

Community Building

Workshop 3A | Wednesday, May 30 St. Peter's: 9:00-10:00am | Louisiana Gov. School: 1:00-2:00pm

Objective

In this fifth session, the concept of the “River Stories” is continued to demonstrate the ways in which our life journeys are the building blocks for community. The students have already prepared their own River Stories, and so, adding their creations to the greater classroom River Story will allow the Belizean students to understand their significant place as a contributor to the overall product of the group. By the end of the exercises in this session, the class will ultimately join all of its stories (bodies of water) to see that everyone’s experiences give significance and value to the greater community. This metaphor of the river is meant to be applied literally to the personal (the students) and the communal (Orange Walk).

After this workshop, the students and facilitators will:

- learn more about their peers’ life journeys
- note the multitude of ways in which elements in our lives intersect
- understand that their own “river” is a part of a much larger river—the river of the class community that is shaped by everyone else’s journey

Credits

-- The “Human Knot” activity included in this session has been adapted and modified from *Amigos de Las Americas: 2011 Program Guide* for our purposes in Belize. This resource was written by the administrative staff of this international, non-profit, non-governmental, cultural exchange and student leadership immersion organization.

--The small group discussion and large group sharing ceremony exercises included in this session are tools that originate from my own conception of what a useful group discussion might look like for our purposes in Belize.

Materials

- 4 Pre-completed, life-size models of a river
- Snacks for four (4) classrooms of Belizean students (two earlier/two later)

How to Prepare

In addition to including this workshop in the agenda of the “Belizean Curriculum Review” discussion, the Bonner facilitators should prepare by deciding who will facilitate the opening icebreaker and who will lead the closing group ceremony.

Brief Outline

The agenda of this one-hour workshop is as follows:

1. The “Human Knot” Icebreaker | 15 minutes
2. Small Group Discussion | 15 minutes

3. The Class is a River Ceremony | 20 minutes
4. Snack Time ☺ | 10 minutes

Facilitator Guidelines

1. The “Human Knot” Icebreaker | 15 minutes

Keeping the focus on leadership and team building, this opening exercise is sure to excite the Belizean students for our day’s store of activities.

As usual, ask the students to create a large circle by moving their desks/chairs to the perimeter of the classroom.

To begin:

1. Separate the number of student participants in the classroom in half.
2. Then, ask each of the two groups to form two separate circles in the center of the larger circle.
3. Next, instruct the students to make eye contact with the student who is directly across from them. Tell them to join both hands with this student.

At this point, all of the students’ arms in each group should be criss-crossed and in no particular sense of order.

4. Now, explain to the students that they must work together to unwind themselves back into a normal circle without letting go of each others’ hands!

Once the students finish, you may proceed with constructive questions from the previous day’s icebreaker (I.e. “What was the most challenging part...” and etc.)

2. Small Group Discussion | 15 minutes

After the icebreaker, ask the students to remain in their groups and to sit on the ground in the places they are at. At this time, the Bonner facilitators should begin handing back the “River Stories” that these students began working on yesterday.

After the students have their River Stories, the following questions can be used to guide a brief conversation among each of the two groups:

1. Ask each student to turn to the person they are sitting next to and to face one another (this should partner every student up with another student).

If someone does not have a partner, a Bonner facilitator or even the class teacher can fill in

2. Tell the students that we are going to allow each partner four minutes to explain their River Story to the other person sitting across from them. After the first four minutes is up, begin again with the other partner talking and the other listening.
3. Once the partner sharing is finished (approximately 8 minutes), go around the circle and ask each pair to share something interesting they learned about another person’s life journey (instruct the students to ask permission of the other to “share” before they do so with the larger group).

4. After approximately 7 minutes of group sharing, the two halves of the class can return to the desk/chairs for the final group activity of this session.

3. The Class is a River Ceremony | 20 minutes

As the students move back to their seats, the Bonner facilitators should prepare the space by putting the life-size model of the community river in the middle of the space.

Explain to the students that we will now combine “River Stories” as a class because “our lives are all a part of the same river and the same community.” The process for sharing is a flexible one and might proceed as follows:

1. The original facilitator can begin the sharing by standing up, holding their River Story up for all to see and briefly explaining a few things about their river.

This should only take about 30 seconds.

2. After explaining a little about their river, the Bonner should proceed to the center of the room and place their River on the ground as a part of the life-size river of life.
3. Continue around the circle (or “popcorn style”—when the spirit moves you) with student participants standing up to briefly share something about their own life’s flow, in turn, proceeding to add their river to the larger one in the center of the room.

A Bonner facilitator can be in the middle of the room taping these stories to the larger river so that they will not move around or fall off.

After everyone has shared, ask the class to think about:

1. “Did you learn something about someone else that you did not expect to?”
2. “What did it feel like to share your story with the group and add it to the larger river?”

As everyone consider these questions, tell the class that this giant river symbolizes the joined lives of everyone in the classroom and is a representation for them to keep as a reminder of their unity and connectedness as one community.

4. Snack Time ☺ | 10 minutes

This is the time to distribute the snacks to all of the students. Ask them to remain in their seats and to put their trash in the designated receptacles when they finish. Note that this ten minute period is the bridge from the first session into the second. Be sure that the snack break is brief to allow ample time for completion of the next hour’s worth of activities.