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Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all

RESEARCH CAPSULE (Abbreviated)

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Effective Online Teaching

AT A GLANCE

Given the current health pandemic, teachers have been shifted from the brick-and-mortar classroom into the virtual classroom. Although substantial research on K-12 online instruction has not been conducted, empirical studies exist that focus on effective techniques for higher education. This abbreviated Research Capsule provides a summary of three key components of effective online instruction identified in the literature. Resources that may help supplement teachers' online curriculum and lessons plans are also included.

A clear need exists for empirical research on K-12 effective online strategies. However, higher education has studied this form of instruction and provides a rich understanding of key components necessary for successful learning. Three of these elements include Communication, Active Learning and Expectations, and Assessment of Learning.

Communication

Prior research indicates that effective teacher–student communication in online learning environments relies on timely and clear interactions through a variety of formats, including email, chat, live class questions, and assessment and feedback provision (Roddy, 2017, Cable, 2017, Arshin, 2017). Discussion among teachers and students is an important component that can determine the success of the course. Additionally, helping students connect with each other and providing a space in which students feel they are members of a supportive learning community have proven to be necessary elements in remote education (Dunlap, 2018, Walters, 2017).

Martin's et al. (2019) research found the most important role of an online instructor is that of the facilitator and instructor "presence." Study participants stated that "being there" for students and "having a presence that the students felt on the course site" were essential. Participants explained what "presence" meant to them in the following examples: engage with students to make it interactive, check-in with them regularly, and help students develop self-regulated learning skills (Martin, 2019).

In the absence of more immediate feedback methods available to in-school instruction, (e.g., face-to-face consultation), the assessment and feedback provided in online learning environments also needs to be as clear and valuable as possible to promote student understanding (Roddy, 2017, Bailey, 2009). Tone of voice, body language, and other non-verbal communication clues are typically absent in the online classroom environment. Teacher support online involves effective monitoring of student progress, anticipation and resolution of key learning queries, and establishment and maintenance of rapport (Roddy, 2017). Setting clear standards for the response time to email inquiries and discussion board postings, along with stating and maintaining deadlines, provides students with clear expectations (Cable, 2017, Bailey, 2009).

Active Learning and Expectations

Active learning is a process of making students engage in activities that have them reflect upon what they learned and how they are applying their learning (Roddy, 2017). By also using active learning in online lessons, students take the lead in their own learning. They regard their teachers as a partner to guide them through the learning process and motivate them for further endeavors (Petress, 2008). To practice active learning, students can talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives.

Prior research has uncovered that it is critical to provide an environment in online classes that allows a high level of discussion, which at the very least is similar in quality to discussions that take place in a face-to-face classroom (Kahn, 2017). However, discussions that take place in a face-to-face classroom do not always translate to an online course. Some benefits of online discussions over classroom discussions include convenience, additional time for students to reflect on discussion prompts and responses, increased participation, and a greater sense of community (Dixon, 2014). Furthermore, online discussion allows instructors more time to interact with students without the time restriction imposed by face-to-face-classes.

Teacher expectation research in the past 40 years has provided clear evidence that when teachers expected their students to perform at high levels, they did no matter of the class environment. In other words, higher expectations help generate higher student performance (Cable, 2017). Research has identified high expectations is an important trait of effective online teachers and is not exclusively for face-to-face learning. Defining course goals and learning objectives and clearly

establishing these expectations at the beginning and throughout the online course have proven to be essential to effective remote teaching (Cable, 2017).

Assessment of Learning

The ability to design assessments and provide feedback that helps students' progress was identified as an important online instructor competency by previous research studies (Martin, 2019, Cable, 2017, Kahn, 2017). Findings highlighted the provision of timely, consistent individual and group feedback, and the ability and understanding that student data can provide information about student progress are essential for online instructors. Additionally, research has shown (Martin, 2019) that taking the time to give meaningful feedback to students increases their commitment to learning.

The provision of timely feedback on students' performance is considered essential to student learning (Martin, 2019, Cable, 2017). Prompt feedback is important to students' learning outcomes because it enables students to evaluate existing knowledge, reflect on what they have learned and what they still have to learn, and receive recommendations for improving their future work (Cable, 2017).

The manner in which students are assessed conveys a strong message about what is important and how students should approach an educational experience. In an online course, the use of appropriate assessment techniques is important because of its physically remote nature compared to a face-to-face learning environment. Assessments in online courses may pose greater challenges in cases where instructors attempt to adapt the assessment methods used in face-to-face classrooms (Kahn, 2017).

Online Resources

The following resources may be helpful to supplement your curriculums and lesson plans as you continue with online classes.

- Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, solution providers are offering schools and districts resources, services and teaching materials at no charge. Provided by District Administration.
<https://districtadministration.com/coronavirus-free-teaching-resources-free-education-services-covid-19/>
- Resources that support Distance Learning. Part of the COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Schools - California Department of Education
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/appendix1.asp>

- Cambridge University Press. Supporting every teacher: teaching children online, avoid “edutainment” but don’t lose the fiz!
<https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2020/03/18/teaching-children-online/>
- New York State Distance Learning Consortium
<https://www.nysdlc.org/>
- Resources from NYS Organizations
<http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/resources-nys-organizations>
- From We Are Teachers – 150+ Amazing Online Learning Resources
<https://www.weareteachers.com/free-online-learning-resources/>

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