

Objectives

To create a sense of community in a classroom from the first day. Essentially, this is an easy way to make the class feel more intimate since you can use the card as a tool to call on everyone by name and get to know people's names as well.

Activity

On the first day of class, either pass out cardstock paper (you can choose a colored paper so it's easier for them to find in their notebooks) or just ask them to use a piece of notebook paper. If you have a large class, it's probably worth passing out the cardstock, along with lots of colored sharpies so that you'll be able to see what they write on the tent.

Ask students to fold the paper in three, so that it can stand up in a triangle or "tent" shape. Ask them to write just their first name (or the name they prefer to be called) large in the middle of the front AND back of the card, large enough that you'll be able to see it from the front of the room. Then, ask them to write in smaller font, anything you like in the four corners of the tent. Some suggestions: your home town, your major, your favorite food, your favorite activity/hobby, a word your best friend would use to describe you...etc. You can ask the students to keep their name tent in their class folder and bring it with them every day. In a smaller class, you can collect the tents so students don't lose them.

You can then use these for several purposes. Immediately, you can use them as an icebreaker where students show their name cards to the people around them and introduce themselves. Depending on what you ask them to put on their cards, you could also use it as a mechanism to form groups or to discuss how different people will work together in groups (for example, if you ask them to write down a strength, you might have people who say they are leaders or good listeners or organized—all of these are good talking points for forming groups and being productive members of a group).

If you have a small class, they can put their table tents on the desk or table in front of them, and soon everyone will know everyone else's name. This might be more challenging in a large class just due to space, but they can still be put to excellent use in a large class. Every time someone has a question, insist they hold their name card up. If you like to randomly pick people from the audience, or if you call on pre-formed groups, have them hold up their name card when you call on them, so you can use their name. If you reorganize student groups, you can arrange the table tents on desks on the first day of the new groups so students can find their new seats.

Effectiveness

This has been a valuable tool in my class!

Author

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Materials & Resources

Paper or cardstock, sharpies

Classroom Context

Various biology classrooms

Time Requirement

10 minutes

About this Project

This is one of a set of materials compiled for instructors to draw upon in order to frame non-traditional modes of classroom teaching for their students. Our hope is that these materials can help reduce any student resistance to such techniques.

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Other materials available online at www.colorado.edu/sei/fac-resources