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# Finding Our Strengths: Creating a Strong Classroom Community (3rd-6th grade)

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Finding Our Strengths: Creating a Strong Classroom Community

Grade Level: 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

Subject/Topic Area(s): Classroom Community, Social Skills, Social Studies, Writing

Designed By: Emily Barker Delgado

Time Frame: 8 Days

School District:

School:

School Address and Phone:

**Brief Summary of Unit** (Including curricular context and unit goals):

This unit is intended to help students identify their strengths, get to know their peers, and build classroom community from the beginning of the school year. The unit should be taught during the first three weeks of the school year and could begin as early as day 1 or 2. Throughout the unit, students will complete activities to help them uncover their strengths and intelligences, as well as those of their peers. The unit also challenges students to enact problem-solving skills and reflect on their effectiveness. The unit culminates with a performance tasks that asks students to work in small groups to solve potential problems the classroom community could encounter.

**Unit: Creating Classroom Community**  
**Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>**

### Stage 1: Desired Results

#### Understandings

*Students will understand that*

- *S/he has strengths, interests, and experience that make him/her unique.*
- *S/he can use his/her strengths to help the classroom community solve problems.*

#### Essential Questions

- What makes me unique?
- How can I use my strengths to help solve problems in our classroom?

#### Knowledge

*Students will know...*

Unit Vocabulary:

- **Strength:** *something you do well.*
- **Interest:** *something you enjoy doing or learning about.*
- **Experience:** *something you have done, seen, heard, or been a part of.*
- **Community:** *a group of people who work together and depend on each other*
- **Multiple Intelligences:** *how you solve problems*

#### Skills

*Students will be able to...*

- *Write an original diamante poem*
- *Write a reflective paragraph*
- *Present information through written, oral, and visual communication*
- *Identify strengths and weaknesses in both themselves and in others*

### Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

#### Performance Task:

Students will work together to create a list of potential problems our classroom community could encounter this school year. Students will then choose one of these problems and create a plan to solve this problem if and when it arises. Working in small groups, students will devise and present their plan, focusing on how they can use their strengths, interests, and experiences as an asset to the community.

#### Other evidence:

pre/post assessments, multiple intelligences inventory, strengths/interests/experiences chart, diamante poem, problem solving activities and reflections, class discussions

### Stage 3: Learning Activities

**Read before beginning unit:** This unit should be taught in the first two to three weeks of the school year. For this unit to be successful it is important you have established classroom norms and discussed best practices for working in groups before beginning or by the end of day 2. It is also recommended that you continue additional icebreaker activities outside of this unit for the first few days. For some ideas on additional activities, I recommend *Creating Caring Classrooms* by Kathleen Gould Lundy and Larry Swartz (ISBN: 987-1-55138-270-8).

#### Days 1-2: Introduction Activities

##### Day 1

Have students begin by completing the pre-assessment.

Introduce the first essential question: **What makes me unique?**

Activity: Have students list three things about themselves that they think makes them unique. Once all students have written their lists, go around the room and have each student say one thing off of their list. If someone else in the class has already said an item on their list, they need to choose a different one.

Introduce the vocabulary words **strength, interest, and experience**.

Have students create a strengths/interests/experiences chart (see example in unit materials). Have students share their charts with partners, in small groups, or through mix-pair-share. These charts will then go onto your **student data wall** (see example in unit materials).

## **Day 2**

Revisit the first essential question: **What makes me unique?**

Introduce **multiple intelligences**.

These video resources may help to explain these concepts to your students:

**multiple intelligences:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBbmerzR2JI>

Students should complete the multiple intelligences inventory today.

Multiple Intelligences Inventories (choose 1):

<http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-assessment>

<https://printables.scholastic.com/content/stores/printables/priv/04/9780439590204-001.pdf>

Have students add their data to the **student data wall**.

## **Day 3: Diamante Poems**

Revisit the first essential question: **What makes me unique?**

Students will use their strengths/interests/experiences chart and information from other introduction activities to help them write a diamante poem (see lesson plan in unit materials). Students should then be given a time to share their poems either with the whole class or with multiple peers through a mix, pair, share activity.

## **Days 4: Problem Solving**

Revisit the first essential question: **What makes me unique?**

Introduce the second essential question: **How can I use my strengths to help solve problems in our classroom?**

Give the students a challenge to complete in groups (see the challenge page for options and descriptions of challenges). time to complete it. Once the challenge is complete, reflect upon the experience. Then introduce and discuss these strategies for social problem solving:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Think of solutions.
3. Consider the effects of the solutions.
4. Choose and implement a solution.
5. Reflect

Have the students repeat the challenge, but give them 5 to 10 minutes before the challenge to plan together using the social problem solving steps.

Once both challenges are complete, give each student time to reflect. Create a quiet environment and give students 10 minutes to think about the experience and write down their thoughts before leading a debriefing discussion with the class.

### **Days 5-7: Performance Task**

#### **Day 5:**

Revisit the essential questions:

- **What makes me unique?**
- **How can I use my strengths to help solve problems in our classroom?**

As a class, brainstorm a list of potential problems encountered by classroom communities. Students should then reflect on what they have learned about themselves and their classmates and form teams to solve one of the potential problems. This day will focus on identifying problems, choosing teams, and determining how the various qualities of group members can help the group move forward to solving the problem.

**Day 6:** Student teams will work on creating their plans and visual aids.

**Day 7:** Student will individually reflect on the activity as outlined in the performance task rubric and present their solutions to the class.

#### **Day 8: Debrief/Look Ahead**

Have students complete the post-assessment. Return their pre-assessment to them and ask them to compare the answers they gave at the beginning of the unit to the answers they gave on the post-assessment. Have them reflect on the following questions:

1. How did my answers change from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment?
2. If my answers changed, why did that happen? If they did not change, why did that happen?
3. What activity in this unit was most meaningful to you?

Give students 10 minutes to think about these questions and write their responses before discussing them with the class or in small groups.

**Final Task:** Have students write the one word they feel best describes them on a sticky note or index card. Their name does not have to be visible. Add these cards to the student data wall and keep them up throughout the year. If, at some point, students feel a new word better describes them, they should have the freedom to replace or change their card.