


College of Education  
McDowell Institute  
Fostering Wellness Through Education

## Proactive Strategies to Enhance Student Engagement While Providing Virtual Instruction



**Danielle Empson & Tim Knoster**

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**Webinar Tips**

- 1 Close any applications that use bandwidth or resources on your device
- 2 To submit a question, click "Questions" in the webinar panel and type in your question
- 3 To minimize the webinar panel, click the orange arrow in the upper left of the panel
- 4 If you experience computer audio issues, you can switch to "Phone call" in the "Audio" section of the webinar panel and use the dial-in information provided




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**Provide Clear Performance Expectations In Context of Predictable Structures and Routines**

- In an age-appropriate manner, clearly explain how you expect your students to interact with you, classmates, and the curriculum through virtual synchronous and/or asynchronous means (e.g., timely response to e-mail communications that you may send, use of the raised hand symbol to be called upon to be given the invisible talking stick during synchronous class sessions, video cameras activated during synchronous class sessions).



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**Provide Clear Performance Expectations In Context of Predictable Structures and Routines**

- Pre-correct for errors by identifying high frequency typical virtual routines that may prove most challenging to students and remind students of the expected behavior prior to initiating work within those structured routines (e.g., remind students 1) to use the raised hand icon to speak before beginning a virtual class discussion, 2) of the ground rules for fairly distributing the work load between classmates prior to assigning asynchronous small group work, and 3) to have their web camera on and their microphone muted when you or others are speaking at the onset of each synchronous class session).



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**Provide a reasonably high number of opportunities to respond (OTRs) throughout instruction**

- Provide advanced organizers with focus questions for students to be prepared to discuss during virtual class sessions.
- Use polling software or other tools to increase student active engagement through personal response throughout virtual instruction (synchronous and/or asynchronous).



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**Provide a reasonably high number of opportunities to respond (OTRs) throughout instruction**

- Track student engagement by keeping data on the number and types of virtual interactions that occur across students and look for ways to engage those students that appear more passive in their participation (e.g., during synchronous class sessions structure think-pair-shares by pairing students up to have brief-structured private chats for 1-2 minutes that culminate in a larger group virtual discussion).




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**Provide a reasonably high number of opportunities to respond (OTRs) throughout instruction**

- Build in to your course expectations initiation and responses through discussion threads during targeted windows of time including the requirement for students to (at a minimum) 1) read all threads posted during that time frame in tandem with 2) requiring a targeted number of thread initiations and responses to occur by each student during the targeted time frame.




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**Acknowledge Desired Behavior**

- Consciously look for opportunities to acknowledge students meeting your established performance expectations...but be thoughtful about your use of public or private praise.
- Explicitly acknowledge effort on the part of students...especially with those students that appear to be either less engaged or struggling with course content.
- Disperse acknowledgement across students through a variety of means (e.g., verbal recognition, private e-mails, chat reactions like "thumbs up") and anticipate that some students will need more frequent acknowledgment as well as explicit encouragement than others.




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**What if students act inappropriately during virtual instruction?**

**Point to Ponder:** Muting students or removing them from the virtual room might be an option based on the software being utilized. However, excluding students can have numerous undesired affects. Consider the following less to more intrusive response procedures when possible:



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**Constructive Strategies to Respond to Undesired Student Behavior During Live (Synchronous) Sessions**

- Provide pre-corrections as previously noted.
- Use the "praise around" strategy for low level inconsequential behavior (e.g., brief time off task or forgetting to turn their web camera on) to publicly acknowledge those students who are meeting the class expectations. Be ready to praise the student once they display the desired behavior (e.g., being on-task or turning their web camera on).



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**Constructive Strategies to Respond to Undesired Student Behavior During Live (Synchronous) Sessions**

- Use visual/gestural re-direction prompts as subtle reminders on the screen in the event of low-level disruptive behavior (e.g., visual cue to turn on their web camera).
- Use the private chat feature to implement a stop-redirect-reinforce procedure for behavior requiring immediate cessation (e.g., undesired responses such as a sarcastic response to a classmates remarks, verbal refusal to follow directions, persistent off topic comments) and follow up with the student outside of the class session privately to review performance expectations and encourage desired performance in the future.



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**Questions**


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## COVID-19 Resources

- Recommended reading
- Downloadable resources
- Professional development webinars

<http://bit.ly/COVID-education>



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