

BUILDING COMMUNITY

When you go back to your school, we are challenging you to work toward building a community where students feel physically and emotionally safe, where they feel included – a part of something important. Building community is not easy. It is, by definition, not something you can do alone. You'll need help. But there are some steps that you can follow that will make it easier.

1. The Welcome

First – start the school year by being personally welcoming. At Mt Adams you are met by enthusiastic JCs who personally carry your luggage, ask about your name and your school. Your dorm JC has a place waiting for you – maybe a treat or inspiring words on your bunk. At school you already probably have a freshman orientation – how can you make it more personal? Do you have assigned upperclassman buddies for each person? One school we know spends the entire orientation with the theme – “we need you.”

2. The Message

At camp we talk about the message behind the message. Our message is servant leadership and love. We talk about love from the first keynote, each night with the closing, in counsel, in dorms. At school you need to clarify your message – why is the school something worth being involved in and engaged with? What is your community trying to accomplish?

3. Beach Heads

In WWII, the Allied Forces couldn't begin to free France, and get into Germany, until it could actually get people into France. This happened along the beaches of Normandy. Once the Allied Forces got a small piece of beach, they could land troops, supplies etc. At your school, you have to get small groups who can help you get started – the beachheads within your school. What existing groups can you start with? Who is going to buy-in to your message and be an existing small community that can help? It might be a sports team, it might be the debate club. Don't try to change your school with just the help of the small number of dedicated ASB officers – go create beachheads.

4. Community Building Opportunities

Community gets built in big and small ways. People feel part of a community, when the community identifies them as part. Look for ways to use people's names. At camp we started the first night with a couple of SC's who got on stage and did a silly speech that used every single delegate's name. We did the dance on the first night – not a typical one – but one that asked all to participate and meet as many of you as possible. You have lots of opportunities at assemblies, on posters in the hall, over the intercom, in homerooms to be inclusive and make people feel pulled in.

Building Community (continued)

5. Leadership is Facilitation, not Control

DO NOT do everything yourself. Servant leadership is not about exhausting yourself doing it all. It is about being the person who goes out and finds others to do. Encourage the shy. Ask those who are organized, but not part of ASB. Here at Mt. Adams we ask you to help us put on camp – the Sunday Service, the Banquet, the Talent Spotlights, the Senate Selection Committee, the Random Acts of Kindness group, the hike to the waterfall. We reach out to those who seem interested. Quickly people catch on that they can put their own ideas into action when they see that the servant leaders of the school are asking for and encouraging their ideas.

6. Self-Care

To quote SC Josh Edison, “I realized that I had worked so hard to build a community but had made a huge mistake, I HAD NOT PUT MYSELF IN THAT COMMUNITY. I was thinking about everything others needed and had left myself without a community that I could get nourishment and encouragement from. You can’t do anyone else any good if your needs are not getting taken care of. While it may appear noble, if I don’t focus on myself at all, have I really done a good thing for anyone? Like they say on the airplane, PUTTING ON YOUR OWN OXYGEN DEVICE FIRST IS NOT SELFISH, IT PUTS YOU IN THE BEST POSITION TO HELP OTHERS. When you are thinking about building community, be focused outward, but always be inwardly aware.”