



Inclusive Teaching Practices in a Post-COVID Climate

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Has the post-COVID return to in-person learning resulted in decreased student attendance and engagement?
Do your students report a reduced sense of belonging and connectedness to campus, peers, and faculty?
Has post-COVID teaching increased your risk for burnout and compassion fatigue?

Here are 5 easy-to-implement areas with strategies to assist with re-engaging a diverse student population.

Strategy 1 – Vulnerability, Empathy and Trust

Build trust with students by sharing some level of vulnerability. Expressing vulnerability encourages an empathetic response as well as encourages reciprocal vulnerability and trust building.

Potential Strategies:

- Share examples of own work and discuss struggles.
- Talk about strategies that helped you.
- Affirm that even our work or progress as a student took years.
- Note any challenges or barriers you encountered etc.
- Express our own struggles with speaking up in class as a student.
- Affirm a personal understanding of speaking up in class.

Strategy 2 – Support Peer Connections

Encourage students to step outside of their comfort zones while modeling the same. Exposure to different perspectives encourages creativity and innovation.

Potential Strategies:

- Generate structured, low to no-risk opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups.
- Introduce themselves in small group discussions.
- Share some shared likes or favorites (snack, color, etc.).
- Share one unique thing about a group member.
- Create a list of group commonalities.
- Before jumping into the content, take time to use icebreakers.

Strategy 3 – De-escalation

Recognize when a student is in distress and utilize techniques to remain in control of yourself, give space, and use de-escalating language. Students experience a variety of stressors and being treated with dignity and respect positively impacts engagement.

Potential Strategies:

- Remain calm. Use a low tone of voice. Use concise language. Keep a calm face.
- Give the individual space. Don't touch the person, shake a finger, or smile.
- Acknowledge the individual's emotions and empathize (e.g., "I see that you are frustrated" and "I care about your success")
- Suggest alternative behaviors (e.g., taking a break, entering a quieter space, getting a drink of water) and offer options when available.
- Take a break and "reset."
- Seek assistance if de-escalation is ineffective.

Strategy 4 – Campus Resources

Be familiar with available campus resources to make appropriate and timely referrals. When our basic needs (food, water, shelter, sleep), sense of safety, belonging, and self-esteem (confidence, accomplishment) are met, we are more receptive to achieving.

Potential Strategies:

- Have a list of the available campus resources (updated yearly). [Canvas module in Creative Commons](#) to import into your Canvas course(s).
- Review the resources with your students, such as that the ASI Food Pantry regularly hosts free Groceries Pop Ups or that the CARES office can assist students with completing a CalFresh application.
- Utilize campus resources for employees: free wellness classes like Breath and Health, Monday Meditation, and Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Peak Adventures: free rentals occasionally, scholarships and discounts for faculty, staff, and students.

Strategy 5 – Normalize Self-Care

Normalize self-care and regularly model its use. Support students with exploring sustainable self-care options while connecting these needs to their overall academic performance.

Potential Strategies:

- Faculty should first be kind to themselves and routinely check in with their own needs. Take breaks (e.g., reduce or eliminate working lunches, walk for coffee). Set healthy boundaries (e.g., designate work hours to respond to emails).
- Exercise, get sufficient sleep, and make room for quality time with family and friends.
- Faculty can assist students with identifying:
 - sustainable self-care activities (e.g., "What is something that you like to do, that you can do anytime, anywhere, for 15mins to destress?")
 - effective coping strategies (e.g., "What could you do if you slept through an exam?") by conducting quick, in-class. polls (e.g., Qualtrics, Kahoot, Slido, Zoom polls, or hand raising).
- Self-care check-ins can be incorporated into the course, and if appropriate, for extra credit (e.g., use of a sleep log, posting self-care selfies, selecting a student song dedication to the class). Additional strategies could include encouraging students to self-advocate (e.g., requesting the use of spongy ear plugs during exams to reduce distractions). strategies could include encouraging students to self-advocate (e.g., requesting the use of spongy ear plugs during exams to reduce distractions).

Additional Resources and References

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