"What Is Your Superpower?
A Powerful Ice-Breaker

I noticed that my students were putting little thought in to the Ice-Breaker introductions at the beginning of every semester. The Ice-Breakers, in general, are helpful to me because they give an idea of the students' interest in the course, some demographic information, and a baseline sample of their writing. I noticed that students were "'cut and pasting" their introduction from semester to semester, that they were not learning anything new about their peers, and that I wasn't getting an adequate writing sample for early "intervention"' to the Writing Center, if needed.

Learning Outcomes

The student

- engages with other students in online community
- provides a writing sample that is not cut-and-pasted from other courses
- identifies personal and professional characteristics that relate new career roles
- practices basic Moodle skills such as online forum and posting their photo

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. During the first week of the course, students are given guidelines for what information to post in the Ice-Breaker forum.
2. Students are required to respond to at least five other students.
3. Students are required to post their Mug Shot on Moodle.
4. Students receive points toward their final grade.
5. I post an Ice-Breaker and respond to every student.

The assignment prompts are as follows:

Please introduce yourself by letting us know:

1. Which program you are in: Accelerated Second Degree or Basic BSN?

2. Why you chose nursing as a career/future plans and goals

3. If you were a SuperHero, which one would you be and why. What are your super powers? How are your super powers helpful to you as a nurse?

Include also any parameters on length, peer exchange, and identifiers (e.g. profile photo, signing off with name).

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Additional Comments

The biggest advantage of this Ice-Breaker is that students reflect on "what superpowers *do I have*, and what superpowers does *a nurse need*?" Since they are just beginning students and starting to identify with the role of "nurse", it is valuable that they ponder the traits that are characteristic of nurses in general, and the kind of nurses they want to be. This is an opportunity for the students to recognize their own strengths, and to view the professional from a position of power and advocacy for their patients and community.

This assignment also gives me a 'heads up' if a student is struggling with Moodle or with formulating and writing a cohesive paragraph. Early in the course, I am able to identify students who need writing assistance and can refer them to the appropriate resources on campus.

Resources

Moore, R. (2014). Importance of developing community in distance education courses. *TechTrends. 58*(2), 20-24.

Shea, P., Li, C., Picket, A. (2006). A study of teaching presence and student sense of learning community in fully online and web-enhanced college courses. *Internet and Higher Education, 9,* 175-190.

Swan, K. (2010). Building learning communities in online courses: The importance of interaction. *Education, Communication & Information.* (2), 23-49.

Yuan, J. & Kim, C. (2014). Guidelines for facilitating the development of learning communities in online courses. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, *30*(3) 220-232.

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