Community Before Content: Strategies for Online Learning Success

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Check-in

1. Zoom Poll

1. Chat Question

Which place on campus do you miss the most right now?
“I enter the classroom with the assumption that we must build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor.”

“It has been my experience that one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice.”

Teaching to Transgress by bell hooks
Community matters at Loyola

Themes from Spring 2020

student data:

Connection

Gratitude

Organization

Context
Community matters in the literature

- **Social-belonging intervention** improves academic outcomes & longitudinal life outcomes for Black students (Brady, Cohen, Jarvis, & Walton, 2020)

- Belonging, interactions, and connections increase the potential for knowledge-building (Delahunty, Verenikina, & Jones, 2014)

- Reduces feelings of isolation and lowers risk of attrition (Owens, Hardcastle, & Richardson, 2009)

- Increases perceived learning and satisfaction with learning experiences (Liu, Magjuka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007)

- Community enhances learning & enhances social support. Social support **buffers stress** (Watkins & Hill, 2018)
# Community matters to you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I like to use <strong>breakout groups</strong> and visit each room</th>
<th>I often <strong>play music</strong> (a song related to the theme of the day) while students are walking in before class begins (seems hard to replicate online!)</th>
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<td><strong>Sharing personal experiences</strong> and encouraging students to do the same; frequent <strong>use of students’ names</strong></td>
<td>I usually have students <strong>work in groups</strong> to solve econ problems once a week so they get to know each other and I actively circulate among the groups</td>
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<td>Take time to engage in conversation or opinion on a <strong>current event/topic relevant to the students</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meet 3-4 people</strong> the first class as a <strong>networking exercise</strong>, a central concept in my class</td>
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<td>Build trust over time by the way that I respond to <strong>students</strong> - respectfully, encouraging questions, etc.</td>
<td>I use <strong>group projects, discussion using Flipgrid and Moodle forum, role playing</strong></td>
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Attributes of community

**Belonging & learning**

- **Connect**
- **Trust**
- **Communicate**

**Col: Social Presence**

- Identify with the community
- Trusting environment
- Develop relationships
Questions about building community

- Is it worthwhile and possible in a 90 student class?

- How can we build community fully online and in hybrid mode?

- Do methods of building community differ by age/development (i.e., UG vs Grad)?

- Introductory courses are lecture-heavy because by definition students don’t know much about the topic. How to ameliorate this?

- In a rigorous pre-health course, anything outside of material may be viewed as superfluous to students.

- How do I engage the quiet ones? How do I handle the overeager ones?

- How to handle the tough conversations I usually do in person (on racial injustice, redlining, forgiveness in cases of abuse, etc.)

- What are the best ways to really foster collaboration? Please don’t just say forum.
How to build community

● Establish **group norms** for class climate
● Intentional & predictable **check-ins to** make space for real life & touch base about learning
● **Breakout groups** bring people together
● **Office hours** promote continuous & flexible communication
● Timely, kind, & rigorous **feedback** is an opportunity to continue the conversation
How to build community (per ODTL)

Maximize high-touch social learning experiences:

- Think pair share
- In the news
- Pass a problem
- List group label
- Dyadic interviews
- 5-3-1

MORE STRATEGIES

IN THE NEWS

- Ask students to bring to class articles, news items, editorials, and or cartoons related to the topic of the class session.
- Divide class into subgroups and ask them to share their items with each other and choose 2-3 that are most interesting.
- Reconvene the entire class and ask representatives from each subgroup to share their choices with all.
- As groups are reporting, listen for important points that you will address in the class and use that information to promote discussion and make connections.

CLASSIFY, CLARIFY, ORGANIZE

- Create notecards or pictures (could be pictures, phrases, single words) related to concepts that can be classified or ordered in 2 or more groups.
- Give each student in the class one card that will fit into at least 1 category or group.
- Move around and view each other’s cards. Then encourage students to move around the room to find others who they could group with so they are somehow related.
- When students believe they have classified themselves, give the group a few minutes to identify its category and determine how the parts are related.
- Each group should report its findings to the class and other groups can interject or add comments.
- After each group presents, reinforce key points.

https://www.loyola.edu/department/digital-teaching-learning/course-design/continuation-of-teaching
Tools for building community

- Flipgrid video introductions - instructor, students
- Audio / video announcements - what to expect this week
- Free choice participation (text, video, audio, diagram, outline, song, art...)
- Padlet for collaboration
- Polls/surveys (qualtrics, google, zoom, poll everywhere) - precourse & along the way
Breakout Groups

12-15min to connect and collaborate

● Click the link in the chat to open our Padlet
● Once in breakout rooms:
  ○ After listening and engaging in this discussion, please share your thoughts about how to connect, trust, and communicate in your classes
  ○ Add your ideas to the Padlet to share with everyone
Recap: connect, trust, communicate

- **Connect**: Asked about & built on your experiences using pre-session survey, chat check-in
- **Trust**: Success is the intent, partners in learning, provided several ways to foster successful communities
- **Communicate**: Clear is kind: shared purpose, multimodal communication, authentic message
Building community works

“I felt the genuine concern and understanding for us both as students and just as people.”

“You never fail to connect with students and I am inspired by the example you set for us both as a professional and as an individual.”

“I wanted to write you an email to thank you for making this class feel normal. Once I got home from Loyola, my motivation tanked, I had no desire to put effort in and I saw the change especially with my art. Your class was literally my reason for getting out of bed on Monday and actually being excited about joining your zoom. How you continued like it was a normal in person class gave me that connection to Loyola and I can’t thank you enough for how you have dealt with this situation.”
Empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risk.

~ bell hooks
Online Community Building Resources

Flipgrid: https://info.flipgrid.com/

Jamboard: https://jamboard.google.com

Padlet: https://padlet.com

Wired Ivy podcast: https://wiredivy.org/; Apple podcasts

**LUM ODTL: https://www.loyola.edu/department/digital-teaching-learning**


