



Better Together
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Four first grade classes launched a shared project guided by the question, “What makes up a community?” Rather than defining the word for students, teachers filled the room with photos and videos of people working together and asked what they noticed. From there, students identified groups they wanted to know more about. They decided on builders, firefighters, cooks, and scientists. Each class chose a group to focus on, generated their own research questions, planned how to find answers, and carried out fieldwork (for example, classes visited a neuroscience lab, a construction site, a fire station, and the school kitchen). Each class then took action in the role they had studied: the scientists hosted a science fair, the builders designed a prototype to stabilize a sinking playground toy, the firefighters organized a mini fire drill for all first graders, and the cooks hosted a thank-you breakfast for the school kitchen team.

Teacher Reflection

What stood out the most was how much ownership students had. Being able to ask questions that guided the inquiry and make decisions alongside us gave them a sense of agency and purpose. My class decided to dive deeper into the community of scientists. The highlight of the project for me was watching them step into the role of scientists that they naturally are. They asked questions, formed hypotheses, investigated, reflected, and found some answers—truly living as scientists throughout the journey.

—*Stephanie Halpern, Head Teacher*

Student Reflection

One special memory was when we visited Instituto Butantã. It was really fun. I was with my friends and my class, and I saw lots of animals and scientists. They help everyone there, and they help each other. They also helped answer our questions. Being there as a group was special because we were learning as a group, as a community.

—*B.Fetter*

I really liked it when we cooked for our school cooking team. This was our final product. We, the kids, cooked for the people who cook for us. I remember that I brought a picnic towel from home, and we also made pink lemonade. We worked as a community to plan everything, make the cake and the lemonade, and bring things for the picnic. I think this was really important.

—*E. Rezende*

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