Beyond the Discussion Forum: Engaging Online Learners

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Learning Outcomes

1. Identify an online icebreaker to promote student engagement.
2. Discuss strategies to increase student engagement when using online discussions.
3. Describe at least two ways direct instruction can be used in online classes.
4. Identify at least 2 ways to engage online learners in collaborative learning activities beyond traditional discussions.
Online Learners

Creating a Community of Inquiry

- Teaching Presence
- Social Presence
- Cognitive Presence

Most Important Engagement Strategy?

Icebreaker Discussion
Based on results from study on graduate students at 8 different institutions

Martin and Bolliger (2018)

Tips for Online Icebreakers

- Require Video and Text
  - Video introduction and course overview
- Connections to Content
  - Syllabus, course content
- Connections to Peers
  - Similarities, questions
Share an Idea for an Online Icebreaker

Traditional Online Discussions

Shadiquah’s Experience
Video in Conversations

Adding video to the online conversations increased student perception of social presence.

Social Presence

Social Presence (Median Score)

Text-Based Conversation  Video-Enhanced Conversation

Clark, Strudler & Grove (2015)

But Text is Important too…

Video + Text = Student Satisfaction

Fernandez, Simo, Castillo & Sallan (2014)
Instructor Presence in Discussions

- Moderate involvement is best
- Time spent in class is most important factor

Cranney, Wallace, Alexander, & Alfano (2011); Morris, Xu, and Finnegan (2005)

Ask Yourself

Is the discussion the best way to achieve the learning objective for the module?
Ask Yourself

If yes...
- Are instructions clear for initial and follow up posts?
- Did you communicate the why and purpose?
- Have you “mixed it up” with different types of questions?

If no...
- What other synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning strategies might work best?
  - Direct instruction?
  - Independent work?
  - Partner work?
  - Group work?

Veronica’s Experience
Direct Instruction

- Introduction to Course
- Assignment Information
- Lectures
- Demonstrations
- Guest Lecturers

Direct Instruction Example EDLD 831- The Scholarly Practitioner

- Welcome to the Course Screencast
- Live Webinars with National Experts
- Recorded Feedback to Class about Assignments
- Recorded Lectures and Demonstrations
- Summarizing Discussions
- Individualized Feedback and Support through Synchronous and Asynchronous Conversations
A Variety of Learning Tasks

Examples from EDLD 831
The Scholarly Practitioner

- Whole Class Discussion
- Small Group Presentation and Discussion
- Independent Work - Empathy
- Interviews and Annotated Bibliography, Blog
- Partner Activity - Blog Critique
One-on-One Meetings with Students

- Create space for each student
- Students can sign up for an appointment time via Google Doc

Action Plan

What is one way you can go beyond the traditional discussion board to engage online learners?