ASSINIBOINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUSES ARE LOCATED ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF TREATY NO. 1 AND TREATY NO. 2, AND THE SHARED TRADITIONAL LANDS OF CREE, OJI-CREE, DAKOTA, DENE AND ANISHINABEK/OJIBWE PEOPLES, AND THE HOMELAND OF THE MÉTIS NATION.

ICE BREAKERS

May 7, 2021

Purpose

This document outlines some icebreakers that could be used to build relationships and create community in an online or blended class.

Background

Icebreakers are short activities which can be used to encourage connection between students and with the instructor. Icebreakers can be used for various goals including learning students names, discovering student interests, connecting students together, helps students feel comfortable in an online environment, and developing a positive learning environment (Banna et al., 2015; Chen et al., n.d.; Deering, 2011). Because icebreakers promote interactions, they can support student engagement with course content (*Icebreakers for Online Classes*, 2020).   In a study, over 90% of students rated icebreakers as important or very important to their course engagement (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018). People are craving connection with their classmates and their instructors. It may seem trivial but giving everyone a chance to connect could make a huge positive impact

How To

Start small
Warm students up to engagement in the class by using small and informal icebreakers to get students used to using the technology for

Walk the talk
When asking students to do an activity, model what you want them to

Consider the goal
Think about your reason for including this activity in your class. This will help you to choose an icebreaker that will meet your needs. Instructors use icebreakers to establish a feeling of community, assess students' prior knowledge and experience, and to support students in working and learning together in your course (*Icebreakers for Online Classes*, 2020).

Relate the activity to your course
Ice breakers can be used as an opportunity to assess prior knowledge and experience of learners. You could ask questions that encourage students to anticipate what they will be learning, review previous classes, or highlight important information from pre-reading or watching.

Provide Structure and Expectations
Students need clear instructions so that they know what to do and how to prepare for the ice breaker activities.

Have fun
Keep icebreakers short and simple especially as students get used to doing them.

Examples of Icebreakers

1. **Introduce your neighbor**
   Break students into pairs (use break out rooms for an online class). Have students interview their neighbor based upon prompting questions. Depending on class size have everyone

introduce their neighbor to the full group, or put students in groups of four and introduce their neighbors there.

2. **Desert Island**
   Student describe the five things that they would bring with them to a desert island, the only rule is it can't be a person. This is a strategy that could be done asynchronously on a discussion board or live in a Zoom call.

3. **Reading Re-Cap**
   Using the polling feature on Zoom to get your students' take on a reading, assignment, discussion, or other part of the class

4. **Meme**
   Asking your students to post their favourite meme of the moment on a shared discussion board or messaging thread (with a reminder to keep it classroom appropriate). This could also be related to course content.

5. **GIF**
   Prompting your students to describe themselves in 3 GIFs and post them on a shared discussion board or messaging thread

6. **Media Check in**
   Asking them what their TV/movie binge of the moment is and to share a three sentence summary for the class

7. **Photo Sharing**
   Giving everyone an exercise to find a photo on their phone that's especially meaningful to them (that they're willing to share) and tell the class about it

8. **Snacking**
   Posing the question: "what is your go-to snack when studying at home?"

9. **Rose, Thorn and Bud**
   Prompting reflection, ask your students to name a rose (something they liked about the week), thorn (something they didn't), and bud (something they're excited about)

10. **Self-Care Selfie**
    Encouraging students to share their self-care selfies on a shared discussion board or messaging thread

11. **Emoji**
    Asking everyone to share or describe their favourite emoji to use

References

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