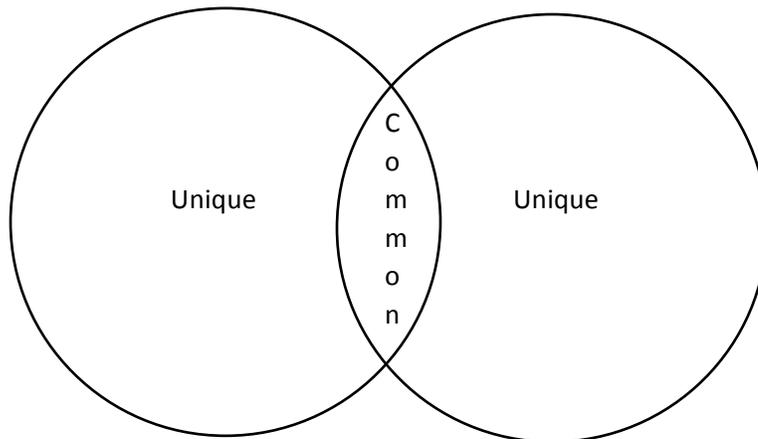


Dear Alan and Kim,

Here is the teaching idea I used this semester that was very successful. I hope you'll be able to share it at the conference. For me, in teaching and in life, simplicity has been the rule. This is a very simple activity that paid great dividends.

First you teach a short concept on "commonality". I used two overlapping circles with uniqueness labeled in the non-overlapping parts. Then I labeled common on the part in the middle that overlaps.



I also explained about the three levels of questions: surface, shallow, and deep. I told them they would at first be using surface-type questions, but that by the end of the activity they would be very deep looking for commonalities.

Then I had the kids take a paper and number down the side from one to however many kids there were in the room, minus 1. They were also told to put their English name at the top of the page in big letters.

Then they were given instruction to go around and find out what they had in common with every other person in the room, but they could only use the same thing once. For example, if they wanted to say they were Chinese, that was fine, but they could only do it with one person, etc. Of course, this all had to be done in English.

The result was in a group of 30 kids there were 900+ questions being asked and answered in the span of one hour. Kids got to know each other better, and they had a lot of fun trying to find commonalities among each other.

Then, with the roll, I would let someone pick a number corresponding to a student, that student picked a number corresponding to another student and they had to share what it was they had in common with each other. This was the most fun of all. For example, two girls were chosen to share and they started giggling. Of course the whole class was then involved, so finally one girl said, "we're both fat!" The whole class laughed. (By the way, neither one of them were fat)

This is a great get-to-know-you game, but I did it later in the semester after they thought they knew each other. There was a lot of English flying around, I got to mingle and help/correct/admonish, and after the activity there was a new sense of unity among the class members and everything improved.