Chapter 2: Creating Inclusive Classrooms for Global Perspectives

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In this chapter we provide a rationale and three strategies for classroom teachers to create a learning environment that builds inclusiveness and community as requisite skill sets for global citizenship education. Helping students to develop the abilities and attitudes necessary for empathetic participation in an interdependent world is a core foundation in this context (Moore, 1992). This emphasis also fosters tolerance and respect for diversity both within and beyond the Canadian context. Fortunately, we have much to build on, since as Jeanne Gibbs (2001) suggests, when following early adolescents for a day (exhausting—yes!) it becomes obvious that making connections is what drives their “energizer batteries.” Our task as educators, then, is to channel this natural proclivity for connecting beyond the limited realm of teenagers’ own lives to the larger global context.

Most teachers recognize the power of healthy interactions between learners, but in the global classroom it is essential to nurture safe zones from day one, since controversial issues can arise at any time and provoke a range of emotional responses. Brain research reveals that when a threatening situation (real or perceived) occurs, a flight or fight mechanism may “hijack” otherwise rational thinking. Because poor relationships are salient stressors, we need to provide students with places of learning that the brain perceives as non-threatening (Jensen, in Gibbs, 2000). For participatory learning, students need an affirming and secure environment in which they examine their own assumptions, take chances in their learning, share their opinions, and are receptive to the feelings, ideas and perspectives of others (Pike, 2000). In other words, students should feel included and valued before they take risks.

Inclusiveness starts with the process of inviting people to reflect upon and share their own experiences (Gibbs, 2000); it is vital to successful community-building, since only then do students have a vested interest in the process and begin to appreciate their classmates. For global educators, having students “experience connectedness through empathy with the personal stories of real people from other parts of the world” is the right place to initiate their own global awareness (Pike, 1996). As Moore (1992) reminds us, intercultural communication is the doorway to human fulfillment. In turn, inclusiveness and community building are the cornerstones of effective co-operative learning, which simultaneously addresses civic values and constructive conflict. When students participate in co-operative communities they begin to internalize the civic values that recognize and support the long-term benefits of contributing to the welfare of others, the common good, and one’s own well-being (Johnson & Johnson 1998).

The high school in which we worked was searching for ways to enhance student interaction and relationships among its very multicultural population. Over two-thirds of the students attending the school were born outside of Canada. A partnership between the OISE/UT teacher education program and the school emerged that focused on training selected staff and teacher candidates in a collaborative process called “Tribes,” with co-operative learning strategies at its core. One of
the goals of this professional development opportunity was to enhance teachers’ repertoire of teaching-learning strategies so they could more actively engage their diverse sets of learners. The teacher candidates completed one of their practicum experiences with Tribes-trained associate teachers, and several of the teaching partners used the strategies featured in this chapter with great success. Several reported a significant enhancement of class ‘tone’, based on an increased willingness of students to ‘listen to and have respect for the stories of their peers’.

The strategies that were selected are co-operative ones that foster a perspective shift from “me” to “we” to “the world.” While they can be used independently, they will have more impact in a global classroom when done in the sequence suggested, since they build in complexity, interdependence and social skills. Pike (1996) recommends that the “perceptual dimension” of global education should include, among other things, open-mindedness, resistance to stereotyping, and inclination to empathize. These strategies also move students from homogeneity to multicultural diversity in respectful ways. The goal is “co-operative pluralism,” wherein linkages between and among students raise awareness of interconnections and interdependence (Gibbs, 2000).

The strategies are adapted from an instructional process called Tribes. Tribes is a democratic group process designed to create positive environments that promote human growth and learning (Gibbs, 2000, p. 21). It starts by having students practice some of the essential collaborative skills that people need in order to work together in families, schools, work settings, government, and all organizational systems. These are the ability to listen attentively, encourage others, express ideas, make decisions, and resolve conflict. All interactions are based on a set of community agreements that include attentive listening, mutual respect, appreciation/no putdowns, and the right to participate/pass. We strongly encourage these foundations be in place before the strategies recommended here are attempted. Equally important, each strategy needs to be debriefed with a series of reflection questions, since the activity alone is not enough to shift thinking or influence patterns of interaction. Research clearly shows that such group processing increases students’ meta-cognitive abilities, attitudes, and leads to greater retention (Yager, Johnson, & Johnson, 1986). This is of particular value as students gain a deeper understanding of development and co-operation issues (e.g., humanitarian assistance, protection, and promotion of the rights of children).

**Strategy 1: History of Your Name**

*Reflections on the Strategy Applied*

The teachers who used this strategy reported that they were able to meet all of the learning expectations. The questions in Step 1 provided an excellent foundation for students to prepare for the activity. When asked if this step could be eliminated, the teachers recommended it remain because the preparation ahead ensured more students were able to participate and it raised the quality of comments. In fact, one teacher shared that a student said, “My Mom likes you because you made me have a conversation with her about our family.” The students loved this opportunity to reveal personal information about themselves in a safe environment. Teachers cautioned that the trust factor had been established because the Tribes community agreements were in place. In fact, one teacher had the students in previous classes create posters that
personalized their understanding of the agreements, as Figure 3.1 illustrates. An adaptation suggested by one teacher was to spread the sharing of names over three periods (approximately one-third of the class reported each time), so that it was integrated with existing curriculum. Another adaptation implemented by one teacher was to have students respond to the reflection questions in Step 6 as a journal activity instead of verbally, since this was a better fit with subject expectations.

**Learning Expectations**
- Build inclusion and community by encouraging students to learn the names/origins of classmates.
- Explore one's personal identity/heritage.
- Demonstrate effective speaking and listening skills in a group/whole class settings.
- Promote tolerance and respect for the many diverse cultures in Canada and around the world.

**You Will Need**
- Push pins or stars
- Wall map of the world

**Steps at a Glance**

**Step 1**
- For homework, have the students ask their parents/guardians about the ‘history or origin’ of their name. It is advised that you as the teacher first model this, to set a positive tone while providing a concrete example. For younger students, you may want to send home an instruction page with prompt questions such as these:
  - How was your name picked?
  - Are you named after someone? If so, why?
  - Does your name have a special meaning?
  - Is this meaning related to your family’s culture?

**Step 2**
- Have students stand in a circle, making sure that everyone is part of the circle and can see each other.

**Step 3**
- Ask students to take turns sharing the ‘history of their name’. Remind students of the community agreements while information is being shared, to ensure a “culture of respect and acceptance.”

**Step 4**
- Once all students have shared around the circle, use a world map to create a visual representation of the class. On a wall map of the world, have students mark with a pin/star the location of the country where their name originated.
Step 5
- As an extension, students could explore the origins of the names of other family members and add these to the class map. A further idea would be to research the history of surnames and add these to the map.

Step 6
- Ask the following suggested post-activity reflection questions. This “processing” is a critical piece of the learning experience, since we know that for most students, this is the stage in which new learning is realized and retained.
  - What similarities did you notice about how people’s names were selected?
  - How did you feel when you learned how your name was selected for you?
  - What similarities did you notice about the meanings of people’s names?
  - How did you feel when you learned the meaning of your name?
  - Why is it important to know how you got your name?
  - What did this activity do for our class?

*Figure 3.1: The Tribes Agreements (poster made by students)*
Strategy 2: Life Map  
*Reflections on the Strategy Applied*

Response to this strategy was clearly positive; in fact, in two classes, only one student in 70 passed when it came time to share life maps in class. Teachers reported that it was “time well spent.” One teacher commented that the activity on the surface appeared juvenile, yet the results proved otherwise. It reinforced the global connections in this very diverse group of learners who discovered commonalities as they shared their journeys. For example, when the finished life maps were displayed on bulletin boards by country of origin, less than one-third of the class was first generation Canadian. In fact, it was clearly visible on the life maps that many students had family origins concentrated in the Middle East, as Figure 3.2 illustrates.

In one class, a number of students had already completed a similar activity, so the teacher modified the assignment by allowing students the choice of completing the traditional life map or a life map of their hobbies, talents, or jobs. Because these topics were perceived by some students to be less personal, they had the unanticipated positive effect of increasing disclosures because students were working within their comfort zone. An implementation tip arises from the different ways to share life maps. If students are working in small teams and simultaneously sharing, then a large portion of their history can be told. If however you choose to use a full class community circle, then it is best to limit each participant to one key event so each voice can be heard within one class period.

**Learning Expectations**

- Build inclusion and community by creating/sharing a visual illustration of one’s life.
- Explore one’s personal identity/heritage, and to learn about the identify/heritage of classmates.
- Demonstrate an ability to contribute to a positive climate in group settings (eg: respect the rights and opinions of others).
- Research and describe how family, gender, ethnicity, class or nationality may affect one's ability to participate.

**You Will Need**

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Bulletin board space
- Region/province/state/country names on poster paper

**Steps at a Glance**

*Step 1*

- Give each student a piece of chart paper and some markers. Have him/her draw a visual illustration of “my life to date,” including city/town/country where they were born, cities/towns/countries where they have lived, selected significant events, dates, people, in the form of a map. Ask them not to include anything on their map that they are not
comfortable sharing with the class. Again, it is recommended that you as the teacher first model this, to set a positive tone while providing a concrete example. If you so choose, indicate that “road signs,” “place names,” ups and downs, and so on can be used to enhance this visual journey.

**Step 2**
- Once all life maps are complete, invite students to share in turn, explaining the rationale for “road signs” etc. that they chose. Depending on the class size, and time permitting, this could be done as a whole class in a community circle, or in small groups of 3-4 students.

**Step 3**
- Ask the students to give their full attention to the speaker. Remind students of the community agreements while the life maps are being shared, to continue to instill a “culture of respect and acceptance.”

**Step 4**
- Once everyone has shared, have the students thank each other for sharing their life story. Then, create a class bulletin board of the life maps, grouping them by location/country of origin.

**Step 5**
- Ask the following suggested post-activity reflection questions:
  ⇒ Why is it important to be able to draw a “life map”?
  ⇒ In what ways were the life maps of class similar? Different?
  ⇒ From how many different countries did the people in your group/class originate?
  ⇒ What did you learn about your group/class members?
  ⇒ How did you feel as you shared your life map?
  ⇒ What did you learn about yourself?
  ⇒ How did your group/class members help each other during this activity?

**Figure 3.2: Sample LIFE MAPS**

![Sample LIFE MAPS](image)
**Strategy 3: Every's and Only's**  
*Reflections on the Strategy Applied*

All teachers reported this since this strategy was the most complex, it was best implemented once students were familiar with one another. This complexity did lead to a deeper sharing of personal and cultural beliefs about individuals and families. It also became apparent that groups wanted to personalize their visual presentations by stylizing their own versions of graphic organizers, as illustrated in the Figure 3.3.

The easiest way to ensure success with this strategy is to have students experience the first two strategies suggested in this chapter, or equivalent class-builder exercises. Even with this base, one teacher suggested that in addition to brainstorming, an exemplar would have increased student awareness of the types of topics to explore in groups. Teachers were most excited about the way students discovered and valued each other’s strengths. As summed up by one student, “Now we know what our skills and talents are for the next project.” In this case, the teacher used this strategy as a base for an upcoming multi-day group assignment and it enhanced the working relationships within groups because they already had an understanding of their similarities and differences. In fact, they also chose to maintain the same roles.

When roles were introduced in this strategy, teachers reported that the students willingly performed them, and even adapted some to fit their personalities. For example, one student declared himself the “creative consultant.” However, use of the roles varied among the teachers, depending upon expectations and operating norms previously established in each class. In every case, students had experienced co-operative group learning before, so they had been exposed to the logistical roles, which allowed one teacher to experiment with the support roles. If this is the first time students are encountering the use of roles, it was recommended to focus on the logistical roles only.

**Learning Expectations**
- Build inclusion and community by assisting students in identifying commonalities and differences in personal skills, interests, achievements, etc.
- Practice co-operative team skills and demonstrate/analyze effective roles in small groups.
- Demonstrate an ability to contribute to a positive climate in group settings (e.g.: respect the rights and opinions of others, accept personal responsibility for group duties, provide leadership when appropriate, and encourage others to participate).
- Demonstrate an ability to organize information effectively (e.g., using visual organizers).
- Compare various personal, societal and cultural beliefs about individuals and the functions of families.

**You Will Need**
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Role cards for the following team roles

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Logistical Roles:
Materials Handler - get/return materials for activities
Recorder - record ideas and decisions
Reporter - share with class
Timer - keep track of time

Support Roles:
Peacemaker - make sure that all participate positively
Supporter - praise the efforts and ideas of team mates
Checker - check for understanding and agreement
Observer - keeps a checklist of the group’s social skills

Steps at a Glance
Step 1
- Divide class into groups of four (for variety, consider using similar colour of clothing, birthday month, type of footwear, etc.).

Step 2
- Clarify the expectations of each role. Each member should select one logistical and one support role. The materials handler picks up a set of role cards (only needed for the support roles, since this is the more challenging) and has each member place one front of them.

Step 3
- Have the materials handler pick up a piece of chart paper/markers, and the recorders copy the visual organizer illustrated next. Model the activity by using an example of a group of people students would be aware of (maybe the student council, teaching staff, or for fun, characters on a commonly known television show). Explain that each group will be creating one of these organizers for their own team.
Step 4
- Instruct the groups to verbally brainstorm (approximately ten minutes) the qualities/talents/skills/beliefs of members, distinguishing between:
  EVERYs ... those items common to EVERY team member
  ONLYs ... an item unique to ONLY one team member

- Remind all team members to practice/observe roles while brainstorming.

Step 5
- Have the recorder list all common qualities/talents/skills/beliefs in the centre of the circle. Then have the recorder write each UNIQUE item on a line and the name of the person to whom it belongs below the line. Add more lines as necessary. Tell the timers they have ten minutes for this.

Step 6
- Direct reporters to share their graphic organizers, either as a whole class, or by joining up two or three groups.

Step 7
- Observers should report to their teams what social skills they observed being practiced by their group. For this to be a productive session, it is assumed that students would have had previous lessons on how specific social skills look/sound/feel.

Step 8
- As an extension, this activity can also be repeated with multiple themes (e.g., birthdays, holidays, family traditions, places in which they have lived, to which they have traveled, etc.).

Step 9
- Ask the following suggested post-activity reflection questions:
  ⇒ Why is finding out what you have in common a good way to get to know somebody?
  ⇒ What do you appreciate about this community?
  ⇒ How did you feel about sharing what you had in common?
  ⇒ How did you feel about finding out what made you unique?
  ⇒ Did you and your teammates honour the community agreements?
  ⇒ How did you and your teammates perform your assigned roles?
  ⇒ Was it easier to perform the logistical role or the support role? Why?
  ⇒ What will your team do differently to function even better next time?
Figure 3.3: Every's and Only's

Notes


References