CREATING COMMUNITY IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Amy L. Schelling
2012

“Developers of online learning must pay attention to the fostering of social interactions across a group of learners, which ultimately contributes to a strong sense of community in an online atmosphere” (West et al., 2012)
Creating and Sustaining Instructor Cyber Presence

• Timely feedback... Personalized and Meaningful
• Audio Feedback
• Voice Announcements

“research findings indicate that the social presence of instructors profoundly influences students’ and instructors’ account of the online learning experience” (Hodges, C. and Cowan, S., 2012)
Creating and Sustaining Student Engagement

• Course Navigation Video and Document

• Meaningful use of Discussion Board and Journal tools
  • Generating dialogue’s
  • Promotes inquiry and reflection
  • Knowledge construction vs. acquisition

“The online discussion board provides a unique potential based on the capacity of the discussion board to support higher-order constructivist learning and the development of a learning community’ (Levine, S., 2007)
Creating and Fostering a Community of Learners

- Icebreaker DB activity/instructor video
- Photo Album

- Collaborative Projects
  - Utilizing the BB wiki tool

  A wiki is...
  - Like a webpage or collaborative work space
  - Group members can add and edit content collectively
  - Instructors can monitor each group members contributions to the wiki

“Success in virtual environments is being attributed increasingly to collaborative efforts within and between groups” (Arbaugh, J.B. and Hornik, S., 2006)
A Sample Collaborative Project Lesson Plan

• Expert Panels are formed around a list of issues impacting individuals with a CI
• Groups engage in researching the issue and present their findings by creating a wiki
• I introduce the project and provide directions through the use of a wiki (modeling)

• Groups have one week to research and place content in their wiki
• Groups then have one additional week to read, comment and engage in discussions with other Expert Panel groups
“Technologies such as computers (or pencils) don’t have predetermined impacts; it’s their uses that influence outcomes” (Ehrmann, S., 1999)


