Social Engagement in Online Learning

Online learning can increase a sense of isolation. In traditional pedagogy, the act of thinking together in a classroom builds a sense of community and connectedness. This may be missing in an asynchronous learning environment, as meaning-making through non-verbal cues, such as tone and gestures, is absent.

Barriers

- Sense of isolation in online environments
- Asynchronous activities may create a feeling of forced or artificial communications
- Mature online learners may be less likely to develop relationships in online classes
- Concerns about being polite or saving face may downplay expertise and impact learning goals
- Cultural tendencies can affect interaction and collaboration

Evidence-Based Strategies

- Design a community-building event to bring learners together in a safe space
  - This may help equity-seekers voice their needs
- Try different platforms, such as social media, to increase interaction and meet the needs of diverse learners
- Create collaborative events and flexible engagements to facilitate group connections
- Encourage students to reach out to their peers, create a support group, or make a chat and study group
- Provide opportunities for students to share stories about how they are relating to the content
  - Use icebreakers in synchronous sessions for students to share parts of themselves
- Give groups the tools they need to succeed, such as rubrics, guidelines, and check-ins

For more data and context, read the full report from ABLE Research Consultants