

Culminating Activity for Cycle Theme

Community Potluck

Purpose: Our cycle theme this semester was “Purposeful Collaboration.” As a way to celebrate the community we’ve created, and to acknowledge all of our learning and hard work, we will share food and space. The end of the semester can also be a challenging time for students, who may feel overwhelmed with finals or anxiety about being away from school for two weeks. This will make sure that everyone in our learning community, regardless of their academic standing or home life, will have the opportunity to feel loved and connected.

Explanation: There are a lot of factors that need to be considered in order to finalize some of these details. First of all, we are a Title 1 school with free breakfast and lunch for all students; the stipulation being that no outside food can be served before 1:00 pm. I think it would be okay if we did it during lunch time, since students are allowed to bring their lunches. I would just have to clear this with our principal. Secondly, the scale of this celebration can become overwhelming when considering that we are in a school of 1400 students, 300 of whom are Montessori. I will most likely restrict the gathering so that it is either an entire class, or if the event is happening during lunches, I will invite students to come during their lunch time. This means that students who aren’t in the same classes will be eating together, but I actually like that! The only difficulty is with the planning portion. Can students invite a guest, a friend who maybe isn’t part of our class, or Montessori? I’m open to the idea, but hesitate because I envision this happening in my classroom, and I don’t have a ton of space.

All this to say that I will be planning for each class to plan their own gathering, but that this could be expanded into a true Community Potluck.

Materials: Paper and writing utensils for planning
Supply or food that students will bring

Optional: Teacher and/or students can create a slideshow detailing roles. Slideshow can also be used to assign roles to students (each student gets a slide), and used as a planning tool throughout this process.

Procedure:

Planning (a minimum of a week before)

1. How does your community gather? In table groups, discuss. Some considerations: celebrations, space, guests, food, activities, music. Give table groups around five minutes to talk.
2. Share out with the class. What was something that another group member said that stood out to you?
3. Does anyone do potlucks with their community? (Give space for students who may come from cultures--like me!--where potlucks are unheard of, or even considered bad form.)

This could also be a time to address the Potluck Problem: what if someone doesn't bring something? (Guide students to a sense of community, but also that there are other ways to contribute to a community besides bringing things!)

4. How do we want *this* community to gather? Brainstorm with your table groups. As groups are discussing, circulate. Guide groups to consider logistics and obstacles. Give this discussion ten minutes.
5. Make a plan. Nominate a Party Planner and a Head Chef. These will be the head organizers making sure that everyone's needs are met.
 - The Party Planner group is in charge of organizing the space, which includes storing food and materials, setting up, decorating, and cleaning up. People on the Party Planner team are responsible for bringing drinks, cups, plates, utensils, table cloths, and garbage bags. They can also plan decorations, create a playlist, write a toast, and create a greeting. One person on the Party Planner team can be the Reminder, who will send out reminders to everyone in the class the day before.
 - The Chefs are cooking and bringing the food. They must be mindful of allergies, likes and dislikes, and a variety of foods.

Both teams should be mindful of Montessori values while they plan (bringing healthy food, reducing waste when possible, etc). Allow students to choose groups, but offer guidance. For example, if more students want to be Party Planners, maybe assign them desserts or store-bought foods, so we actually have food at our potluck!

Event

1. Party Planners should communicate where supplies and food should be stored before the Potluck. This would be excellent information for the Reminder to include in their reminder the night before.
2. If time allows, some of the Party Planners can show up early to decorate or set up the space. If this isn't possible, they can do this at the beginning of class.
3. Chefs can use the English Workroom space to prepare food.
4. Party Planners should have an intentional seating plan, and a dedicated place for food and materials.
5. When everything is set up, we will begin. Party Planners will choose how we start, whether we eat or greet first, etc. Make time for the toast and any acknowledgements.
6. Party Planners will also organize the clean up. Plan for everything to be cleaned up and put away at least ten minutes before class ends so we have time to process.

AOP:

1. What are some examples of Productive Collaboration that we experienced today?
2. How was collaborating on a meal different from the other kinds of collaboration we've done this semester?
3. What were some anxieties you had about today? How did you cope or overcome?
4. What was your favorite part about this meal?
5. What are some takeaways or lessons for when we do this again?