A Guide to Icebreakers for Teachers
Compiled by Diana Bowen, Mary Nash, and Katherine Shifflett

Why should I use an icebreaker activity?
Icebreaker activities give teachers an opportunity to build classroom community and teachers get to know/meet their students.

How does an icebreaker activity relate to culturally responsive teaching?
Icebreaker activities touch on questions 1B, 1C, 3M, and 3N from the survey.

Challenge: We all use ice breakers in our classroom; can you take one of the ice breaker activities below and use it at your next faculty meeting?

General Icebreakers for Students and Faculty:

1. People Bingo – Teachers or students must find people matching the characteristics on the bingo card. You can play until everyone achieves a bingo or in a large faculty you can play until someone fills in the entire card. Remind students/teachers that they should be engaging in conversation about each item and the bingo card is not merely a checklist.

2. Marooned - Which 3 people would you want to have on a desert island with you?

3. Expectations - List name, what they expect from today/this class, and what would be the best possible outcome if the expectation is met.

4. Bring in a photo – Each student or teacher brings in a photo and shares something about them related to the photo.

5. Zoom - Each person has a picture from a story they can't show the others and they must put them in sequential order using non-verbal communication.

6. Birthday Line-Up - Students line up in chronological order by birthday using non-verbal communication

7. Index Card Survey – Students/teachers write three things down on one index card. 1. They write down something they think everyone in the room has in common. 2. They write down something they think most people in the room have in common. 3. They write down something they think is unique to them. Collect all the index cards and put them in a container. Draw an index card and have everyone stand up. Read the first item on the card, if this item applies people should remain standing, if the item does not apply they should sit down. Go through all three items on each card.

8. Two Truths and a Lie – Students/teachers write three things down on one index card. The three items need to include two things that are true about that person and one thing that is not
true. Each person shares their two truths and a lie and the rest of the class/group tries to guess the lie.

**Icebreakers by Subject Area for Middle School and High School Students:**

**Math: Birthday Line-Up** – students must put themselves in chronological order by birthday using non-verbal communication. (You can introduce the idea of probability here)

**History/Science: Marooned** – If your students could bring one person from history or one scientist to the island who would it be and why.

**English/Language Arts/History/Science: Zoom** – Students are given picture cards and they must find the people with the same event, story, or movie depicted and determine the correct order of the event, story, or movie. (In science teachers can depict cards of life cycles such as the butterfly or frog, in English or Language Arts teachers can depict cards of famous novels, in history teachers can create cards that give a time line of an important period in history or a historical story)

**Foreign Language:** Introduce another student in the language

**Icebreakers for Elementary School Students:**

1. **Shoe Game** – Every child takes off one of their shoes and puts them in the middle of the carpet. Children take turns blindly picking a shoe and guessing who it belongs to. This is a great game for teaching and learning names.

2. **Student Interview** – Students partner up with each other. The teacher asks a question and the children have to find out their partner’s answer. When it’s time to share, kids have to introduce their partner and tell his/her answer to the question.

3. **Cooperative Drawing** - Get large A3 paper and fold into 5 sections, label each section head, shoulders, arms, legs, shoes/feet - photocopy enough for everyone in the class. Then get each person to draw the relevant thing in the section, fold and pass it on. At the end post the results on the board and discuss the outcomes.

4. **Class Quilt** – Each child decorates one square of a quilt. Before putting the quilt together, each child shares why they decorated their square the way they did.

5. **Hickety Pickety Bumble Bee** – This is one example of a name game for young students.
   Hickety Pickety Bumble Bee
   Won't you say your name for me?
(kid says name)
Let's whisper it.
Let's shout it.
Let's clap it.
Let's wiggle it.

In one Albemarle County classroom the teacher passed around a bee stuffed animal and sang the chant for each kid. She felt the kids were engaged and it made it easier for her to learn names.

6. Playdough - At the beginning of the day, we give each child a piece of playdough at their seats to play with as “Morning Work”. (Playing with the dough is a great activity to get rid of those first day butterflies!) Then the kids have to use the dough to make a picture of something special to them. Later, each child shares what they have made. Children are allowed to give compliments to their peers or ask questions.

Additional Resources for Icebreakers:

http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/ice-breaker_games.htm

http://classroommanagementforteachers.com/

http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/