Creating Community and a Sense of Belonging (ITL SCS9)

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Background

- I work with pre- and in-service teachers in asynchronous courses. Some of my students are in the United States while others work in international schools around the world. Some of the topics in my courses are quite heavy. For instance, one of my courses as a main focus of integrating human rights into teaching practice and another course discusses diversity, equity, justice, and decolonizing the curriculum.
- Some teachers work in contexts where they are guests in the countries where they teach and they are also limited by ministry requirements and other norms.
- My work includes teachers who work with students in grades PK-12. Teachers can teach any subject.

Norms for Class

- Since we are all online, it is important to create a safe space for my students. It is very possible that I will have students multiple times across the program I teach in and it is important that they feel safe not only with me but with each other.
- Our students will most likely never come to campus for class. The class norms promote safety, allow students to disagree with dignity and respect, and encourage students to adopt a learning stance while also considering bias and being open to discomfort.

Discussion Boards and Conferences

- I often start semesters with exploratory questions that ask students to consider their own biases and perspectives. I hold individual conferences with students to assess their understanding, their discomfort, and safety level.
- I also do not ask students to share something I will not share myself. For more probing discussion board questions, I also provide a response. This often makes me vulnerable as well.