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Fostering Belonging with AI

Practical Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms

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Welcome & Introduction (5 minutes)

Hear from a Peer (15 minutes)

Create an AI-Powered Peer Collaboration Activity (35 minutes)

Thank you and conclusion (5 minutes)

Join the Conversation!

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Say hello!

Using iClicker, please briefly introduce yourself with your name, your institution, and your course area

(short answer)

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Hear from a Peer

Belonging

- a positive affective state that involves feelings of comfort and security derived from the perception that one is an integral part of a community, place, organization, or institution.

- a student's feeling of being accepted, respected, valued, and connected to their classroom community, including peers and faculty, where they feel comfortable being their authentic selves and can participate fully in the academic and social life of the institution

- students having a sense of being an integral part of the classroom environment.

Why Does Belonging Matter in Higher Education?

Belonging is critical for student success

- Leads to higher engagement, motivation, and persistence
- Supports historically underrepresented students
- Reduces feelings of isolation in online/hybrid learning

Institutions are increasingly recognizing belonging as a key educational outcome

What Does Belonging Look Like in the Classroom?

Building belonging means:

- Encouraging student voice & participation
- Creating inclusive learning materials
- Designing collaborative activities
- Providing personalized feedback & support

Traditional Strategies for Fostering Belonging

- Humanize the Course: Intentional course design and instruction delivery
- Inclusive Icebreakers: Course-related introductions
- Peer Collaboration: Group work & discussion forums
- Personalized Feedback: Addressing student needs directly
- Scaffolded Support: Differentiated instruction

AI is a tool, not a replacement for human connection. Thoughtful and sparing integration can streamline your work and enhance belonging.

- AI helps personalize student experiences
- AI can generate inclusive learning materials
- AI facilitates peer interaction and engagement
- AI streamlines instructor workload, allowing more time for human connection

Example 1 – AI for Inclusive Icebreakers

- AI-generated discussion prompts related to course themes
- Tailored to students' backgrounds and experiences
- Example: AI creates an introduction prompt connecting macroeconomic principles to students' real-world experiences

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Example 2 – AI-Powered Personalized Feedback

- AI-assisted rubric-based feedback
- Helps students receive and apply constructive feedback
- Example: AI highlights common strengths and areas for improvement in student work

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Example 3 – AI for Peer Engagement & Reflection

- AI-generated peer feedback prompts
- Helps students engage meaningfully with each other’s work
- Example: Structured AI-assisted peer review in a writing-intensive course

Example 4 – AI-Powered Student-Led Inquiry & Research

- AI as a research assistant for students
- Encourages critical thinking and evaluation of sources
- Example: Students use AI to analyze economic policies, historical trends, or case studies, then critique the AI's response. Then have students present their work to the class or in small groups. Can couple with a peer review.

Connecting to Today's Activity

- We will use AI to help us design a group assignment and/or peer feedback activity
- Focus on inclusive, structured assignments and feedback
- Apply AI tools to create meaningful peer engagement

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What are some ways you foster belonging in your classroom?

(short answer)

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Create an AI-Powered Peer Collaboration Activity

Craft your AI-Powered Peer Collaboration Activity

How Collaborative Learning Fosters Belonging

- **Builds Peer Connections** – Encourages interaction and reduces isolation.
- **Creates a Supportive Environment** – Fosters encouragement and inclusion.
- **Amplifies Diverse Perspectives** – Helps students feel valued and heard.
- **Promotes Active Participation** – Ensures every student has a role.
- **Boosts Confidence & Trust** – Provides a safe space for expression.
- **Reinforces Shared Goals** – Strengthens community and teamwork.
- **Develops Communication Skills** – Encourages respectful dialogue.
- **Reduces Anxiety & Stress** – Makes learning more approachable

Craft your AI-Powered Peer Collaboration Activity

Goal of This Activity

- **Transform an individual activity into a structured, inclusive peer collaboration experience**, encouraging meaningful student interaction.
- **Leverage AI-powered prompts** to guide students in **group work or peer feedback**, enhancing engagement and fostering a sense of belonging.
- **Help students build essential collaboration skills**, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, while ensuring balanced participation.

Step 1 - Identifying a Solo Activity to Transform

Select an existing activity that currently has no group element.
Common solo activities:

- Writing reflections, reading responses
- Problem-solving exercises, practice questions
- Case study analyses, lab reports, concept mapping

Think about opportunities for collaboration – Could students benefit from:

- **Discussing different approaches?** (e.g., peer critique on writing)
- **Working together to solve a problem?** (e.g., group-based case study analysis)
- **Sharing perspectives?** (e.g., collaborative reading discussion)
- **Co-creating a final product?** (e.g., joint concept mapping)

Identify the key goals of the solo assignment that you'd like to keep in the new collaborative activity.

Step 2 - Group Work or Peer Feedback?

Decide how to introduce collaboration in your activity:

- 🔄 **Group Activity** – Students work together toward a shared goal.
- 💬 **Peer Feedback** – Students review and respond to each other's work.

🔄 **When to Choose Group Work:**

- Best for activities that benefit from multiple perspectives, such as case studies, brainstorming, and problem-solving.
- Works well for collaborative creation, including co-writing, concept mapping, and group presentations.
- Effective for projects where students build on each other's ideas, like debates or design challenges.

💬 **When to Choose Peer Feedback:**

- Ideal for activities that emphasize individual thinking and refinement, such as writing drafts and research proposals.
- Useful for assignments where reviewing different approaches enhances understanding, like coding exercises or lab reports.
- Helps improve work before final submission, such as essay critiques or portfolio reviews.

Step 3 - AI-Powered Activity Transformation

Fill in the blanks to use this prompt:

"I am a [course] instructor, and I currently have my students complete the following activity: [describe the activity].

I would like to transform this into an opportunity for [Choose: group work/peer feedback]. The new activity should take [duration of time.] My goal for the activity is [goals.] Considering my course and the nature of this activity, how can I best adapt it to foster a sense of community, encourage meaningful collaboration, and ensure that all students engage constructively? Please suggest specific strategies, discussion structures, or interactive elements that will enhance learning while making students feel valued and included."

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What do you think of the updates to your activity from the generative AI prompt?

a. Wow, I can use it pretty much as is!
b. I'll have to do some tweaking but this is something I can use
c. I will have to think about it more before I decide
d. I would have to do some major overhauling to be able to use this.
e. I am not at all interested in doing this activity with my students.

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Step 3 - AI-Powered Activity Transformation

1️⃣ Customize the Activity for Your Course & Students

- Adjust the **complexity** based on student level (introductory vs. advanced).
- Modify **examples, scenarios, or discussion prompts** to fit course content.
- Adapt for **class size** (small discussion groups vs. large lecture hall).
- Consider **time constraints**—shorten or expand sections as needed.

2️⃣ Plan Implementation & Logistics

- Decide **when** and **where** to use the activity (e.g., in-class, online discussion, flipped assignment).
- Select **tools** (e.g., Google Docs, whiteboards, concept-mapping software).
- Assign **roles** or structure group interactions to ensure balanced participation.
- Plan how to **explain the activity** clearly to students.

Step 5 - Assessing Your Collaborative Activity

Choose how you would like to assess the collaborative activity:

Grading vs. Ungraded

- **Ungraded (Low-Stakes Participation)** – Best for **early-stage exploration**, brainstorming, or building confidence.
- **Participation-Based** – Use when the goal is **engagement** rather than a final product.
- **Rubric-Based Grading** – Ideal for **structured assignments** with clear expectations (e.g., group presentations, reports).

“I would like to create an assessment for this assignment that is [ungraded/participation based/rubric based].”

Step 6 - Bonus! Guiding Student Reflection

“I want to guide students through a structured reflection process to help them articulate what they learned, how collaboration influenced their understanding, and how they can apply these insights moving forward.

Please generate a set of reflection questions that:

1. Encourage students to analyze what they gained from the activity.
2. Prompt them to consider how working with peers shaped their thinking.
3. Help them identify challenges and strategies for effective collaboration.
4. Connect their experience to real-world applications or future coursework.

The questions should be clear, engaging, and adaptable for both class discussions and written reflections."

📌 **Wrap-Up:** Encourage students to connect this experience to real-world applications and future assignments.

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How are you feeling about fostering belonging after today's session?

(short answer)

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Q&A

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Name and Contact Information