
Building a Healthy School Culture Through Communication

— Maximizing Outcomes for
Students —

Challenge: Building Connection through Relationship

Arguably the most difficult aspect of teaching virtual learners. The loss of the bricks-and-mortar captive audience benefit requires us to set building relational quality and connection as one of the primary tasks for virtual programs.



Basic Psychological Needs of At-Risk Youth

Feelings Essential for Effective Learning

- *Competence*
- *Belonging*
- *Usefulness*
- *Potency*
- *Optimism*

Characteristics of Discouraged Learners

- *Low self-confidence*
- *Avoiders*
- *Distrustful*
- *Pessimistic*
- *Think of themselves as 'dumb'*
- *Fragile homes*
- *View success as a matter of luck not achievement*

Think about how your communication could either support feelings for effective learning or the feelings discouraged learners experience.

Creating an Inviting Environment for Learning*

Trust . Optimism . Respect . Intentionality



Intentionally Inviting**

- Consistently Positive
- Communicates a Growth Mindset
- Purposeful
- Sensitive to Student Needs

Student Excels

*The Student's
Perspective*

Intentionally Uninviting**

- Dismissive
- Alienating
- Harsh
- Vindictive

Student Struggles

**Source: Adapted from *Better than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management* (p. 23), by D. Smith, D. Fisher, and N. Frey, 2015, Alexandria, VA: Copyright 2015 by ASCD

*Source: Purkey, W. W., & Stanley P. H. (1991). *Invitational teaching, learning, and living*. Washington DC: National Education Association Library

Key Strategies for Engaging Students in Virtual Learning Environments

Research Questions:

1. *What strategies do teachers of virtual courses employ to engage students?*
2. *What student engagement strategies do teachers of virtual courses believe to be most effective?*
3. *How do teachers of virtual courses develop relationships that nurture student engagement?*

Findings:

Relationships

- Communication
- Feedback
- Appealing to students' interests
- Humanizing
- Synchronous meetings

Harrington, C. & DeBruler, K. (2021). *Key strategies for engaging students in virtual learning environments*. Michigan Virtual University.
<https://michiganvirtual.org/research/publications/key-strategies-for-engaging-students-in-virtual-learning-environments/>



Let's Evaluate Connection!

Freddy Bell and his Teacher



Billy Frost and his Teacher and Mentor



Dashboards and Text Thread captures provided through Pulse

www.accountabilitypulse.com

Dashboard Comparison

— Let's Identify Differences —

Conversation Reviews - The Questions we're Asking

1. *Can we determine what these staff members are doing well, and what they may need to change, in order to help improve student outcomes?*
2. *How is their approach affecting their dashboard data?*

Message Preparation(1)

Scale: 1 Ineffective - 4 Highly Effective

Description	Ineffective	Highly Effective
<p>1. Positive - language is honest and uplifting in nature. It is important to identify and celebrate student actions that get them closer to achieving their goals. Does the language demonstrate a 'with' approach that shows the educator as a partner in the learning process?</p>	<p>Uses negative tone.</p> <p>Language uses fear, shame, and/or threats to attempt to get the student to complete work.</p> <p>When negative consequences of a student's lack of engagement occur, the staff member uses negative reinforcement.</p>	<p>Uses encouraging, warm tones and words consistently.</p> <p>Language is consistently clear and direct, with a focus on positive reinforcement and a message of belief in the abilities of students.</p> <p>The staff member engages students when negative consequences from a lack of student engagement exist, but consistently with a positive expectation of the students abilities.</p>
<p>2. Relational - language should reflect a relational context - does it appear that the staff member is authentic and showing a personal and individual interest in each student? Does the log content demonstrate a depth of knowledge of the student's life situation, and a caring attitude?</p>	<p>No follow-up communication is happening on personal items of interest or concern to the student.</p> <p>Communication appears to be 'all business' and primarily one sided.</p> <p>The majority of messages appear to be template messages and there is no sign of personalizing communication or response from students.</p>	<p>Conversations reflect a continuing personal knowledge of students' life situations, and a sensitivity of the challenges students are experiencing individually.</p> <p>These conversations are consistently individualized and happen frequently and naturally.</p> <p>Mass messages are only used for informational purposes.</p>

Message Preparation(2)

Scale: 1 Ineffective - 4 Highly Effective

Description	Ineffective	Highly Effective
<p>3. <u>Intentional</u> - Does the language demonstrate an educational intent? When the staff member reaches a student and has a conversation, does it eventually result in reconnection to an educational goal or purpose? Does the staff member create scaffolding goals for the student in time-on-task, log-in-rates, activities, or other student-centric measurements?</p>	<p>Mass progress messages are the primary means of establishing expectations with students, which show a total lack of individualized goal setting.</p> <p>Responses do not relate to a previous statement and demonstrate listening.</p> <p>No specific goal setting has been done with students.</p> <p>There is little to no communication about student weekly schedule or any direction given on what is expected of students and how they are doing.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are totally disregarded as a viable support.</p>	<p>Uses very specific language with students that is individualized.</p> <p>Responses relate to a previous statement and demonstrate listening.</p> <p>Goals are identified and specific steps are shared to reach that individualized goal.</p> <p>Staff intentionally ask about student schedules so they can create a plan together to be successful that week.</p> <p>If the student is not responding then staff intentionally implore the help of parents/guardians.</p>
<p>4. <u>Reflective</u> - Does the language demonstrate an encouragement for the student to reflect on efforts, outcomes, and benchmarks established from prior conversations and goals established with the staff member?</p>	<p>The staff member does not encourage students to reflect on students' contributions to either positive or negative outcomes.</p> <p>Outcomes are not in reference to previously established expectations, and they do not discuss goals, set achievements, and determine next steps.</p>	<p>Staff member encourages the student to reflect on how they contributed to either positive or negative outcomes regularly.</p> <p>Outcomes are in reference to previously established expectations, and they regularly discuss goals, set achievements, and next steps on a daily basis.</p>

Recommendations

1. *After reviewing the threads in relation to the Communications Rubric, what recommendations would you like to make to our staff members?*
2. *What do you believe is affecting dashboard data?*

Conclusion

“Good communication practices are essential to getting and keeping students engaged!”

- *Things to consider*
- *Next steps in your own journey*
- *Questions*

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Kristi Teall kteall@shamrocks.us 989-388-8212

Chris Loiselle cloiselle@shamrocks.us 616-788-7825