

Bringing the Village to the Classroom

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Many learners face isolation from the community due to age, class, employment schedules and varied learning styles, as well as lack of information. The goal of this practice is to allow mentors or guest speakers to come into the classroom and lead discussions about the outside community. Activities target emotional and physical health; teaming and social service projects; goal setting, diversity and future planning; and community and cultural events. An artist, a nurse, a speaker on AIDS or a professional from a local business can bring variety to the classroom and contribute to a safe environment allowing learners to discover academic and personal skill building, as well as encouraging them to stay in school.

Speakers from public health organizations, social services, the Minnesota AIDS project or local businesses are sources of possible mentors to come to the classroom. A positive team-building exercise is to have the learners participate in a clothing or food drive. A trip to a museum, to nursing homes or to see local theater or cultural performances, can give learners a chance to broaden their horizons while experiencing something they would not ordinarily get the opportunity to experience.

This practice enables an instructor to update his or her curriculum constantly. This also simulates a more traditional environment where there is a nurse, instructors that are more diverse, supportive personnel and experiential learning opportunities.

Many community resources are free; for example, guest speakers are often willing to volunteer their time. Grants are often available to help support any speaker fees that may be charged. Field trips come with obvious costs, but clearly, the advantages are equally obvious.