



### We Are All Change Makers

Next to family nurturing, school connectedness is the most important protective factor in a young person's life. Students with strong connections to school are less likely to exhibit emotional distress, display disruptive behaviour, or engage in violence. They are less likely to use alcohol or other drugs in unhealthy ways or become sexually active early. But how can we build connectedness?

No magic solution exists. Building a sense of connectedness within a school is a complex process. According to John Dewey part of the answer is to make our schools places of . That may sound strange, but Dewey is suggesting that to educate we need to foster communication among students, engage them in open inquiry rather than providing authoritative instruction and expand their excitement by building upon their interests. He believed schools need to be democratic communities in which students feel valued, included and respected.

Creating such school communities takes time and plenty of intention and effort – and young people's engagement in the process is critical. This inquiry lesson encourages students to reflect on Margaret Wheatley's poem, and to engage in behaviour that builds the skills of connectedness, of democracy.



Begin by providing students with a copy of the [handout](#) and having them read Margaret Wheatley's poem,

1. Draw attention to the first four lines of the poem.

Ask the students to close their eyes and envision an ideal school community. Then engage them in dialogue about community. Some of the questions below may be useful.

- a. What is a community? What does it look and sound like? How does it feel?
- b. What do you think the power of a community is?
- c. Is it important to be part of a community? Why or why not?
- d. How can we build an ideal school community? Explain.
- e. Throughout history, people have used alcohol and other substances for a variety of reasons (e.g., as medicine, in rituals, to have fun). Do drugs build community or destroy it? Explain your views.



2. Draw attention to the following section of the poem.

Again, engage students in dialogue using questions such as:

- a. Do you have to be brave to start some conversations? What conversations take courage? Do conversations about drugs take courage? Explain.
- b. Do you have to be brave to talk to certain people? Who is it hard to talk to? Who is it easy to talk to?
- c. How do drugs change the ability to talk to people? Discuss





- Apply appropriate strategies to comprehend written, oral, and v(d)mdd90.6)2xes 2.5 .6(www.6)-6)3i6)-1.qu6)10.6)-yx