

# Building a Community of Learners

Oregon Department of Education

<https://youtu.be/8Z4SvD6nyo>

Narrator: In this video, we will hear educators respond to the question, how do you help students to collaborate and work together to support their reading, writing, and oral language? We will first hear from Francesca Aultman, district language arts specialist, then Lisa Moreira, early reading specialist, and then Melissa Standley, first grade teacher. Setting up a classroom community.

Francesca: When I think about building a classroom community, I really think about how we're going to get to where we want to be as a whole. So while individual students may have individual goals for learning, ultimately, we all go farther if we're all in that together. And so, I really try to communicate with my students from day one that we are in this together. I start by building a community where we're really reading books together about building empathy, building classroom community. I share about myself with my students. I think it's really important for them to be able to trust me and part of that is sharing some of myself with them. And that kind of opens the door for them to share with each other about themselves. One of the things I talk about is that we have to model for our students what that looks like. So I'm really intentional about modeling kindness and empathy and question-asking in front of my students so that they see how I treat their classmates. And there's a lot of mirroring that takes place just from them seeing that modeling.

Narrator: Celebrating students.

Lisa: In creating a reading and writing community of learners, I look to celebrate students' growth. Motivation for more work comes from success from the work that you've already put in. And so I really try to recognize their hard work and show them how far their work has helped them to come. Also, I believe student choice can help in this. You know, you have to sometimes curate what they can choose from, but letting them choose, like, what story we're going to focus on or even something as simple as what color pen to work with. I think that sometimes makes them have a little more sense of control in the learning.

Narrator: Peers supporting peers.

Melissa: One more way that I'm really proud of my class for is we have what's called a discussion corner. So when they have a problem with each other, they invite their friend to the discussion corner to talk about what happened and how they can make it better, how they felt about it, and how they want to see it change. So that social emotional piece of regulating when you don't get your way or regulating when you're feeling frustrated is essential to be able to have classroom discussions. So I will heavily focus on those ways to communicate with peers that will translate into our academic circles. So we might have a morning circle about an issue that happened at recess, or we might have a morning circle about the number 17. Kids learn in here that they can become academic experts just like they can become a yoga expert or a breathing expert. And when they finish their work early, they get the opportunity to be a tiny teacher so they can go around and assist their peers. And a peer can say, "Yes, I really need somebody in my classroom to help me." Or they can say, "No, I want to struggle through this by myself first." And kind of decide and the kids practice inviting each other to help, saying, "No thank you, I'm not ready for help. Please come check with me later." But I feel like it makes them better learners because not everybody knows everything all the time and not everybody learns it at the same

rate. There are 20 little people in here and they're all learning things at a different pace. So if I can take some of that learning that came from frustrations or happiness or empathy or our peer relationships and tie it to being a scientist or an advanced mathematician, that the kids learn that this community will help them with things that they don't know just as well as they'll help them with things they know.

Narrator: To learn more, visit the framework website at [Oregon Instructional Frameworks dot org](http://OregonInstructionalFrameworks.org) and download the Early Literacy Framework.