Connecting Through Common Reading: What to Discuss and How to Do It

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Common reading discussions are a great way to help learning community students meet and interact with other students and professors as well as expand their knowledge about exciting and unique topics. Here are some basic tips for you to follow when starting a common reading program.

Selecting the Book/Reading
Choosing a great book to use is the most important part of the success of your common reading program. Here are some guidelines for choosing a book/article.
Readings need to be:
* pertinent to the major/area of study of your students.
* NOT intimidating, for example too long or over students’ heads.
* current and applicable to what is happening now in the world. This will make the reading easier for the students to relate to.
* talk with other learning communities on campus and see if you can share materials!

Selecting Facilitators
So now that you have a good book or reading in mind, you need a facilitator, here are some things to think about:
Find someone who is:
* within the major/area of study for your group.
* passionate & knowledgeable about the subject.
* charismatic and has an EDGE.
* involves the students in the discussion.

Getting Your Students There
* schedule the event after a related class so that students walk together and are motivated by each other to attend.
* have mentors or selected students give in-class announcements.
* post fliers in common areas.
* utilize online invitations and schedulers such as Doodle and Google™ Invite
* use incentives: networking opportunities, extra credit, etc.
* provide snacks and beverages, the students will come!
* MAKE IT FUN!

Hopefully these tips will help you to get a successful common reading program started in your learning community! Be sure to utilize campus resources and other learning communities in order to have a successful program. Remember to maintain the enthusiasm of the students by frequently evaluating your program and looking for ways to improve and better fit their needs.

Important Dates to Remember
- March 5—ISCORE conference; a comprehensive forum on issues of race and ethnicity at ISU and beyond; 8:00 a.m. —5:00 p.m.; register online
- March 27—Stash the Trash/VEISHEA Service Day; volunteer to keep Ames beautiful by picking up litter; meet at Reiman Gardens; contact the Student Activities Center for more information
- April 7—LC Peer Mentor Awards Ceremony; 4:15—5:00 p.m. in 0020-0060 Hixson-Lied Student Success Center; register by contacting jenl@iastate.edu