connect it to the journey of your own classroom community. Also, take time to point out the subtle tools of humor, such as the characters' names, fountain ideas, types of letters, and “voices” of the characters

RL3: Discussing character development and interaction meets RL3.

Day 3

Community Communication (60 minutes)

Communication Helps Foster Relationships **40-45 minutes**

Communication is an important component of being a member of a community. Ask the class how they use communication to develop relationships with other people. Partner students for a think-pair-share activity. Encourage partners to generate a list that identifies the ways that people communicate with one another. The list might include face-to-face conversations, phone discussions, instant messaging, text messaging, email, writing friendly letters, etc. If technology-based communications are not mentioned, then you may choose to remind students that they are increasingly important forms of communication. After these partner discussions, merge groups or pairs to make small groups. Encourage students to share their lists within their groups. Next, use the ReadWriteThink Comic Creator tool to create individual, small group, or a class comic in which two or more characters communicate using one of the methods on the list.

[\(http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/comic/\)](http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/comic/)

W.10. Writing comics showing characters communicating meets W10, writing for a specific purpose.

Read Aloud: Written Communication **20-25 minutes**

Regarding the Fountain by Kate Klise: Read pages 60 – 90

The book uses a variety of tools for written communication to build relationships among the characters. Today as you read, model “thinking aloud.” Ask your students to think about the questions listed below as you are reading. The questions focus on written

R.1. Participating in conversations about a book, and answering questions about the text promotes R1.

communication. Tell them you will be thinking about the questions also. While you are reading, share your answers to the questions or any thoughts you have about the story so students can hear your think aloud. Don't worry about interrupting the story (but don't interrupt too often). This process models the thinking that happens while you read.

Sample Questions: Regarding the Fountain

How are the letters different from the other kinds of writing in the book, such as memos and newspaper articles? (Third grade)

How do the characters' personalities unfold through the letters?

What tones do the letters have? Tones can be friendly, angry, worried, and so on. What different tones does Flo Waters use in letters to different people?

Day 4

Building Peer Relationships

60 Minutes

Student Interviews

45-50 minutes

Partner students for peer interviews. You may choose to post or photocopy questions like these as sample questions for your students to use during their interviews. They might also benefit from copying them in their journals. Better questions will result in better answers, which in turn will lead to more interesting paragraphs.

1. What is your favorite thing to do?
2. What three words would you use to describe yourself?
3. What are you good at?
4. Do you have any collections?
5. Do you have a favorite sport or activity that you do for fun?
6. If you were flying on the moon, what three things would you take with you? Why?
7. What do you want others to know about you?

Instruct your students to take notes and tell them that after the peer interviews, they will write an informative introduction about their partner! These introductions will each form a page about their partners for a class wiki, *Introducing Our Classroom Community*. They will also be the text for how the students introduce each other to the class. They do not have to include all of the information from their interviews. However, they do need to capture the most important things about their classmates, as well as interesting details about them. Use the [ePals informational writing checklists](#) to help students check for key elements of informational writing.

After the interviews are complete, ask each child to introduce his or her partner to the rest of the class.

Add pictures of each of your students to the wiki and share during Back to School Night or Open House!

! Great Informal Assessment Opportunity This particular lesson is a great opportunity to observe and record social skills and oral communication skills.

SL1: Participating in peer interviews meets SL1, preparing for conversations with diverse partners.

W2: Writing an informational piece introducing a peer is informational writing, and meets W2.

W.6. Publishing on a wiki meets W6, communicating and publishing using technology.

W4: Using the writing checklist helps students produce clear and coherent writing, with organization and development appropriate for informational writing, meeting W4.

Read Aloud: Communication

Builds Relationships

15-20 minutes

Regarding the Fountain by Kate Klise: Read pages 90 - 120

This book captures Florence Water's ability to establish relationships through written communication. This fountain designer manages to communicate using a different tone with each of the members of the school community: Goldie Fisch, Walter Russ, Mr. Sam N, and the students. As a class, dissect the different tones that she uses in her letters, faxes, postcards, and memos. Then discuss the type of relationship that she builds with each person as a result. Again model "thinking aloud." Ask your students to think about the questions listed below as you are reading. This process models the thinking that happens while you read.

Sample Questions: Regarding the Fountain

Florence Waters uses written communication to establish relationships with Goldie Fisch, Walter Russ, Mr. Sam N, and the students in the fifth grade class. What changes in each of these characters because of these relationships?

W.9. Drawing evidence from a text to support book analysis meets R9.

Day 5

Our Classroom Community (60 Minutes)

Essential Question

15-20 minutes

Review the Essential Question: What does it mean to be a part of a learning community?

Revisit the class concept map created during the introduction of the essential question. How have their answers to this question evolved? What evidence is there to support that your class has generated understanding of the question? Ask the class to share new learning, and use a different color of ink to supplement the concept map. Finally, turn your discussion forward to the rest of the school year. What does the class want to do next to extend their community and improve their communication skills? (This type of discussion provides a rich opportunity for student ownership of learning goals.)

SL1: Having a class discussion about extending community and improving communication skills meets SL1, having conversations with diverse partners.

Reflect: Post-Self Assessment

15-20 minutes

Give students time to write in their journals what they have learned.

- How can we ensure that all members of our community feel safe, trusted, and valued?
- What do I know about myself?
- What do I want other people to know about me?
- How do people build relationships that are respectful and nurturing?
- How can I do my best to learn and support the members of this classroom?

W.10. Journal writing to reflect on the project and their learning meets W10, writing for a specific purpose.

Read Aloud: What Happens Next?

30-35 minutes

Regarding the Fountain by Kate Klise: Pages 120-138

The final ten pages of the book bring closure to the mysteries of Dry Creek, and the relationships of the book's characters. Florence Waters asks Mr. Sam N's fifth grade class to accept responsibility for caring for the new school drinking fountain. In a fun twist, the Principal Mr. Russ asks Ms. Waters to replace the sink in the school cafeteria.

Ask your students to pick a method of written communication (you might use the *Communication Foster's Relationships* list as a resource). Then instruct students to send a reply back to Walter Russ from Florence Waters regarding the sink in the cafeteria. The relationship between these two characters grew and changed during the course of the book, which is a sign of a good book. Encourage children to capture this change in their replies.