

COMMUNITY BUILDING PRACTICES

WHAT IS COMMUNITY BUILDING?

A **community** is a setting made up of individuals who come together for a common purpose. In an **inclusive space**, members of the community should feel that they are welcome, have a connection with those around them, and know that they are valued. **Community building** is the foundation for learning and creating an inclusive space.



COMMUNITY BUILDING FACILITATES...

Belonging: Students who feel like they belong in their community do better academically!

Group Interaction: Students that interact with one another get along better and students become more comfortable working in groups, which fosters a collaborative environment.

Attendance & Participation: By increasing the sense of community and belonging, students are more likely to come and participate.

Student Learning: When students feel like they belong, they feel safe and are in a good position to learn!

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Building a sense of community **prepares adults and youths alike to better handle challenges.**
- **Connecting to a supportive mentor might make the difference** between giving up on a problem versus trying one more time, or even not continuing the program versus returning to it.
- While building relationships can happen organically, often **it takes time!** It takes time for people to get familiar with one another, to open up, and to form trust.
- Through **intentional community building practices and activities**, you can facilitate the community building process and create genuine and positive relationships between students, mentors, and staff! See the next page for more details.



COMMUNITY BUILDING TIPS!



ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES!

When you first meet your youth, intentional community building activities help break the ice! Allow yourself to be vulnerable to develop trust with your youth. See additional resources for activities you can implement!

CONNECT WITH THEIR INTERESTS

Ask them about their interests outside of school. For instance, the tv shows they may watch, the sports they like to play, their plans for the weekend, etc. Remember this for the next time you see them! It really shows that you care and remember even the little things they share with you!



INVOLVE EVERYONE

Actively work to create a space where everyone feels free to contribute and participate. This may include moving often to engage students who may be more shy and who may be participating less. Be adaptive! Different people like to be involved in a different way.



THINK ABOUT THEIR PERSPECTIVE

Make the problem relatable by putting it in their perspective. This will help them understand the problem and make them more interested in the activity. If students don't know how to begin a problem, ask them to identify the things they know, ask them.

