ADDING SOME TEC-VARIETY

100+ Activities for Motivating and Retaining Learners Online

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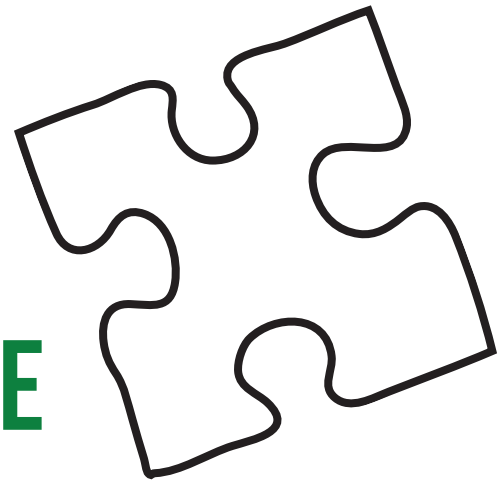
CHAPTER FOUR



PRINCIPLE #1 TONE/CLIMATE

(Includes Psychological Safety, Comfort, and Sense of Belonging)

I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.

—Albert Einstein

Perhaps the most obvious place to begin a framework related to online motivation and retention as well as to start a course is to introduce ideas related to the tone or atmosphere of the class. How an instructor welcomes learners into a course is perhaps tantamount to success. As noted in Chapter Three, those adhering to principles from Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and other humanistic psychologists start with a focus on establishing a psychologically safe climate for learning. From this humanistic perspective, learners must be comfortable with the course, the instructor, and themselves as online learners. In addition, such learners must feel that their ideas are respected and encouraged. Establishing a welcoming environment allows the student to settle in and adjust to this relatively new form of instructional delivery.

Ideas from Carl Rogers have been influential in education for decades. His *Freedom to Learn* (1969) and *Freedom to Learn for the 1980s* (1983) are considered classic texts by many espousing learner-centered instructional approaches and opportunities for students to construct and share personal ideas and innovations. For Rogers, at the core of education, learning should be open and active, involve genuine tasks, respect students'

backgrounds and ideas, and embed student-driven activities where and when possible. These principles should hold no matter what the age group or discipline.

What becomes apparent from reading Rogers' *Freedom to Learn* books is that there should be invitations for learners to make decisions and take responsibility for their own learning. In collaborative settings, there is a unique sharing of ideas and perspectives among the students. In effect, for Rogers, the more that learners are free and open to experiences, the more likely that they will be creative and participate in productive ways in the world at large.

When people feel valued and understood, there is a sense of safety to explore and a freedom to continue to grow. Such a perspective would resonate with those who incorporate aspects of Web 2.0 technology in their instruction. For instance, an instructor could be considered a Rogerian if he relied on student reflection blogs, Twitter feeds, and podcast shows. Such a humanistic and learner-centered approach is also apparent in collaborative document building using Wikispaces or Google Docs, as well as in social networking activities using systems like Facebook or LinkedIn. From a pedagogical perspective, an instructor could be a Rogerian if she relies on product- and problem-based learning and emphasizes the construction of knowledge and learning participation in the classroom. With such technologies and activities, students take ownership over the learning process. There is a freedom to express ideas, create new products, share inventions, and, in general, make significant learning contributions in the classroom, be they physical or virtual.

Instructors, no matter the situation, can create climates that are learner-centered and invitational in nature. Such environments are filled with a sense of meaning, individualization, belongingness, and encouragement. There are challenges but also supports to meet those challenges. Challenges do not mean roadblocks.

The initial sense of understanding or empathy expressed by an instructor can create strong bonds with students. These interpersonal connections can nurture student support early on in the course when some of them may feel lost or confused by the structure of the course and assigned tasks (Salmon, 2011). Opening activities can foster mutual knowledge among those enrolled as well as a set of expectations that the course will be highly engaging and interactive. Students will realize that an active learning approach will be utilized and that their productive participation is required.

While that is the optimistic side of education, opening moments in the course can also isolate students as well as disrespect them in some way. When that happens, there is scant motivation to participate in the course. Think about some new organization or conference in the physical world. When you arrive and no one is there to greet you, or you feel uncomfortable with the surroundings, you are unlikely to be an active participant, at least not immediately. The same is true if you do not know the mission or purpose of the institution, organization, or event. However, if social icebreakers or meet-and-greet activities took place before the start of the event or at the very beginning, you would likely feel greater dedication, commitment, and willingness to pursue difficult tasks later on.

Activities that set a positive tone such as social icebreakers help learners and instructors become acquainted with each other. This mutual knowledge can facilitate later small-group activities and hasten the effective functioning of online teams. Opening social

activities like scavenger hunts of online course resources can also help to familiarize learners with the content that they will encounter in the course, as well as with the very tools that they will need to effectively access that content. There is far less stress in experimenting with passwords, access issues, and tool features at the start of a course than later on in the semester or term when one or more assignments are coming due.

When used effectively in an online or blended course, these early class activities help overcome emotional, social, or cultural discomfort and establish "swift trust" (Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer, 1996), a social glue that binds the online class participants together during the duration of the course to successfully complete the course's learning activities and goals. Feelings of trust, rapport building, and a sense of camaraderie are typically assumed to be quite difficult to establish in online courses compared to F2F courses due to the separation of distance, space, and time. A study by Meyerson et al. (1996) indicated that online instructors can shortcut this process by putting in place building blocks for establishing swift trust.

The first week of an online course is especially crucial for developing trust via instructor actions such as initiating early communication with students and developing a positive tone and social climate through activities, such as those exemplified in this chapter. Online courses where swift trust had been achieved early in the semester were deemed to be more successful than those that had not (Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2004). Online lecturers who downgrade the importance of setting a psychologically safe class tone and swift trust do so at their own peril, leaving their students vulnerable to a higher likelihood of feeling isolated and uncared for (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998).

Once established, that sense of trust is sustained through frequent and predictable communication with the instructor as well as regular feedback from him. There are also opportunities to provide feedback back to the instructor. Such a course is designed for high levels of interactivity and trust building. Many of the activities in this chapter as well as the nine that follow are meant to help in that regard.

Technologies for Principle #1: Tone/Climate

When it comes to establishing a certain tone and climate, there are many technology tools from which to select. For instance, a public wiki for a course or training event allows the world to peek in and contribute to it. Such a tool helps students realize that their learning in this particular course will be global in nature. At the same time, a private class wiki can also foster an awareness that students can contribute to the learning of their peers in this class while assuring class members that their ideas will not be read, commented on, or pirated by those outside their course. Polling students as to their preferences—public or private—would best determine the route chosen.

An instructor might also welcome students to her course with a short online video offering a brief course overview and an explanation of her teaching philosophy. That same instructor might refer newly enrolled as well as potential students to a class website or instructor blog. Students might also become acclimated to the class by watching Web-

streamed lectures of the instructor or listening to one or more of her podcasted lectures from previous semesters.

Instructors relying on several methods to create a warm climate for learning might think about creating an online template or job aid for navigating all of them. Many online instructors post their course syllabi to the Web with links to course readings, videos, and other online resources. Posting a syllabus to the Web is akin to having an online welcome mat for potential students as well as recent graduates or course alumni. For those currently enrolled in the course, it is a sign that the course materials will be open, online, and free to explore at will. The tone of the class will be one of learner self-exploration and discovery.

Most of the activities described in this chapter do not involve cutting-edge or expensive technologies. Many simply utilize computer conference systems and their online discussion forums, which have existed for decades. In such forums, students and instructors can make introductions, form relationships, share personal and professional information, and generally learn more about each other. Such social icebreakers, while not necessarily heavy when it comes to course content, set the stage for many later course activities. Bonk, in fact, had 30 percent of his students drop his first fully online course back in 1997. After he added a few social icebreakers, the percentage of students failing to complete his online courses dropped to zero the next time he offered that same course online.

Ten Online Activities in Principle #1: Tone/Climate

In this chapter, we detail 10 learning activities that correspond with the first principle of the TEC-VARIETY model, namely "Tone" or "Climate." Attached to this principle are concepts such as psychological safety, comfort, and sense of belonging. There is extensive overlap within the 10 principles of our framework. As a result, with minor tweaking, many of the activities in this book could be relocated as prime examples for one of the other nine principles. In fact, many of the activities listed in this chapter relating to the Tone or Climate principle address other principles, such as encouragement, curiosity, or autonomy, in direct or indirect ways.

As was noted in Chapter One, the scales provided for each of the 100 activities—related to the risk, time, cost, and degree of learner-centeredness—are highly subjective but reflect our extensive online experiences and backgrounds. The reader should be aware that each rating is dependent on many factors including the content area, degree of learner familiarity with the Internet, and the age of the learners. You should also keep in mind that these risk, time, and cost indices, in this chapter as well as the following nine, are in regards to the instructor, trainer, moderator, tutor, or course developer, not the learner or learning participants. And what is deemed high risk to one instructor or trainer might be extremely comfortable for another. Keep this in mind as you explore the following 10 activities for establishing a safe tone and climate.

Activity 1. Personal Introductions

Description and Purpose of Activity. Introductions are a universal instructional technique across all forms of instructional delivery, content areas, and age groups. They break the ice on opening day of a class or training activity.

Many online educators would prefer to create a discussion thread for learners to make explicit introductions. Instructors or trainers could structure the introduction activity by asking for specific items or characteristics. For instance, ask learners to list their professional interests, goals in signing up for the course, and jobs that they have held in the past; in addition you could ask about personal matters such as hobbies and interests outside of school, favorite places to visit or vacation, or salient personality traits. We have found that the most interesting and useful posts are those that combine the personal as well as the professional. Again, be sensitive to student cultural issues when asking for these types of personal information.

As with many other activities in this chapter, the purpose of this technique is for the creation of socially shared knowledge and opportunities that might foster intersubjectivity among course participants (Rogoff, 1990). It is from social interaction and dialogue that many solutions are often found in education and training settings (Brown & Duguid, 2000). What may seem unimportant or inconsequential at first is often central to student learning. In addition, the personal introduction threads provide a space that students can revisit throughout the course; especially when they are matched with others for small-group activities.

Skills and Objectives. These include course interactivity, feedback, social interaction, sharing, appreciation of multiple perspectives, course diversity, community building, and mutual knowledge.

Advice and Ideas. Once again, the instructor should be one of the course participants who posts a personal introduction. In fact, he should be among the initial responders. Being the first to post establishes expectations for later course participation. There might also be instructional guides related to how much to post and the number of peers to whom learners need to provide feedback or comments. If someone has posted something really interesting or connected to a topic covered later in the class, highlight it. The instructor might also highlight commonalities across participant posts.

Variations and Extensions. To help reduce tension about the course, students could be assigned a partner (e.g., a Web buddy, e-mail pal, or critical friend) for the semester, with whom they would share their introductory information. Partners could ask a few clarifying questions or seek additional information. After a few exchanges, ask team members to share what they have learned about each other in a discussion forum, allowing students to add to any information that their partner reveals about them.

Another extension of this task would be for the instructor to create an online hangman game or crossword puzzle using information about the students in the course. A third variation would be to have separate discussion threads for personal introductions and professional introductions. Fourth, the students might initially vote on what areas or topics they want to include in their respective introductions. Such student decision making would set the stage for later learner-centered activities and autonomy.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks

Activity 2. Video Introductions

Description and Purpose of Activity. One activity that we have seen students and instructors use more and more is video introductions. There are many reasons why instructors are increasingly relying on them. First, there is the growing recognition of the need for social presence on the part of online instructors across all educational sectors. The communicative cues that can be embedded in a short instructor video of one to three minutes helps to personalize a seemingly "cold" Web-based environment and can set the stage for later learning in the course. Students can quickly understand the scope, purpose, and history of the course and associated course topics.

There are many other reasons for the surge in video introductions within online and blended courses. Enhanced bandwidth, lowered storage costs, and a vast array of emerging technologies for recording, categorizing, and storing shared online video has made such activities an efficient and effective aspect of online courses. In the past, the costs of video production and storage were too exorbitant for most online training and education, except perhaps for military or corporate training environments. And when video materials were produced, few learners had the requisite bandwidth to watch them.

Recording a video introduction serves many purposes. First, it lowers the tension among students signing up for the course by personalizing the course. Second, it advertises the course and program. Third, it can help boost the reputations of the instructor and program. Fourth, it can be replayed as many times as a student feels is warranted. Fifth, it can be reused in later semesters or versions of the course. It might also find use in similar courses by other instructors.

Skills and Objectives. These include observational skills, course planning, visual learning, and learner motivation and engagement. A key goal here is for lecturers to introduce the course in a personalized and engaging fashion to students (using audio and visual cues). Such an approach helps to familiarize students with the course content and resources so as to reduce personal hesitancy to enroll.

Advice and Ideas. Watch video introductions from other courses and instructors before creating your own. Take notes on them. Maybe talk to colleagues in your department or in your organization about what you ought to include. Check out your production studios and other available resources. Then script it out. Next, practice the introduction or have dry runs through the content before you go to production. We realize that it feels strange to see and hear a recording of yourself. Until you become comfortable with the technology and recording process, you will tend to be overly critical of yourself. Relax, this feeling is natural and the situation will get better over time. In addition, consider how props, jokes, and interesting stories or examples might pull potential students into the course.

To create the video, you might be able to use the technical support services of your organization or institution. Find out what resources are available. Some instructors use a common audio screen and lecture capture tool such as Panopto to record themselves from the convenience of their desktop. Alternatively, you can sign up for a free screen capturing service like Screencast-O-Matic, Jing, or Screenr and use an internal camera and microphone on your laptop computer. Hit the record button and stop when done. Then post a link to the video file that was created. It is that simple.

There is much you can do with the video introduction once you have created it. As with most course content and resources, instructors can create a reflection activity on their video introductions. For instance, you could begin a discussion thread related to the introduction. Alternatively, online instructors might build question and answer (Q&A) sessions around their introductory videos. Such Q&A activities can help personalize the information in the course introduction. At the end of the semester, be sure to solicit student feedback on the videos you used in the course and take suggestions on how they could be improved.

Some instructors create a video at the beginning of a new course topic or module to give students an overview of what they will be learning. They may also include a video related to each of the course assessment activities as a means to walk students through the requirements. However, instructors also need to keep in mind that there could be students with auditory disabilities. If that is the case, they will need to create a transcript of the video or closed-captioning in order to be ADA compliant. Along these same lines, visually impaired students will need an auditory file or the ability to access the text in a braille reader.

Variations and Extensions. One option or extension to this task is to have the learners create their own video productions. In our own classes, many students have voluntarily created and shared their personal introductions after viewing the instructor's introduction. A student video introduction is yet another means to personalize the course and grant students more power and control over their own learning.

Khoo was involved in a research project where intermediate-level science students (11 to 12 years old) recorded videos discussing their assumptions about what it meant to be a scientist at the beginning of the unit. This was followed by a second recording after the unit was completed. Being able to revisit their initial ideas and misconceptions on video proved an amazing learning experience for students in terms of seeing how far they had shifted in their thinking by the end of the unit. It also provided a valuable multimodal learning experience that was especially appealing to the more visually oriented learners.

A second option is to have students watch video introductions from instructors at other institutions or organizations and compare the content with that from their own instructor. Such an approach offers a different interpretation of the importance of the course or field of study. Perhaps key historical insights or milestones will be offered in those other introductions. Another possibility would be to have students watch the various introductions and provide a short summary, integration paper, or presentation across these videos to gain a more macro perspective of the course or entire field.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Medium
Time index: Medium to High
Cost index: Medium
Learner-centered index: Low to Medium
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks

Activity 3. Goals and Expectations

Description and Purpose of Activity. Each online course or training situation has a set of goals and learning outcomes established by the instructor or designer of the course. However, learners have their own goals and expectations. In this activity, students share their expectations for the class, including why they enrolled in it and what they intend to get out of the course or module (Dennen & Bonk, 2008). To emphasize the importance of this task, it might be the very first item to which students respond in a course discussion forum. After opening the "Course Goals and Expectations" thread, students would post a few of their goals and expectations for the course as well as comment on those of their peers.

There are many benefits to be gained from this one simple strategy. For instance, other students can read what their peers are expecting from the course and compare these to their own goals and expectations. There might be some commonalities across most of them in terms of their intentions for taking the class. And a few students with unusual requests may understand that the instructor might not be able to meet all of them. Another benefit is that fellow students in the course could offer each other tips or suggestions on how to meet some of their goals. In addition, this is a goal-oriented activity, meaning that it can shape the behavior of students toward the goals that they each have personally established. Posted goals give them something to strive for and feel a sense of personal pride or accomplishment when achieved.

Instructors gain an important perspective from reading through and commenting on students' goals and expectations. They can mention that they will get to a topic or issue of interest at some later point in the semester, thereby lowering any students' felt anxiety levels about the personal benefits of the course or inner tension that their needs may not be met in this course. At the same time, the instructor could alter or shift aspects of the course if she senses that there is an area with sufficient student interest that was not being addressed. Allowing for some degree of student choice and negotiation of the course's goals to meet student personal or professional needs is another way for instructors to effectively support and respect the many and varied student learning perspectives (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992).

Skills and Objectives. These include idea generation, reflection, goal setting, comparison and contrast, analysis, community building, and basic terms or factual knowledge. A key aspect of this activity is sharing what students know and plan to learn in the course.

Advice and Ideas. As with the eight nouns activity (Activity 5), direct modeling from the instructor will help students understand the "goals and expectations" task. Consequently, we recommend that the instructor and any teaching assistants be among the first to

complete this task. In addition, the instructor could post interesting comments mentioned by students in previous semesters, with permission, of course.

The instructor can use the information that is posted to the course expectations thread in myriad ways. At the very least, she should read these posts and adjust ensuing classes appropriately. This is especially important for instructors hoping to build a learning community in their classes. A positive online class atmosphere can be promoted when negotiating and steering the class toward common learning goals. More specifically, such an environment is salient when encouraging students to work hard toward their goals and gently reminding them when they are off track. It is also useful when pointing out how the different tasks and activities will lead to achievement of the chief course goals listed at the onset of the course. Finally, instructors can use this information when drawing student attention to how the achievement of mutual class goals can result in reaching their individual learning goals and vice versa. Such techniques can foster a positive tone and feeling of mutual collaboration and respect for one another.

As part of this effort, the instructor could send a course announcement or an e-mail message that discusses or highlights some of the student goals and expectations, pulling out common themes as well as subtle differences. During this process, the instructor should respond to as many student postings as possible.

There are innumerable benefits from acquiring this information early in the course. Keep in mind that any listing of course goals or expectations is an indirect reflection of student prior knowledge of a topic. Students will indicate terms, principles, theories, and subject areas wherein they have preexisting knowledge or abilities, which enables the instructor to create conceptual anchors and tasks to incorporate that knowledge.

Some final advice relates to the reality of teaching and learning. Although this activity is highly learner-centered, students must realize that not every item in their lists can be fully addressed. Still, instructors and trainers must use their best judgment as to where and when an idea from a student could be implemented or even alter the course in some valuable manner.

Variations and Extensions. Many course tasks often spin off this one early course activity. For instance, we sometimes ask our students to post their goals and expectations in teams or in accordance with their career interests or occupational pursuits. Student goals and expectations in a counseling psychology course, for instance, may depend on whether they plan to enter school counseling, health care or government settings, or private practice. Once completed, they might be required to summarize the expectations for their respective group or theme area to compare it with other groups or career discussion threads. The instructor could also end the course or semester with a reflection paper task where students are asked to compare their initial goals and expectations to what they learned in the course.

To build a sense of community, ask students to name one or more people who posted certain goals and expectations. They could also build on the goals and expectations of students who took the course previously. Alternatively, instructors can summarize student goals and expectations in a list for students to rank or vote on so that they can have a more active voice in the class or indicate some of their learning priorities. Suffice it to say, this is one activity that can be operationalized in dozens of different and highly intriguing ways.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Medium
Time index: Low
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1 week

Activity 4. Personal Commitments

Description and Purpose of Activity. Similar to the goals and expectations activity, this activity simply asks students to post their commitments to the course. For instance, a student may say that he is committed to reading a certain technical report or book listed in the syllabus because it relates to his present job, or to finish this course during this particular semester as he will be halfway done with his master's degree by then. The number of commitments that the instructor expects students to list as well as any relevant peer interaction criteria will have to be clearly stated.

Embedding a personal commitments task in your online course may be the most momentous instructional decision you make. As with the goals and expectations activity, commitments force learners not only to think of personal outcomes that they wish to accomplish but also to actually list them for later evaluation and reflection. In effect, posting commitments offers adults with chaotic schedules a definitive end state to work toward. Humans are goal-oriented creatures. This singular task makes it possible for them to reach toward some personally high standard of success or self-actualization.

In addition, this task makes explicit what was once internal and highly secretive or personal for each student, thereby allowing the entire class, and sometimes the world, to read and react to what is posted. By making such personal commitments, a class filled with adult learners (or even K–12 students) is less likely to experience drop-outs. Each person posting such commitments has decided that there are achievable course goals toward which he or she is investing personal time and energy to accomplish. Fellow students can then acknowledge and support each other in meeting those stated outcomes. Such support might compel a person who is considering dropping out to want to continue so as not to be ashamed (that is, to save face).

Skills and Objectives. These include idea generation, goal setting, working backwards, reflection, comparison and contrast, and analysis. This task helps students perceive possible course outcomes and work hard to make them happen.

Advice and Ideas. Most of the advice in the previous activity applies here as well. As with the goals and expectations activity, this task can be accomplished through a course discussion forum using a free computer conferencing system or available discussion forum in a course management system (CMS) like Desire2Learn, Moodle, Sakai, or Blackboard. The instructor may also use a course wiki to accumulate and expand on student commitments. Freely available wiki tools that many educators tend to use include Wikispaces, PBworks, and Wikis in Education. Another alternative is to ask students to create a blog for the course and post their course commitments publicly or privately within it. Privacy may be especially critical for students from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Be sure to make such privacy an option.

As with course goals and expectations, personal commitments are a window into the minds of your students. Each commitment is built upon previous accomplishments, backgrounds, and experiences. Instructors who read through these commitments gain a rich understanding of what their students aspire to be after they finish that course or their entire program of studies. Do not downplay this knowledge. It may help you change directions in a course when students seem apathetic toward selected tasks or particular course content.

Savvy instructors build on such information and refer to it often. Students will realize that their instructor has read their postings and genuinely cares about what they will accomplish in the online or blended course. This realization, in turn, will support and perhaps solidify their projected or hoped-for end states. Effective instruction could include student reflections on the commitments that they have in common with others in the course.

Variations and Extensions. Commitments posted in the first week of a course might be significantly modified a few weeks later. Given that likelihood, instructors should assign follow-up commitment tasks. As an example, ask students to post their commitments a few times during the course and then write a final paper on how their commitments changed during the course as well as which commitments they actually reached and when. If some papers are particularly insightful, instructors could ask their authors for permission to share them with students in the ensuing semesters or versions of the course or training experience.

Another variation of this task is to have students post their commitments to different discussion threads that are set up by age, gender, occupation, or student background. It would not be too surprising if students' course outcome commitments significantly varied between students in their 20s and those in their 30s and 40s with families and children to raise. They also may be drastically different from commitments coming from individuals nearing retirement. As an add-on or modification to this activity, you could ask students what they can contribute to the course using their personal expertise, experiences, or interests. In effect, this would be a set of personal commitments to help in the operation of the course, as opposed to commitments to achieving a certain state of knowledge or competence at the end of the course.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Medium
Time index: Low
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1 week

Activity 5. Eight Nouns

Description and Purpose of Activity. One of our favorite activities is called the "eight nouns activity." It is as simple as the name implies. In this task, everyone is required to post to a discussion forum eight nouns that best describe themselves (Dennen & Bonk, 2008). Learners should also describe why each particular noun selected is representa-

tive of who they are. Depending on the instructor preferences, such descriptions can be short, perhaps one or two sentences, or longer, extending for a paragraph or more.

The first few nouns often come fairly easily. For instance, Bonk will quickly list "pirate," "music lover," "roadrunner," "wind," and "traveler." For the final three, he often has to think for a while. Ditto for most of his students. It is in the last few nouns, however, that they often reveal aspects of themselves of which even they were not fully aware. Much of that information might find later use in the course. For instance, data from the eight nouns activity could prove valuable as a factor in grouping students for project work. It could also be strategically employed for engagement and curiosity when the instructor mentions a student interest, hobby, or accomplishment that was noted in the eight nouns task back in Week One.

The eight nouns activity is a common opening icebreaker for an online course. It helps students quickly grasp the backgrounds of others in the course. With so much personal information on display for peers and instructors to read, many barriers or walls come down that could have stood in the way of later interaction in the course. As with many of the tone and climate activities of this chapter, the eight nouns activity can find use in both brick-and-mortar classrooms as well as in virtual learning situations. And, given enough time, it also can be employed in nearly any discipline area or situation.

Bonk has used it in online courses as well as in F2F ones. Back in the fall of 2002, he had a live class which included a student named Ugar who had recently arrived from Turkey. Ugar included the noun of "dishwasher" with his eight nouns posting. He said that he loved to wash dishes. As a result, anytime people brought food to that class, they noted that Ugar would be happy to take care of any dishes. While a joke, it was said appreciatively, and Ugar soon became highly popular in that class.

Another student in that same class was named Riad. For Riad's eight nouns post, he included the word "technology" in his profile. He then added that if something had a power supply, he wanted it. Riad also noted that he was a "traveler" and did a road trip each spring to California. A few years later, Bonk observed Riad getting out of his truck, and, after remembering the eight noun activity, he asked Riad if he had been to California lately. At that point, Riad turned around and a huge smile beamed across his face. He then said, "I just got back from my annual pilgrimage. Here I am. You remembered. Wow." Coincidentally, just as we were beginning to write this book, Riad was in attendance for a Webinar given by Bonk and this story was retold.

A third student in that class, Raquel, said she loved music, especially the Dave Matthews Band. A few hours after her eight nouns post, a fellow student named Theresa responded to her post with the URL for an online radio station wherein she could listen to Dave Matthews 24 hours a day. Such peer postings are not unusual. Students find out pieces of information about each other in the eight nouns activity. This socially shared knowledge becomes the seeds for rich interactions and collaborations later in the semester (Salomon, 1993). As such, the eight nouns activity is a springboard to later learning. The exact amount or percentage of learning that ensues as a result of the method is impossible to quantify.

Keep in mind, however, this difficulty with measuring direct learning outcomes is the case with most of the methods outlined in this chapter. Nonetheless, a warm and accepting social climate is the starting point for learning. It sets everything in motion. If an

instructor fixates on learning outcomes such as new behaviors and higher order reasoning skills and ignores the affective and motivational aspects of the learning situation, it is doubtful much learning will actually occur that extends beyond a single unit or lesson (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). In the eight nouns activity as well as most of the others listed in this chapter, there are socially shared understandings and a build-up of common knowledge (Schrage, 1990) from which to discuss, debate, and negotiate meanings.

Skills and Objectives. These include feedback, feelings of social presence and connectedness, socializing, sharing, student interaction, idea generation, appreciation of multiple perspectives, mutual knowledge, instructional immediacy, and community building. The eight nouns activity is a fun, nonthreatening way to interact with the course content.

Advice and Ideas. The eight nouns activity is most appropriate at the start of an online course. It may even be used a few weeks before a course begins, especially if that course is a summer intensive one or taught in a short time span, as in an accelerated program. In such a situation, students will build rapport with each other that can immediately be put to use once the course starts.

There are many subtle aspects to the eight nouns activity that make it work. First, the instructor should post her eight nouns list as well. Honest and thoughtful comments from the instructor will serve as a model for student postings. Similarly, instructors might post samples from previous semesters as a means to ease students into the task. In addition to those models, learners should be asked to respond to at least one such posting of their peers, though preferably several. Again, having personal traits and hobbies on display for others to read is useful, but not enough. Equally if not more powerful is reading through peer postings and forming connections and common understandings. Students should also be clear about the task expectations, including how much to post, where to post, and when to have the task completed by. If needed, create an instructional scaffold or job aid on how best to interact with peers on the eight nouns task.

Variations and Extensions. The eight nouns activity could be employed in a synchronous brainstorming session. In such an activity, there would likely be immediate feedback on each student post. Another variation or extension involves creating an activity based on the information students have posted in the eight nouns activity, such as a crossword puzzle with clues about each person in the class from the eight nouns posting. Similarly, the instructor might create some type of matching task or accomplishment hunt activity (see Activity 7) where students would have a competition to name the person with a particular trait, hobby, or background. Bonus points could be awarded to the winner as well as to the first one who completes the eight nouns activity.

Another alternative is an "eight adjectives" (e.g., lazy, powerful, shy, bored, exotic, cooperative, sloppy, ruthless, and so on) or "eight verbs" (e.g., coordinate, entertain, amuse, push, unite, beg, dream, publicize, and the like) activity to describe each course participant. To help in this effort, hundreds of sample nouns, verbs, and adjectives can be found in the website Moms Who Think listed with the resources of this chapter.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks

Activity 6. Two Truths and One Lie

Description and Purpose of Activity. The sixth activity for building a climate rich in socially shared knowledge is a fun and sometimes challenging one. In this activity, students must post two truths about themselves and one statement that is a lie. Fellow students in the course or module must attempt to determine which piece of information is a lie and which items are truthful. They can guess this after asking questions of that individual or exploring online information that is available on him such as a profile page of Facebook, LinkedIn, or some other website. The students who guess the most correct answers could be given a bonus point or two or be recognized in some other way.

As with most of the methods detailed in this chapter, the two truths and one lie activity is a means for students to share personal information about themselves and notice commonalities with their peers. Along the way, they will learn interesting facts about each other which may come in handy in later group activities. Such shared knowledge might be used later during the semester as a means to boost student curiosity and engagement in the course. Though this activity should work across educational sectors, it might be especially appealing in higher education and corporate or military training environments. In fact, Rick Kulp (1999) at IBM in Chicago told us that he found this technique quite engaging for adult learners.

Skills and Objectives. These include interactivity, dissonance, feelings of social presence and connectedness, mutual knowledge, community building, and prompt feedback. A primary objective is to share personal information that builds rapport and may be useful in later course activities.

Advice and Ideas. Before starting this activity, give students a few examples from previous semesters. In addition, you should post two truths and one lie about yourself and ask your class to ascertain the item that is less than honest. To further arouse student curiosity and engagement, you could give students a set amount of time in which to complete this assignment.

Do not let it drag on for more than a week or two. In fact, it could be billed as a one-day or 24-hour activity. For instance, the instructor might kick off this activity at 6 p.m. Monday of the first week of the course and expect all guesses to be posted by 6 p.m. Tuesday. The instructor could ask students to send her a private e-mail or text message identifying their lie so that she can determine the winner. She could also have students vote on the funniest lie or on the best liar. Virtual award ceremonies could even be held.

Variations and Extensions. If your class incorporates many team activities during the semester, students could work in teams to figure out the respective truths and lies, with some kind of recognition for winning teams. The activity could be modified in many other ways such as telling nine truths and one lie or listing five truths and five lies. You

could also ask students to tell two truths and one lie about their professional lives and two truths and one lie about their personal lives. The possibilities are endless.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low to Medium
Time index: Low
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1 week

Activity 7. Accomplishment Hunts

Description and Purpose of Activity. Another activity that we occasionally use in our online and blended courses is called an accomplishment hunt. This is a technique that typically is used in F2F classes or training events to foster knowledge sharing and provide a sense of pride among those enrolled. Normally, students are asked to list three or four accomplishments in their lives such as one from the preceding summer or year, one from their academic career, and one or two others of which they are especially proud.

The instructor then creates a sheet of paper with a few accomplishments listed per student but with no names noted. Instead blank lines are placed before each set of accomplishments. Students in the class are handed the sheet of paper and asked to walk around the room and determine the person with each particular set of accomplishments; however, they can only ask one simple yes-or-no question of their fellow classmates—namely, "Is this you?" If they have not identified the correct person, they move on. If there is a match, than they must request the signature of the person next to the appropriate accomplishments.

In the online version of this task, there are several options. In one of our recent courses, we simplified the task to the bare bones. We ask students to list a few accomplishments in a discussion forum thread with their names boldly attached to them. We also required them to comment on at least a few accomplishments of their peers. Though such an approach may not be as fun or interactive as the F2F version, it still fosters student pride, intersubjectivity, and sense of accomplishment. Our students have found the online version interesting and informative.

Skills and Objectives. These include social interaction, analysis skills, peer feedback, fun, adventure, curiosity, mutual knowledge, fostering building pride, and strengthening an online community.

Advice and Ideas. Consider whether this task will be most effective in a synchronous or asynchronous activity. If the accomplishment hunt is an asynchronous activity, keep it simple. You could, however, create secondary Web pages for students to obtain signatures, keep track of points earned, and reflect on their overall progress.

Be sure to monitor the activity. When appropriate, instructors might provide subtle clues, highlight successful identity matches, prod participation, and add additional accomplishments or information about each student in the course as deemed necessary. As in the two truths and one lie activity, instructors may choose to establish a time period in which the activity will start and end, anywhere from a day to an entire week.

When done, the instructor should post an announcement about how well the activity went, including information on the winners and a final list of student names and their respective accomplishments.

Variations and Extensions. There are many alternative versions of this task. As an example, students could post future accomplishments or targets for their lives instead of those they have already completed. Such an approach fosters student creativity and goal setting. Another variation would be for students to write a creative short story including the accomplishments of two or more peers in the class. Students could vote on the most unusual, interesting, risky, and humanitarian accomplishments, with awards given out in each category.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks

Activity 8. Course Fan Pages

Description and Purpose of Activity. By 2012, there were more than 1 billion users of Facebook. In fact, at that time, more than 70 percent of the active Internet users in the United States were Facebook members (Swartz, 2011). Along these same lines, over 60 percent of adults who use the Internet had signed up for one or more social networking sites (Hampton, Goulet, Raine, & Purvell, 2011). Not surprisingly, college instructors are beginning to tap into social media in their courses (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011).

Social media can be used to enhance the climate, tone, and sense of belonging in an online or blended course or experience. With the explosion of interest in social networking tools like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Ning, and Twitter, creating a fan page for your course in a system like Facebook might attract potential students to it. A fan page can be your marketing platform. In addition, anyone can then become a fan of your course and also contribute to the page as well as promote it.

There are many possible learning activities that differentiate a fan page from an individual's page on Facebook. For instance, if there are F2F events or meetings, you could take and post a class photograph. You may also create a task that asks students to contribute Web resource links, photos, or other relevant pictures to the fan page. Someone else might post questions to vote on in the course fan pages. After becoming a member of the fan page, students could create, post, and modify documents, create events, and chat with fellow group members. As an added benefit, alumni of the course and those who graduated from your institution but never had a chance to take the course could be informed of the fan page and encouraged to contribute something to it.

A fan page is a bridge between formal learning and informal learning. As such, it can ease students into a new course experience while enabling them to share aspects of their academic life with friends and family. It also legitimizes previous student knowledge

about the functions and features of social networking technology. At its core, it is a form of invitational and personalized learning. Those who stop by are encouraged to check out the course.

Skills and Objectives. These include engagement, social interaction, friendship, networking, community building, course interactivity, feedback, idea generation, and sharing multiple perspectives. The fan page is also a means to market your course in ways that potentially could go viral.

Advice and Ideas. With social networking activities and sharing, the course builds immediate momentum. Having a course fan page is akin to having an annual department picnic late in the summer just before the semester or school year begins. Alternatively, some instructors may consider incorporating fan pages as an ending course activity as opposed to a beginning one.

Consider assigning each student a different role or task in building up the fan page. Some students can be in charge of polling site visitors and sharing the results of those polls with course participants. Other students can be responsible for creating links to videos that relate to the course, whereas still others can find an important role collecting text-based resources. In this way, each person has a role or identity in the external window you are building for your course. As such, it can excite students about the learning possibilities of the course.

If you find success with this task, consider expanding it to multiple fan pages, possibly one for each semester or section of the course. You might also create cross-institutional fan pages or pages that extend globally but are related to a particular content domain or topic. Such fan pages might eventually serve as a recruitment tool as well as a means to brand your school, university, training organization, or similar entity.

Social media technology is changing rapidly. You may consider asking students which sites they prefer using or are currently thinking about switching to. At the same time, you can explore the benefits of different social networking technologies through your own experimentations as well as from talking to colleagues and family members. Whatever you do, keep your antennae raised and alert to new possibilities.

Variations and Extensions. Instead of the instructor deciding on the fan page appearance, the students in the course could be charged with creating and maintaining one. Another idea would be to use the fan page as a means of recruiting students who have completed the course to come back as mentors to the new students in the course. Students could be matched with their mentors (or be able to select from a number of possible mentors) using the profile or other available information in the course fan page. A course attraction or homepage might also be created in a blog, wiki, or some other emerging learning technology.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Medium
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks (or possibly ongoing for entire course or semester)

Activity 9. Favorite Websites

Description and Purpose of Activity. We often start our online classes with students sharing a couple of their favorite websites. Such a "share-a-link" activity can be used to reveal student learning preferences and interests. You quickly discover what students know and do not know. Oftentimes their knowledge may extend beyond what you planned to cover in the course. Such link sharing can also be used to create mutual knowledge among the course participants. And, if the shared Web resources are highly integral to understanding the course content, this activity is a means to expand the available course materials for all the students as well as for the instructors.

Posting favorite websites starts the course off with a personally relevant activity. Just like dogs in the woods, students are marking their territory by posting the links to online resources that are important to them. Sharing links and online resources starts with what students know and find valuable, helping to create a tone that is more friendly and personal. Such a technique stands in sharp contrast to approaches wherein students read a chapter or watch a lecture filled with completely unfamiliar terminology.

Skills and Objectives. These include searching and filtering information, exploratory learning, analysis and evaluation, comparison and contrast, and feedback. Such an activity fosters twenty-first-century skills related to information search, selection, and critical analysis, while simultaneously empowering students with a personal voice and self-directed learning. A key goal of this activity is motivating and retaining students through personal relevance, openness, and building on what they already know.

Advice and Ideas. Assign students to post one or more of their favorite websites to the resources section of their course management system. Consider using a wiki or collaborative group tool such as Google Groups for such sharing. In addition, be sure to require students to explore a certain number of the websites posted by other students, and rate or comment on them. If you incorporate some type of rating system, be sure to specify the criteria in advance. If the posted websites have to relate to course content, students could be asked to examine resource links posted by those enrolled in previous years. They might write compare and contrast papers or some form of reflection paper on the sites listed across the years or semesters in which the course has been offered.

The information that an instructor gains from this activity helps to identify students' interests, which can be built on as the semester or term unfolds, thereby making the course more relevant and personally meaningful. For example, students can be assigned to be resource persons or experts in their areas and asked to contribute their knowledge in a joint problem-solving or collaborative learning activity. It is important that information asked from students in early course icebreakers or social activities be used and built on subsequently in the course where appropriate. Otherwise students may feel that the activity was merely added on without any relevance to their learning in the course.

Khoo has heard from disgruntled online students who had participated in a similar type of activity that had not been structured well or coherently designed into the course. The lecturer intended for the activity to be a quick first-week course social icebreaker before proceeding with what she termed "the real business of learning" in the rest of the course. The course continued without incorporating any of the information gained from students in the activity. Students felt the activity was a waste of time and irrelevant to their

learning. The fact that students worked in pairs and were only asked to comment on one other person's shared websites diminished their need to interact with other peers. Such a technique missed a huge opportunity as it bypassed the collective wisdom shared by the entire class. Moreover, as part of building a community of learners, the instructor should have also participated in the activity.

Variations and Extensions. Instead of sharing favorite websites, students might post other preferences. For instance, they could list their favorite movies, foods, sports teams, cities, countries, vacation spots, courses of all time, news headlines, jokes (clean ones), cartoons, and the like. You could ask them to write a short reflection paper critiquing or promoting websites posted by one or more of their peers. Alternatively, using preestablished criteria, students could vote on the quality of all the websites posted. There could also be competitions for students to provide top-ten website lists on topics that will be explored later in the semester. Another idea is to consider inviting the designers of the top two or three ranked sites for an online class chat about the purpose and intent of their sites.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: 1–2 weeks

Activity 10. Online Cafés

Description and Purpose of Activity. An online café can be created as a special place and social space for learners to "hang out" informally. Here, students can post questions and comments on personal interests, pertinent items in the news, and so on. They could in fact discuss anything they want. The online café is a safe haven that operates within as well as outside the course. It is in this virtual space where formal meets informal. The online coffeehouse or café is a place to get to know peers and perhaps the instructor without worrying about the degree to which each comment relates to the topic of the week, or to any part of the course for that matter. As such, this technique helps to personalize the course and establish a learner-centered course philosophy.

From our experience, students post a range of topics in the online café. Sometimes students will post questions about technologies that they heard are popular. They might ask their peers about where they can get a good deal on a computer or smartphone. We have seen students post information about job openings for those who are looking for a position. Still other threads in the café will typically be about the course itself. Students could be looking for confirmation of ideas that they have for final projects, or ask for clarification on potentially confusing aspects of the course or topics. We have found that issues that are resolved in the café tend to lower learner tension and anxiety. Hence, this activity has emotional as well as cognitive ramifications.

The online café builds bonds between and among students enrolled in the course. It is in the café where everyone can act as they do in everyday life. They can let their hair down a bit. Over time, students come to know each other and respect each other's opin-

ions. Trust, empathy, and respect emerge. It is also in the café where the sparks for an online learning community might first be seen. If properly nourished and managed, such sparks become flames. As is obvious by now, while the activities highlighted in this chapter emphasize the social and emotional aspects of learning over the cognitive side, such techniques often elevate the success of the online course to new levels. In addition, they provide the lasting course memories which members of the class fondly recall and tell others about.

Skills and Objectives. These include social interaction, questioning, feedback, course review and planning, connections to the real world, peer interaction, and social presence. A key goal is to foster a sense of trust and community building.

Advice and Ideas. What you create during this activity is definitely not yours. This is one resource that students will quickly assume control over and typically not seek your assistance or advice. The online café or coffeehouse is for them. This does not mean that they will totally ignore your advice or not welcome you in. However, you must proceed with caution. If you assume control over one or two discussion threads in the café, it may be fine. Answering all student questions and concerns and joining in every thread in the online café will discourage student interaction and personal honesty. Some instructors have chosen not to participate in this area, thereby allowing their students space just to hang out. Create this resource for them and then step back and watch it grow. Of course, some semesters and courses will see much more activity in the café than others. Despite our combined decades of online learning research and instruction, we admit that we do not fully understand why this is the case.

If a student does become a leader in the online café and offers extensive advice and directions to others, it may be important to recognize such leadership. Perhaps a bonus point or two for such an individual might suffice. Alternatively, you could simply acknowledge such café contributions in one of your weekly course announcements and reminders.

Variations and Extensions. Some of the hot topics and key concerns raised in the online café in previous semesters could be inserted as discussion starters in a new semester's café. Students from previous semesters could be asked to monitor the social cafés, thereby both freeing up instructor time while creating a space where students do not have to worry about instructor agendas and interference. You may also decide to have students from the current semester sign up to monitor particular weeks of the online café.

We have found that online cafés can get particularly interesting and lively when students from other sections of the course or from other institutions altogether are invited to participate. Back in 1997, Bonk created the "café latte" for preservice teachers from his institution as well as those in the United Kingdom, Finland, Korea, Peru, in addition to those from Texas A&M University and the University of South Carolina in the United States. In the café latte, students from around the world discussed their field experiences in their respective schools. In the process, they brought up case problems or situations, differences in the education-related laws and rules of different countries, pending educational policy, career aspirations, and so on. Needless to say, it was always quite informative and lively.

Key Instructional Considerations

Risk index: Low to Medium
Time index: Medium
Cost index: Low
Learner-centered index: High
Duration of the learning activity: Weekly or as needed

Final Reflections on Tone/Climate

This chapter explored many activities that can help establish a safe and inviting tone for an online or blended course or training event. We have used all of them in our university courses as well as in other adult training and professional development settings. At the same time, most if not all of them can be modified, tweaked, or rethought for nearly any educational level or situation.

As with all 100 activities that we lay out in this book, these first 10 should be viewed as instructional guides or templates, not as prescriptions. Change, combine, or eliminate any part of them to suit your own needs. Still not satisfied that they will work for you? Well, before discounting or saying "no way" to any of them, reflect for a few minutes on how you might creatively apply them. Trust us, they can work nearly anywhere with the right modifications. Perhaps start with one or two of the online icebreakers that you feel comfortable with. You might look for the low-risk, low-cost, and low-time activities.

This is just one set of tone and climate activities. There are dozens more that we wanted to include in this chapter but lacked the space. For example, learners can explore alternative ways to introduce themselves such as in relation to an online news story, cartoon, or video. If the instructor is keen on gaming, the syllabus, or aspects of it, could be turned into some type of learning game like *Wheel of Fortune, Jeopardy,* hangman, crossword puzzles, or perhaps even a 3-D world. You could place the course syllabus in a wiki that enrolled students can easily modify. Another way to enhance the course tone or climate is for instructors to create weekly podcasts or videos on aspects of the course and post them to a special channel on YouTube or YouTube EDU. As you can see, there are countless ways to acclimate learners to the course and establish that important sense of trust and community.

At times, you may need to turn on your creative thinking cap and exercise your risk muscle. Many social icebreaking and introductory activities can be fun. Though extensive sharing of personal information may not be the norm in F2F classroom settings, online students will often write pages about themselves in the hope of establishing connections. At times, they may reveal more about themselves than they would face-to-face. Instructors will need to monitor student frankness. Keep in mind, however, that such text-based sharing is just one of the ways for students to discover their commonalities and differences; video introductions or personal stories can also be employed, with perhaps even better results.

Another benefit of this first component of TEC-VARIETY is that instructors can insightfully refer back to the messages generated by these activities. When this happens, students get a better sense of who their classmates and instructors are. Knowing that the instructor is a "pirate" or "roadrunner" and one of their classmates is a "tea kettle" or "knitter" may have hidden benefits as the course proceeds. We have seen firsthand how such commenting can foster curiosity, laughter, trust, mutual respect, peer support, extended interactions, and high doses of learner course participation.

No matter how well conceived the idea, if the instructor is not modeling the behaviors expected, the activity will soon flounder. If eight nouns are asked for, the instructor should be creating her own list of eight and immediately sharing it. Students can then see that the instructor is a real human being with her own particular interests, strengths, and experiences.

One benefit of activities related to tone and climate is that everyone gets a chance to participate and share ideas and perspectives. As is evident in this chapter, there are a wide variety of activity frameworks from which to select, including posting and reacting to favorite websites, listing two truths as well as one lie about yourself, posting personally relevant questions and issues in an online coffeehouse or café, brainstorming nouns or adjectives to describe yourself, and so on.

If you are using some type of synchronous technology for any such activity, you will need to create procedures for taking turns and interacting with one another. If you do not, it will be extremely difficult to hear from all course participants. If, however, you are using asynchronous technology, students will likely not read all their peer postings and may only selectively post or perhaps contribute something at the last minute. To foster student reading of what is posted, you will need to embed some type of requirement for replying to peer postings or summarizing the postings of a set number of peer statements in reflection papers. No strategy or idea is foolproof or guaranteed to work. Each requires careful planning and deftness on the part of the instructor or instructional designers of the course or online learning experience.

Even considering all the various possible tone-related activities described in this chapter, your first attempt may not work. The recommendations and guidelines that we provided here for each activity should elevate your chances for success. Nevertheless, you must refashion each strategy according to your own situation or context. No strategy will work exactly the same way each time. And if you do not find success the first time, you can modify or tweak it slightly and try it again. Often amazing results will occur after a minor fine-tuning. But if it does not work to your satisfaction in the second attempt, then we recommend that you reconsider using it.

Your tone- and climate-related strategies will need to evolve with the technologies of choice. Today, social networking technologies are all the rage. Those working with adult learners might try Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn as ways for students to interact. K–12 teachers, however, will need to abide by school district policies and practices. We fully realize that there are significantly more security concerns and procedures when working with children. At the same time, we believe that there are dozens of activities found in this book that can be easily incorporated into blended or fully online learning in the K–12 classroom despite pervasive firewall and security issues.

Given the explosion of interest in social networking, and online socializing in general, the coming decade will likely be filled with interesting experimentations using online icebreakers and course introductions. Soon social networking technologies will be integrated into course management systems. If that proves insufficient, social networking technology will probably take over many of the duties of such systems. In fact, some instructors are already experimenting with using aspects of Facebook as a course management system and are finding mixed results (see Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, & Liu, 2011). No matter what happens, instructors will undoubtedly find increasingly interesting ways to foster a safe and personal learning climate.

The first component of TEC-VARIETY is loaded with learning opportunities to capture student interest and help them commit time to the course. Without this first component, which is the backbone for everything else, it is extremely difficult for instructors to find ultimate success online. And yet, as essential as this component is, it is not on its own sufficient for online teaching and learning success. As you should be aware by now, as important as it is to establish a safe and productive tone or climate, there are nine other motivational principles that we detail in this book that are just as important. We now push on to the second principle, which involves the feedback and support mechanisms embedded in the course. For the purposes of the TEC-VARIETY framework, the word "encouragement" is emphasized. And so we encourage you to read on.

Praise for *Adding Some TEC-VARIETY*

"There are books on theory and books on practice, however this is the best volume ever written for using learning theory to inform effective practice. This book is a tour de force for creating an environment where students not only succeed in online learning, but they achieve excellence as well."

—**Charles (Chuck) Dziuban,** Director, Research Initiative for Teaching Effectiveness (RITE), Professor Emeritus and Inaugural Pegasus Professor, University of Central Florida, and Sloan-C Fellow

"An excellent book from world leaders in the field that will be of great value for educators and designers. Presents concrete examples grounded in solid 'practical' theory."

—**Charalambos Vrasidas,** Executive Director of the Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET), Associate Dean for elearning, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, and author of several information technology and distance learning books

Based on 10 theoretically driven and proven motivational principles, *Adding Some TEC-VARIETY* offers 100 practical yet innovative ideas to motivate online learners and increase learner retention.

What motivates?

1. **T**one/Climate: Psychological Safety, Comfort, Sense of Belonging
2. **E**ncouragement: Feedback, Responsiveness, Praise, Supports
3. **C**uriosity: Surprise, Intrigue, Unknowns
4. **V**ariety: Novelty, Fun, Fantasy
5. **A**utonomy: Choice, Control, Flexibility, Opportunities
6. **R**elevance: Meaningful, Authentic, Interesting
7. **I**nteractivity: Collaborative, Team-Based, Community
8. **E**ngagement: Effort, Involvement, Investment
9. **T**ension: Challenge, Dissonance, Controversy
10. **Y**ielding Products: Goal Driven, Purposeful Vision, Ownership

This is the book you need to grow your online teaching repertoire in innovative ways that will grab your students' attention and imagination. **Additional book resources as well as a free e-book are available for download at http://tec-variety.com.**

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