

Today, let's learn from teachers

Categories: Uncategorized

"We are a nation divided" is the phrase that I have heard over and over again this morning. I saw it before I even got out of bed when I checked my phone to see who won the election. "We are a nation divided" was posted on my facebook feed by a dear friend. I crawled out of bed to face the day and as I was making coffee, I heard the news anchor on CNN start his segment with "We are a nation divided."

The election is over and our task now as a country is to figure out how to best unite as a community in order to work together over the next four years and beyond. **Let's learn from classroom teachers who build community with large groups of people every single day of their lives-the teachers who teach, shelter, and care for our children.**

At the beginning of any school year, students at all grade levels spend time thinking communally about ways they want their classroom to be. They ask and discuss questions like:

- What is important to us?
- How can we best work together?
- How will we feel safe to take risks so that we can learn?



They often think about one small step they can each take to make that change happen. **Let's try this where we live. How do I want my community to be and what is one small thing I can to impact my community positively?**

Teachers encourage students to really listen to one another, look one another in the eye when they are listening, and ask follow up questions that probe for understanding. They call attention to different points of view without judgement by asking questions like:

- Do you agree or disagree with the idea? Why do you think so?
- What would you like to add?
- What questions would you like to ask?



They do this so that students can get to know one another and learn from each others' perspectives. **Let's try this where we live. How can I really learn from others' perspectives?**

Teachers also spend time thinking about and discussing the very important topic of exclusion with their students. They ask and discuss with their students:

- Have you ever been left out of a group activity? What happened?
- Have you ever seen someone else being left out? How do you think that person felt?
- Why do we want to make sure everyone feels included? What can you do as a member of our community to make sure everyone is included?



Teachers know that exclusion is an emotional issue for all involved and everyone needs to feel safe and supported while discussing it. Teachers also know that it is normal for individuals to form closer bonds with some people than with others-but what is most important is to distinguishing between the appropriate expression of social preferences and the mean-spirited or deliberate isolation of others. Let's try this where we live. What can we do as a community to make sure everyone is included?

As we each end our day this evening and crawl back into bed, let's ask ourselves:

- What can I do to make my community stronger?
- How can I learn from my neighbor?
- How do I make sure everyone in my community feels included and heard?

We ARE stronger together.

Some resources for creating a collaborative classroom include the Caring School Community program. You can download the first eight weeks here of class meetings [here](#).