



SACRED HEART EDUCATION

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BUILDING COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY

# Building Community

## COMMUNITY

Essentially the Goal of Community is about the fostering of relationships in an atmosphere of mutual interaction, where those involved both give and receive. Another way of putting it would be that the Goal of Community is attempting to live the motto 'Cor Unum' ('One Heart').

Mary Cavanagh, rscj, in her letter January 2000 introducing Heritage and Horizon says:

*'A school will stand or fall by its relationships. The relationship between staff and pupils/students in our school communities gives shape to the mission of those schools.'*

*'The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed.'*

*'Bhí na creidhmhig go léir in aon bhuíon le chéile agus bhí gach ní i bpáirt acu; dhíolaidís a gcuid sealúchais agus a gcuid maoine agus roinnidís a luach ar chách de réir mar a bhíodh aon duine acu ar an chaolchuid.'*

*'Dawk kollha li kienu jemmnu kienu jghixu lkoll flimkien, faga waħda, u kienu jaqsmu kollox bejniethom, ibighu gidhom u kull ma kellhom u jqassmu d-dħul bejn kulħadd, skont il-ftiega ta' kull wieħed.'*

**Acts 2: 44-45**

### THE CHALLENGE

Therefore our challenge is to aim that:

- No pupil/staff member should finish the school year with a sense of marginalisation or of feeling undervalued.
- Our work on the Goal of Community has helped prepare our pupils to become, in the future, agents of change and responsible citizens who can contribute meaningfully to society.

# How can we achieve these objectives?

## HERITAGE AND HORIZON RECOMMENDS:

1. Developing a participative approach which ensures:

- Involvement with pupils
- Involvement with staff
- Involvement of parents, parish and wider community

2. Establishing and reviewing School Policies and Practices which focus on:

- Understanding
- Caring
- Compassion
- Forgiveness
- Celebrating difference

3. Teaching particular skills which emphasise:

- Listening, caring, co-operating
- Communication
- Self-restraint
- An appreciation of the other person as "other, different, likeable"

4. Helping all pupils to become responsible citizens who can:

- Build community
- Appreciate difference

### Some Key Words

- **Communication**
- **Community**
- **Compassion**
- **Caring**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Know worth of school**
- **Pride**
- **Inclusiveness**
- **Identity**
- **Role models**
- **Visits in/out**
- **Relationship**

### SUGGESTED EXERCISES:

- Utilise teaching methodologies that are structured around participation and mutual learning, e.g. Cooperative Learning.
- Ask pupils to identify a community cause or issue and to suggest ways of resolving it. Perhaps inaugurate a Cause of the Month.
- Discuss the school's role in the community.
- Organise student committees to deal with real issues both in the school and in the broader community.
- Ask some staff members, parents and pupils to jointly act in the interest of a community cause, e.g. a Hospital Visitation Group.
- Ask pupils to nominate a person who is identified with community activities and to invite this person to address the class.
- Arrange special classes on the 'soft skills', e.g. communication, listening, empathetic verbal behaviour, the power and meaning of forgiveness.
- Take the opportunity to demonstrate inclusive patterns of behaviour in the classroom.
- Build awareness about the diversity of the human race.
- Ensure that the values associated with this Goal are suitably stressed when teaching relevant formal syllabi, e.g. syllabi dealing with social, economic, business or other community related subjects.

### How Can We Evaluate Outcomes?

- Review the state of the school's physical environment. Does it engender pride and satisfaction?
- Observe the standard of behaviour in the school and estimate its community orientation.
- Consider whether a sufficient number of group oriented activities are taking place in the school. Could further benefits accrue from additional activities?
- Survey the opinions of pupils, staff and parents, asking such questions as 'To what extent do you believe that our school exhibits a sense of community?'
- Take an inventory of all posters, displays and slogans and assess the proportion that emphasise community.
- Carry out a survey to establish whether any pupils feel a sense of isolation.



