

The Teaching and Learning Communique

brought to you by



The Ultimate Guide to Engaging Students in the Virtual Classroom

In March 2020, educators and students embarked on an unexpected experiment in online learning as COVID-19 shuttered schools around the world. But the rapid transition to virtual education left many teachers struggling to engage students the way they did in the classroom.

Instructors want to connect with their students online. But often, they don't know how – and they don't have time to retrain themselves on the best practices for online learning as they revise years' worth of lesson plans for the virtual classroom. The move online has shown us that virtual learning is the way of the future – but only if we can provide educators the tools they need to boost student engagement and embrace the capabilities of their web-conferencing platforms. In this whitepaper, we'll explain why online engagement is so important, lay out best practices for educators across disciplines, and offer key considerations for administrators and IT professionals as they empower teachers to thrive in the world of online education.

Engaging students online requires having the right tools and training – and that starts with making sure educators feel supported. Instructors need help during the online transition to improve their teaching practice, fully understand the new technologies, and create engaging lesson plans. Following are five best practices for administrators and academic tech to support teachers as they make the move online.



Prioritize communication

As your institution makes a plan for online learning⁵, ensure that you are communicating that plan with teachers. Some of the most common stressors during periods of transition come from a lack of clear communication. If you want teachers to feel empowered, give them the knowledge they need to succeed.

Offer quick, asynchronous knowledge-sharing opportunities

Educators need training to teach online, but they don't have much time on their hands. Offer quick training opportunities to empower teachers without adding more stress. Consider sending out weekly newsletters that share web conferencing features and best practices, offering video tutorials teachers can watch as needed, designing an easy-to-access resource page on virtual learning tools, and scheduling optional round-table discussions for teachers to share their tips with each other.

Offer ongoing technical support

Technical difficulties will happen, so have an emergency line in place that teachers can use to get support when they need it. It's also important to offer regular opportunities for instructors to discuss online learning tools with tech experts; for instance, organize weekly office hours with academic tech to support educators as they adopt new technology.

Celebrate success

This is one of the hardest experiences many teachers will go through in their careers – so make them feel valued by celebrating their successes. You can highlight success stories in a weekly newsletter or at staff meetings.

Ask teachers for their input

It is sometimes necessary to make top-down decisions during a crisis, but remember that remote learning is not just a short-term emergency – it's our future. Make space for instructors to share needs and ideas around online learning, so they feel like their voice matters.

A strong administrative and tech infrastructure is critical to making sure teachers feel supported and confident as they transition to online teaching. But the real magic happens where it always does: between teacher and student. In the next section, we'll explore ways to improve student engagement inside of virtual classrooms.

Call us: +92 42 111 300 200 Ext: 3469/3412

Email us: zarnab.shakeel@umt.edu.pk | ctl.info@umt.edu.pk

Visit us: ctl.umt.edu.pk