Harnessing the Power of linkr

Linkr-inspired Assignments and Curricula

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Background

This document provides support to educators and institutions bringing linkr into their classes for the first time. It provides simple "getting started" assignments to help teachers introduce linkr's features to their students, universal assignments that could appeal to all educators bringing students into the context of global collaboration, online publishing, and social media for networked learning, and subject-specific assignment examples to inspire educators in bringing linkr into their disciplines.

We look forward to hearing from you about how linkr has affected your curriculum!

PART 1 - Getting students started

As a member of linkr, each user has a profile. Their profile will be populated by publications submitted to linkr. Often these publications are submitted to complete assignments. But a student's profile also includes their biography and some publications can be submitted to give background on who the student is as a person.

In Part 1, an assignments is provided to help get students started in linkr by completing a biography. Other "ice breaker" assignments show how students can provide some background information so that other collaborating classes can learn more about from where their collaborating student partners are coming, culturally, geographically, and personally.

Building a Biography

In the below assignment, each student is asked to fill out the below personal questionnaire. Later, students are asked to organize the answers in a narrative that will present their "linkr biography". The questions and coaching educators can provide along with the questionnaire encourages students to see how being part of linkr can lead to collaboration: being provided support and offering it.

Example of biography questionnaire:

1. Personality: What personality traits are your strengths? (Public speaking? Creative ideas? Compassion? Confidence? Humor?)
    a.   _
    b.   _
    c.   _

2. Skills: What activities you are able to perform given your personal background that may be unique? (Languages? Musical Instrument? Mechanics? Fashion Design? Cooking? Web design?)
    a.   _
    b.   _
    c.   _

3. Interests: If you had unlimited time to spend on developing certain skills or abilities for your own interest and benefit what skills would you work on?
    a.   _
    b.   _
    c.   _

4. Problems: What do you see in the news that bothers you? What aspects of the world that deserve improvement make you particularly upset?
    a.   _
    b.   _
    c.   _

5. Possible Collaborators: Do you prefer to work in person or collaboratively online? Would you like to work with other students in this class? On this campus? Or in some

other part of the world? Or alone? With older students? Professionals? Younger students?

       a   _

       b.   _

       c.   _

Please include the above information as part of a brief biography for your profile at linkr.com and give me this completed sheet as you leave today.
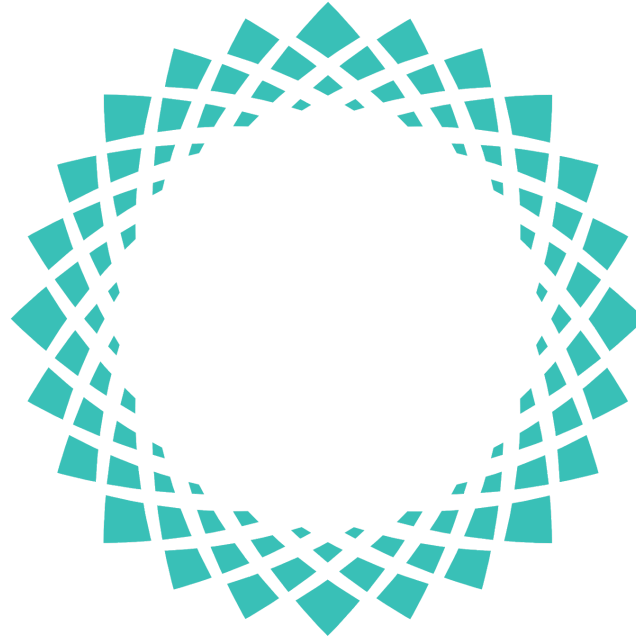
Icebreakers

Icebreakers are activities that help recently connected students get to know one another. Creating publications that start a student's profile can inspire them to recognize their embeddedness within a global educational network. These publications could be shared only with a collaborating class in a co-teaching or linked-classes context (links to both chapters of user guide). Or, if substantial, such icebreakers could be published for the entire linkr community to elicit feedback from any linkr learners.

Examples of icebreakers

- Post a short video, photo or explanation of one of the below:
    - A building, room, or space where you spend most of your time. Why?
    - A food that is meaningful to you
    - An item in your home that tells a story about you

- Ask students to write a summary of a news article that indicates some part of the world they feel should be improved.

    - ❖ **2 points**: Explain the news article in your own words
    - ❖ **2 points**: **Explain how your background and/or experiences give you a perspective on this news summary that deepens your reader's understanding of the issue inherent in the article.**
    - ❖ **.5 point:** You must give the article a good title and include in the text the author of the article, the publication it appeared in, the date of publication of the article, and a link to the article. (.5 points)
    - ❖ **.5 point:** You must have edited your writing so there are no **obvious** mistakes in spelling, punctuation or grammar.

PART 2 - Universally Applicable Assignments

Certain assignments can be useful in almost any discipline.
Learning outcomes related to critical thinking, media literacy, social media use, collaborative communication, and research, for example, can be found in most academic fields.
In Part 2, you will find assignments that can be used or modified and meet learning outcomes in almost any field.
In linkr, as comments can be provided on other students' publications, teaching about these universal skills can be fostered and extended as students are asked not only to contribute publications to complete assignments, but also to provide feedback to other students from their class, in a partner class, or anywhere on the planet.
A user's comments also populate their profile, meaning that as students are contributing ideas in the form of comments on other students' publications, they are also adding to their own profile and their comments also show up in their linkr class.

Mass Media Literacy

This assignment helps students see how to judge the reliability of sources. It can be used in online or blended courses as it integrates Ted talks which can be shared as class materials on linkr.

News Summary (five points)

First, please watch the following TED talks found in our "class material" on linkr:

http://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-choose-your-news-damon-brown
https://www.ted.com/talks/markham_nolan_how_to_separate_fact_and_fiction_online

"Fake News" and "Alternative Facts"

Please write a summary of a news article related to the material we've been studying and **explain why and how you deemed the source to be reliable.**

You will need to be sure to include the below elements to receive 100%:
- ❖ **3 points**: You need to clearly explain the news article in your own words and explain why the source is reliable
- ❖ **1 points:** You must give the article a good title and include in the text the author of the article, the publication it appeared in, the date of publication of the article, and a link to the article.
- ❖ **1 point:** You must have edited your writing so there are no **obvious** mistakes in spelling, punctuation or grammar. If there are any obvious mistakes, you will not receive the point.

Social Media Use

This assignment helps students see how to comment productively on material found on linkr or on other social media platforms.

Example of assignment:

> **Commenting on linkr (Five points)**
>
> Make comments on two students' posts from either our class, the ***** class from Japan the ***** class from Ontario, or go to "Discovery" on linkr and comment on any post.
>
> In your comments on other students' posts, you must:
>
> Begin by mentioning something positive about the post, either regarding content, style or something else.
>
> 1. 2 points: Provide a constructive idea that could help the student strengthen their post through communicating more clearly about the reliability of their source material. Explain why the source they reference is or is not yet considered reliable on your consideration of their post and why their original post would be better if it had better description of this point.
>
> If you can, provide a link to a source with either more information or from a higher quality source confirming their information, to help readers confirm their information by referencing what you explain to be a more reliable or relevant source.
>
> 2. .5 points: You must have edited your comment so there are no obvious mistakes in spelling, punctuation or grammar. If there are any obvious mistakes, you will not receive this point.
>
> Both comments are to be submitted by 7:30 AM Monday, February 6 to linkr

Critical Thinking

This assignment helps students see how to identify strong arguments and recognize fallacies in arguments through exploring student work found on linkr.

Example of assignment:

> We have learned how to gauge the quality of arguments, whether deductive or inductive, how to identify fallacies in reasoning, and how to identify common ways statistics can be used in misleading ways.
>
> Please comment on three publications at linkr. Make sure **one** comment goes to a student in our class **one** goes to another student in Canada and **one** goes to a students somewhere outside of Canada.
>
> In each comment, provide the author
>
> - A positive comment about her work
> - A piece of constructive criticism using a vocabulary term we've studied in the fallacies or "misleading statistics" section
> - An overall assessment of the strength of the presented argument
>
> If a publication already has more than three comments of this type, please find a different piece to give feedback upon

Academic Research Skills

This assignment helps students use linkr to showcase their ability to do research and also to make that research have a meaningful use, insofar as their peers can discover the way academic material can be pertinent and useful

Example of assignment:

Through a xxxxx library database search (or other database available to you), find a course relevant peer reviewed academic journal research article. The research article should be published in a reputable journal in the last 10 years (2008 to 2020). As well, this research article should be relevant to both you and our course. The recommended research article length for review is between 8 and 18 pages. Once your article is selected, you will create a research review presentation. The purpose of the presentation is to summarize and critique your chosen article and share the results and **pertinence** of your review with your peers.

Note: Your chosen article can explore a course relevant topic, concept or any diverse student designation where creativity plays a role or is impacted upon.

Here is a proposed structure; simply answer the questions! Even use headings to orient the reader!

Summary (Description)
- What is the research question?
- What is the research methodology?
    - Who are the participants?
    - What do the participants do?
    - How are the results collected?
- What do the results say?
- What are the conclusions?

Critique (Analysis)

- Is the research question valuable?
- Are the methods a good way to explore the research question?
    - Appropriate operation definitions of constructs?
    - Right population? – Good choice of research participants?
    - Right experimental steps? – Good choice of data collection?
- Do the results speak to the research question?
- Does the conclusion match the results? Are there any limitations to the research/conclusions?

Pertinence (Application)

- How does this research have relevance for:
    - Education?
    - Students?
    - Teachers?
- How can the results/conclusions impact upon your teaching and learning?
- What should peers consider most **now and next** given what you have explored?

PART 3 - Subject Specific Assignments

The following assignments have been shared by teachers on linkr to share how they have made their courses more engaging, interactive, and or international through connecting discipline-specific work with linkr's features.

Geography

Example of assignment:

This assignment requires you to find 3 news articles that discuss an environmental issue, then to summarize and comment on those articles on the linkr website. You are also required to comment 6 times throughout the semester on the summaries of your peers and on the work of students from two classes at .... college that our class will be partnering with this semester.

Guidelines for article summaries (3)
1. You must post one summary per section. Summaries should identify the purpose of the article, the causes of the issue, the main points used to support the author's ideas and point out what makes the issue chosen a problem / identify consequences of the issue. It should also identify the article's sources, any major findings / conclusions or call to action included in the text. When summarizing the content of the text always make reference to the authors / text as the source of that content.
2. Include a section of analysis / opinion directly following your summary of the article. For example, you may explain your opinion on the role of the various stakeholders (gov't, communities, individuals), discuss roadblocks to solving this issue, solutions that seem possible or ask questions that seem pertinent.
3. Make sure the title of the summary reflects the article's content and that a link to its online source is included at the end of the text.

Guidelines for responses (6)
1. Your responses may be short or long, but they must always be polite and relevant.
2. Your response to any of the summaries written should be both constructive and informative.
3. Start by explaining why you are choosing to comment on that particular summary; what is interesting about that subject to you?
4. Following, give information, theory or examples that support or contradict the assertions made in the summary you are commenting on.
5. Always make sure your comments are polite, relevant to the area of the world considered and to the problem discussed.

6. Explain your point of view as clearly as possible. Any information from outside sources must be referenced in APA style both in-text and in the bibliography at the end of the response.

Comments must be submitted by the Friday of the week following the original posting, according to the schedule on the following page. You must submit at least two comments / assignment section.

The guidelines for the summaries for the class we are partnering with may differ from your own, but the guidelines for your responses will be the same when responding to your classmates or to the students from our partner class(es).

Submissions:

Summaries must be submitted to the linkr website by the due date indicated on the back of this sheet. Responses / comments to a summary must be completed one week after the summary posting.

For your summaries you may choose a news article on:
- Population and Resources
- Energy Sources
- Ecosystem Change
- Climate Change
- Oceans and Fisheries
- Agriculture

Biology

Example of assignment:

Two postings on the linkr website. Each post is worth 2.5%.

Post 1 (Deadline: 19 September):
Convince someone from the linkr site to read a recent science article that you have found.

Post 2 (Deadline: 26 October):
Read someone else's science-related post, explain to them how you thought their commentary was useful for convincing you to read that article, and suggest a relevant follow up article that might also interest them.

Grading method:
motivate one to read the chosen article.

Post 1 Criteria:
This has to be a recent (2017) science article that is relevant to the Biology 101- NYA course at Champlain College. That is, it has to be about something that demonstrates the importance of biological research as a significant force for change in our society (affecting policies on health, agriculture, ethics, law etc.), and that the general public should be aware of and understand.

Post 2 Criteria:
You need to find a recent post from an active member of linkr. The post needs to be about topics that are relevant to the college level (or higher) science, but it doesn't necessarily need to be about Biology. However, your follow up article suggestion does need to be linked to Biology in some way.

General Criteria for both posts:

There are no criteria for style, length, article choice, citation style etc. However, your post will be more compelling if it is:

- Written well, with good spelling and grammar
- Long enough to make your point
- Has an authoritative tone and style
- Does not insult the reader
- Does not waste the reader's time by writing something that is uninteresting or uninformative
- Suggests an article from a reputable author or publication
- Suggests a clearly relevant and pertinent article
- Cites the article in a way that makes it accessible to the reader (they shouldn't have to pay a subscription to view it, so you would have to provide a way that they can access this article)

Global Citizenship

Example of assignment:

Organizational Research

This assignment requires you to research and explore four non-profit organizations or socially responsible businesses that provide volunteer opportunities. Each volunteer opportunity submitted is worth 2% of your final mark for a total of 8% of the course.

1. Reflect on your recent news summary posts which indicate a part of the world that you think needs improvement. A piece of your own writing can inspire your research.
2. Search for organizations working on improving the issue associated with the story.
3. Write a post for each organization, or write a single post summarizing the four organizations working on the same theme. For each volunteer opportunity/organization research, you must include:
    a. The organization's core values and goals.
    b. The major projects the organization is working on in 2020.
    c. The volunteer opportunities that would be available to those wanting to help in the organizations mission. (You might need to call or email)
    d. The contact person and information for the volunteer opportunities
    e. Optional information:
        i. The history of the organization
        ii. The past projects the organization dealt with
        iii. The job opportunities associated with the organization.

Psychology

Example of Case Study assignment:

Step 1: March 26th
Create a diverse student profile. The student could fit into any of the categories or designations of diversity explored in the course.

Step 2: April 2nd
Create a support plan (I.E.P. or other if appropriate) for your student. The plan should consider a full ecosystem analysis. The support plan should be for a full academic year.

Step 3: **Due April 9th**
Post your work on Linkr for peer review.

Step 4: **Due April 12th**
Then perform a peer review for your colleagues. Make any constructive general comments you wish but also speak to the evaluation criteria.

Ethics

Example of assignment:

Throughout the semester you will engage in discussions through an on-line platform called linkr. Through the use of this site you will be able to present, reflect on and defend your positions on ethical issues and current events. You will also be asked to respond and engage with the ideas of other student users of the site. These students will include your classmates, other Champlain students as well as students from colleges across Quebec, the United States and around the world.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Be familiar with terminology pertinent to the discussion of ethical issues
2. Be able to recognize an ethical problem and its significant elements

PART 1 : NEWS SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

Your first task will be to choose and summarize a news article on an ethical issue and analyze it according to the elements of moral reasoning. Your article can come from a print newspaper or you can find one on-line through the Champlain College Library website (look in Articles- Proquest databases or Points of View). If you are uncertain if the article is from a reputable newspaper, please email me the link for verification.

Your post should summarize the article and identify the ethical principles and values that represent both sides of the debate. The title of the article should identify the ethical issue being addressed. You should conclude with your opinion on the issue. Your post should be approximately 500 words. You should end with a question about the issue.

MARKING GRID:

Summary of News Article: /10
- The central idea or author's position is identified
- The facts/ relevant supporting ideas are clearly presented/ minor details are omitted

Moral Reasoning: /10
- The ethical principles and values which inform the arguments on both sides of the issue are clearly identified and discussed

Statement of Opinion: /5
- The statement of opinion makes reference to the arguments, values, rights and/or principles that make, in your opinion, one side stronger than another

Structure & Language: /10
- The title is phrased as a question and represents the central ethical issue being addressed
- The post follows a clear structure
- The post uses appropriate verb tenses, vocabulary and terminology
- The news article is correctly referenced, using MLA format, at the bottom of the post

---**TOTAL / 35**

PART 2: RESPONSES

The second part of your task is to make substantial and useful comments on 3 recent blog posts ideally in either XXXX class or XXXX.
- Please make an effort to seek out articles that have not been responded to. It is important that everyone gets a chance to get feedback on their posts.
- When people respond to your posts you should acknowledge them by agreeing, disagreeing, asking for clarification, etc.

MARKING GRID:

Responses should include:
- A positive reason explaining why you are commenting on the post (title, topic, writing style, etc.)
- An explanation of your position. Your position may or may not differ from the one given. You should justify your position by referring to your values and/or the ethical principles that you think are important.
- Conclude with a question regarding the issue that can help continue the conversation and/or see the issue from a different perspective

--**TOTAL / 15**

(5 per response)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Example of assignment:

Idioms

Read the Wikipedia definition of an idiom at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idioms. Once you understand what an idiom is, look through the dictionary of idioms at Daves ESL Café.

1. Select one idiom out of the idioms in the list at Dave's ESL café. Google the idiom surrounded with quotation marks ("idiom") as well as the words "ethics" and "business".
2. Post a link to an article that you find and then paste a paragraph containing that idiom into the same post.

Grading Rubric - 3 points

Pasted a paragraph containing an idiom from Daves ESL café in an online article about business ethics - 3 points

Advanced Business English

Example of assignment:

Propose a Product or Service

Describe a product or service to present to the Dragons in linkr. Remember your proposal has to be ethical. Make sure to correct your entry using Grammarly Lite and Word. Explain in a comment to your post what language you changed because of this information. Make a comment about someone else's proposal.

Grading Rubric

Grammar and Language
- Is your grammar appropriate to your class level?
- Is your vocabulary accurate and expressive?
- Did you explain the nature of your errors as determined by Grammarly Lite and Word?

---**TOTAL / 10**

Content
- How well did you explain your proposal?
- Did you provide a link to the source or sources of information if necessary?
- Did you explain why your proposal is ethical?
- Did you react to someone else's proposal?

---**TOTAL / 10**

---**TOTAL / 20**

The Effects of Technology on Ethics in Business

We have been discussing the ever greater effects of technology on the way we do business. Now the question to answer is how these changes in technology affect ethics. Post about the topic in general or about an aspect of this question that you find interesting. The length should vary according to your abilities in English (and what you have to say).

Grading Rubric

Grammar and Language
- Is your grammar appropriate to your class level?
- Is your vocabulary accurate and expressive?
- Did you analyze your own grammar using grammar correctors?

---**TOTAL / 10**

Content
- Is your content well organized and logical?
- Did you explain the main point of the article?
- Do you think this trend is a good thing? Why or why not?
- Did you provide a link to the source or sources of your information?

---**TOTAL / 10**

---**TOTAL / 20**

Journalism

Example of assignment:

Please read "<u>What is Journalism</u>", by the Canadian Association of Journalists.

Therein, you will find the following description of journalistic methodology:

Methods: Journalistic work provides clear evidence of a self-conscious discipline calculated to provide an accurate and fair description of facts, opinion and debate at play within a situation.

Difference between "journalism" and "non-journalism"

Write a post where you clarify the difference between "journalism" and "non-journalism" by giving an example of each regarding a subject of your choosing. Search for a subject and see what material comes up.

Explain why one piece fits the paradigm of "journalism" and another might appear to be journalistic, but does not indicate the "self-conscious discipline" identified above.