

**Presenters:** Alyssa Taylor Amos, University of California San Diego

**Topic:** ASEE Education Showcase Deep Dive: Communication – “Yes and!” in a BioE Grad Proposal Writing Course

**Resources:**

“The Story of My Name” as a first year ice breaker – introduce self and choose one thing to talk about your name.’

“Say Name then Action”, e.g. “My name is Yanfen and I like to Swim”, then make swim action, then go to next person and they have to add their name and repeat. Works well in small groups only.

Slides to introduce the activity to students + Tina Fay interview video will be made available on

<https://beecvirtual.org/beecshareandlearns.html>

**Presentations Overview:**

- Course centers on communication and generating new ideas
  - Yes and! is a well known improv technique
  - For a proposal writing class
  - Helps put you out of your comfort zone, and had a really good reception for students
  - Shout out to Ester Kwon for showing how to use it! Shout out to Yanfen Li for using it for teamwork in the classroom
- Graduate level first year PhD students
  - Writing graduate research proposals due in Summer, taught in Spring
  - How to generate new ideas and build upon existing research in lab and literature
- Yes and!
  - Warmup exercise in improv
  - University of Chicago partnered with The Second City found it can improve communication
    - Purpose is to feed off each other in a positive way
  - Each person will accept the previous statement but then add new information to it
- Why use it?
  - Already known to improve communication
  - Encourages acceptance of other ideas
  - Subtle underdone of positive atmosphere
  - Gets over intimidation barrier as they get to know each other in the classroom
- Example
  - Start: The river is full of fish, Diffusion is everywhere (can be silly, or a scientific prompt)
  - Then... “yes, and one of them enormous”, etc.
  - Ends with “Yes and luck for you I just got my pilot’s license”
  - Goes from something to a new place that you end up, which is similar to proposal writing
- Principle
  - Set the stage and show why the exercise is helpful first
  - Yes portion is to encourage acceptance and contributions of others
  - Instead of judging an idea in the design process (which is common), do it later in the development process
  - Next step is to add new information to sway from changing suggested material, but rather build upon it
  - Then determine how you can use this across topics or places, such as listening to a lab partner, accepting what they are saying, and then building on it.
- Ideas for Scaling to Other Courses/Topics:
  - Was in a 20 person class – divided to groups of 2. Groups of 6-7 works well too so team size is flexible
  - Have students go in a circle rather than pointing, but point to the next person also works.

- When done, you can do a second round. Although some students are shy, she noticed that many wanted to do it multiple times!
- Nice to hear the classroom laughing despite how stressed they typically are
- Remind students the rule – using “Yes \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_”
- Important to wrap up and reflect at the end of the activity so it doesn’t feel silly. Share why you as the instructor do it (value other ideas, value creativity), and ask students to reflect on why they think doing the exercise was important
- Have students reflect on other places – lab meetings, journal meetings, versus stages where you want to be more creative and building upon ideas rather than being critical
- Personal Reflections
  - Students loved it
  - Jen Choi adopted idea in class and would like to hear other ideas that they have as ice breaker

#### Open Discussion:

Patricia – has giant lectures or labs typically, so may be difficult to do in large classrooms. Would it be possible in a large class? It isn’t set up for a discussion in a round.

Yanfen – would work if it is a nice day and you go outside to do it so you have the space and can be loud

Yanfen – ties into what I do in class – I teach first year design, when they are in their “solution ideation” phase, I do creative problem solving. The rule is “yes and”, but this activity pairs well and can showcase the concept before they go into the design process

Alyssa Taylor – shows funny clip from Tina Fey on Improv to introduce it, and then has a few slides to introduce ice breaker (will share afterwards)

Alyssa – will be interested to see how undergraduates react compared to grad students

Yanfen – depends on the culture of the group and the student cohort

Patricia – do you monitor them?

Alyssa – no I participate as a member. Then later I have my ear open to hear what is going on in the rest of the groups. I only have two groups to listen in on.

Patricia – I wonder if they would diverge from the task?

Alyssa – it helps that they were grad students and are used to stay on task. You may want to limit it to only a few rounds or short period of time to avoid them going off task.

Patricia – this seems very useful for first day of class for freshmen to get them used to speak

Alyssa – Likes “The Story of My Name” as a first year ice breaker – introduce self and choose one thing to talk about your name. It’s flexible on what you disclose or choose to say.

Yanfen – Likes “Say Name then Action”, e.g. “My name is Yanfen and I like to Swim”, then make swim action, then go to next person and they have to add their name and repeat. Works well in small groups only.