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Teaching During a Pandemic: Practices to Support Students' Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed all our lives. As we move to remote instruction, it is important to recognize the massive impact that current events may be having on our students and ourselves. As instructors we have a special opportunity to help support our students in feeling safe, connected, and hopeful. Below are some suggestions to create positive remote environments that can support our students' well-being during this difficult time.

❖ Establishing **clear and predictable routines** will help build a sense of psychological safety and trust. For instance, consider doing the following:
  ➢ Establish clear communication channels (e.g. email, messaging via Canvas, etc.) and let students know when they can expect a response from you (e.g. "I will respond within 24 hours").
  ➢ Make sure all course readings/lectures are labeled following the same format and are available in the same place on Canvas.
  ➢ Each week, have all assignments due on the same day, at the same time.
  ➢ Structure the delivery of content in a consistent way (e.g., use the same "template" for each class).

❖ With fewer opportunities for direct interaction with you and the instructional team, students may feel adrift and overwhelmed. To help them access course content, **give information in short, digestible chunks**. Similarly, consider breaking large assignments down into smaller pieces. Check for understanding frequently and give students opportunities to ask questions.
  ➢ Consider setting up a "Q&A" or "Students Helping Students" Discussion Forum in Canvas to encourage peer support and to manage your workload (sample here).

❖ **Prioritize relationships and a sense of connection**. Let students know that you care about their well-being, not just completion of assignments or participation in class. Consider using a survey to get to know your students and their needs, and check in with them frequently over the course of the quarter. Use icebreakers to help your students get to know one another, and give students frequent opportunities to connect with their classmates in Zoom breakout rooms or on discussion boards. See this resource for more ideas about how to build community in remote learning environments.

❖ Recognize that each of your students is dealing with their own set of issues, and that **in some cases completion of assignments may be difficult or impossible**. Acknowledge and appreciate their effort, and be accessible to support them. Recognize that current daily life already requires a huge amount of learning, and don't take it personally if students are unable or choose not to prioritize your class.

❖ As you practice kindness towards your students, **be kind to yourself** as well. Give yourself healthy daily routines, connect frequently with loved ones, and reach out for help when you need it. Consider sharing your self-care practices with students, and encourage them to develop their own healthy practices.

For more information: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus; Dear Educators: This is a Lot