

# Transcript - Online Teaching Strategies to Promote Equity and Inclusion

1/27/2022

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: We will begin our webinar shortly. We're going to let some more folks get into the room before we get started.

It looks like our numbers are climbing still, but we're going to go ahead and get underway. So welcome to the Every Learner Everywhere Strategies for Success in Online Teaching and Learning, the reprise of our interactive conference series. It's a pleasure to have you all with us today. My name is Norma Hollebeke, and I'm the manager for Network Programs and Services with Every Learner Everywhere.

Before I introduce our speaker, I'd like to take just a few minutes out to tell you about Every Learner Everywhere and the mission of our network. Every Learner Everywhere is a collaboration of 12 higher education organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of digital learning and its integration into pedagogical practice.

Every Learner Everywhere is one of three solution networks sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Here at Every Learner, we work with colleges and universities to build capacity among faculty and instructional support staff to improve student outcomes with digital learning.

Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning with the ultimate goal of increasing student success, especially for first-generation college students, poverty-impacted students, and students of color.

A few quick housekeeping notes. We are recording today's presentation, which we will share after the webinar. Throughout the presentation, we welcome your questions in the Q&A section. And if participants raise their hand during the presentation, we won't be able to unmute you. However, we will be monitoring the Q&A section as well as the chat.

As a biology professor and a recovering associate dean, I'm excited to have with us today Flower Darby discussing online teaching strategies to promote equity and inclusion. Flower Derby celebrates and promotes effective teaching in all class formats to include, welcome, and support all students, and to foster equitable learning outcomes for today's new majority students. In her former roles as Assistant Dean of

Online and Innovative Pedagogies and Director of Student Teaching for Student Success, Flower led efforts that support teaching excellence for equity and inclusion.

Flower is an internationally renowned keynote speaker and author, as well as an adjunct faculty at Northern Arizona University and Estrella Mountain Community College. She has taught in higher ed for over 25 years in a range of subjects, including English, technology, leadership, dance, and Pilates. A seasoned face-to-face and online educator, Flower applies learning science across the disciplines and helps others to do the same.

Throughout her publications and her presentations, she has helped educators all over the world become more effective in their work. Flower is the author with James M. Lang of *Small Teaching Online-- Applying Learning Science in Online Classes*, and she's a regular contributor to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Her new book project is on emotion science and teaching with technology. I'm going to now hand it over to Flower.

FLOWER DARBY: Thank you, Norma, and thank you to everyone who's making time to be here with us live today or watch this recording later. I really value and applaud your investment in teaching more effective, engaging, equitable, and inclusive classes in all the modalities that we're doing that in.

I have so much to share with you. I'm going to be honest, I probably have too much. I just couldn't cut anything. So I'm going to encourage you, if it's good for you, to go ahead and take a few notes, maybe jot down some ideas that you want to come back to later. The small teaching way, all credit to Jim Lang is to not try everything all at once, but maybe pick one or two ideas from today to try next week or next semester, and then keep a list and maybe come back to some of these ideas.

So with apologies in advance for the fire hose effect, we're going to go ahead and get started. And I'm going to start with a little bit of an introduction. I'd like to show you who I am when I'm not in my Zoom box. I spend way too much time in my Zoom box.

But I do have a family and a life in the real world. This is my fabulous husband, Tim. He's a strong partner and collaborator in my work. We have three teenage daughters, which is so fun, as you can imagine. When it's not a global pandemic, we'd love to travel internationally, especially. There's a couple of pictures of us in London.

And then in the bottom corner you see a picture of what online learning looked like at my house last year. Now this year, my daughters are all back in physical schools, but

last year they spent the entire year online. And that's a picture of two of my girls playing a game on the living room floor while they're also in Zoom class.

And so watching their experience has given me a lot of new insights to share and a lot of perspectives watching the efforts of their heroic teachers. It's a changing world that we're in today. But one thing we're clear on is that we want to create learning environments that really do foster that sense of inclusion, that sense of belonging, and that promote equitable learning outcomes.

Now, if you know my work, you may have seen me tell this story before. But I'm going to tell it again because it really illustrates a point. And that is to say that there was a situation that happened in my Pilates class a couple years ago now. I teach Pilates at my local gym.

And one day I was hurrying into class and I thought, is anybody even going to come today? I ran around the corner into the studio-- not the studio, into the hallway where my studio is, and I saw a woman standing outside the open door with her rolled up yoga mat. And I thought, oh, good, somebody came to class.

But I picked up immediately on this sense of frustration and confusion. She was standing outside the open door and I thought, what's going on? Why doesn't she go in? But immediately I was able to answer my own question. It's because she didn't know if she was supposed to. The door was open, but because I wasn't there yet, the lights were off. There was no music playing. Nobody else was there for class yet. And I could pick up on this tangible sense of, am I in the right place at the right time?

Now because I sensed that, I said to her, are you here for class? She said, yes. And I said, great, me too. Come on in. We got the lights on, the music playing. We got more people showed up and it was a great class. But it really got me thinking about the experience that our students have when they click into our online learning environments.

Whether those are asynchronous in Canvas, Blackboard, D2L, or whether they're synchronous live like this, It's not the same as seeing somebody in the hallway and welcoming them with a big smile and saying, hey, you're in the right place. I'm glad you're here.

And so that's really what I want to focus today, is helping students understand that there in the right place, and that we are going to do what we can to help them be

successful, no matter what their prior educational experiences, background, first-generation status, any of these kinds of things.

And so I'm going to just pause really quickly and unpack as well why I started off with an introduction. And that is because fostering those connections person-to-person and foregrounding relationships is really, really crucial in these environments.

So I start with that quick introduction of my family. I would encourage you as instructors to put something like that in your online class, whether it's a slide during Zoom and all about me video in your asynchronous class. Even just a photo of yourself really can help your students see you as a real person.

Now, I chose to have pictures of my family's faces. If that's not comfortable for you, don't do that. Go ahead and include pictures of your pets, everybody loves those, or hobbies, favorite destinations. Help your students see a little bit more about who you are so that we close the distance online and we feel as if we're starting right off with a welcome and an I'm glad you're here. You're in the right place at the right time.

So I have a question that I would like to ask you, and I'll invite you to engage with me here in the chat box periodically during the talk. And then we are going to save questions for later, but feel free to put those in the Q&A pod while you're here.

And so that is, what do you already know about equitable online teaching? What comes to mind? What have you seen? What have you tried? What research are you familiar with? If you would like to put something in the chat box here and help me get a sense of what we as a group already know, please feel free to put that in the chat box now. What do we know about equitable online teaching? And you'll want to ensure that you're addressing that to everyone.

Thank you, Gabby, for starting us off right away. Welcoming, inclusive, accessible. Yes, we don't want to shut people out of our learning experiences. Absolutely. What else do we already know? What have we tried? There isn't one strategy that works for all. We have to know who our students are. I love that. Yes, including everyone in the process, incorporating UDL. We are going to touch on UDL today. And we do have one of the foremost experts, in my opinion, Tom Tobin is here in the room with us. So welcome, Tom. Welcome, everybody.

Multiple means of representation, engaging, accessible. Allow everyone to feel seen and heard. Flexibility— every student has a sense of belonging, and that they matter. Absolutely, Jen. Good to see you. Meeting your students, even if by Zoom. Maybe it's

not the same as in person, but it's pretty good. We can do a lot of things in these spaces. To use transparency in our teaching, to use alt text, to differentiate instruction. OK, well, I'm all done here. You all have all the answers, so I don't need to do anything else.

OK, I'm kidding, but I love to see what collective wisdom is in the room. And this is, in fact, a strategy that I will share with you later. What we are doing here is activating prior knowledge in order to seed the ground for new learning, and to help us hook new information and new ideas and concepts.

But I can also see there's a lot of good information here. So that means we're going to go pretty quickly through some of the foundational material that I have to share with you here today. We are going to start with some introduction and some theoretical frameworks just to give us some grounding.

As I mentioned before, I have a lot of evidence-based strategies, and we will wrap up our time today with questions and discussion. Feel free to put those questions in the Q&A pod. And then periodically, I will answer-- or sorry, ask you questions and ask you to answer me in the chat box.

I'm just going to be honest though. One of the things that I try to practice and model is to really maintain excellent eye contact with you through the webcam, because it's a way of practicing nonverbal immediacy, which we'll talk about. What that means is that I don't necessarily watch the chat box unless I ask you a question.

So do feel free to engage with each other in that space, share your ideas and resources. And then I have Patti and Norma here who have kindly agreed to help keep an eye on things and bring things up when it's the designated time to do so.

So I'm pretty sure that this won't be new to anybody here, but just a reminder that equality does not mean equity. You've probably seen images like this before. There's a popular one where kids are standing on boxes outside of a fenced baseball game. What we recognize is that people are coming to us with different prior experiences, different needs, different circumstances, different levels of preparation, different challenges that they are juggling, like family or working maybe even more than one job. And that it doesn't mean that we want to give everybody the same resources. That's not how we're going to achieve equity. We have to know who our students are, as was already mentioned in the chat box, and be willing to give students what each individual student needs in order to be successful.

But a while back, I came across a blog post and it really gave me something to think about, arguing that the image of the people on the box doesn't necessarily adequately represent the situation. And that blogger was arguing that kind of implies a deficiency in people because the short person can't reach the branches with the fruit or see into the game.

And so this person presented this model, and I like this. It recognizes that we're all starting from different places, and that some people have a leg up when they come into our college classes. They're going to run that outside lab. People who maybe haven't come to us with as much preparation are going to have that little bit of a heads up or an advantage by starting on that inside lab.

So recognizing that we're all coming from unique places and we want to give each student an opportunity to succeed. Really we're talking about wanting to level the playing field so that no matter what a student background is, they can achieve success when they are willing to do the work when we have provided options and ways forward. And again, this was already mentioned in the chat box. That's how I know we have some enthusiasts and experts here. When we talk about equity and inclusion, a primary principle is that we want to help all of our students feel welcome, feel seen, and feel heard.

Now, this is true no matter what modality that we are teaching in. But I do feel that there are particular challenges and barriers in online spaces. And that, again, whether we're teaching live synchronous like this or especially in our asynchronous classes, it can be really hard to see people for who they are. And so that's what a lot of the recommendations today are going to focus on, is fostering that all important community and helping our students know that they're part of the group. It's a fundamental human need.

So some guiding frameworks to get us started. Again, I suspect many of you are familiar with these, so I'll keep this short. The modified community of inquiry framework developed out of research in the late 1990s, when a team of researchers wanted to know what goes into a really good online class. They identified these three presences that you see depicted in the center of this graphic. And these are to me like ingredients. What do we need in good online classes?

Well, cognitive presence really makes sense to me. It's the thought work that goes into our plan for the class, and it goes into what students are doing to understand new

information, process it, remember it, apply it, use it, relate it to other things they know solve problems with it.

But the other two presences, I would argue, we're still trying to figure out in online environments, many of us. Even if we've been teaching and learning for a long time in online spaces, I would argue that we are more familiar with what happens in a physical classroom.

And so teaching presence and social presence, how do we greet the students in the hallway and say, hey, I'm glad you're here. How do we come into the asynchronous environment and make sure the lights are on and the music is playing, and students know that they're in the right place at the right time? That's where we'll focus a little bit today.

And then in 2012, another couple of researchers came along and said, well, that's all very well and good, but there's something missing. We need to focus on the emotional presence. And this is really what I am working on in the current book project is how do we tap into students emotions? They are so powerful. They are an integral part of the universal design for learning framework. How do we harness the power of emotions to help students learn? Well, I have some ideas to share with you today.

We're also, of course, going to be looking at UDL. As I mentioned, many of you already are familiar with this. It's the idea of building in supports and options and flexibility from the very design of the class. They're not add-ons. We're not making an accommodation for a student who needs a particular thing, although that is sometimes still necessary. But UDL helps us to think about what can we bake in right from the very beginning. We think about a ramp that goes up next to a set of stairs in the physical environment. That ramp was put there in order to help people with a wheelchair get to where they need to go. But it also benefits all kinds of other people who are maybe using things that-- a stroller, for example, or they have a suitcase on wheels.

So universal design for learning provides accommodations. It also provides flexibility, choice, recognizing-- according to cast.org, the Center for Applied Science and Technology, who's the creator group of this framework, recognizing that the way we learn is as individual, as our fingerprints. That is crazy. We all learn in unique ways. It is not one-size-fits-all. And not only that, people have, again, their individual circumstances, preferences, needs that are happening in their lives.

Oh, good to know Gabi. I did happen to see your– I hope I'm saying that right, by the way. I see your comment. We're in the process looks like of updating the framework and guidelines. That is wonderful. We are also going to draw on the work of culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining teaching.

I really like the work of Zaretta Hammond, also Courtney Plotts. I don't have her picture in this slide deck. But just recognition that our cultural values shape who we are and how we process information and how we are in the world. And we don't check our cultural values at the door.

Even our students who have grown up in the States may have had different cultural contexts within their home and within their local communities. And so we want to recognize that these are strengths, these are assets. And in order to help all of our students feel included and welcome in our spaces, we want to consider cultural influences, values, and ways of helping people be included in those ways.

Now, very quickly, I'm just going to show you a quick lineup of who has really informed my work. And I'll tell you after I do this why I have done this. First of all, I've learned so much from Michelle Miller about how learning science works, and especially how we can do things even more effectively when we're teaching with technology. She's got a new book coming out on the importance of remembering and forgetting and why it's important to work on memory, even in the age of Google. Can't wait to see that new work.

I've learned so much from Bryan Dewsbury, who's talking to us about not lowering our standards or reducing rigor because that does not produce equitable outcomes. But what we do is we provide high structure in order to support the students who are wanting and willing to do the work, and we can help them be successful by providing that structure.

I also love the work of Sandra McGuire. Her book is teach students how to learn. How do we help students recognize that college demands a different level of responsibility of agency, different study habits and study skills. And I have some of her ideas to share with you as well.

Josh Eyler, the science and stories behind effective college teaching in how humans learn. He's made me really think carefully about how social we are as people, and again,

that fundamental human need to belong, to be part of the group.

How are we helping our online students feel like they are part of the community and part of the group?

And then finally, I'll be drawing on the work of Sarah Rose Cavanagh as well, who first introduced me to the power of emotion in terms of how powerful these are. They grab our attention, they motivate us. They help us to remember things long-term and they focus short-term. So thinking about emotion science and how we're going to draw all of these things together.

Now, once again, I will explain why I have this quick introduction to some of the authors and scientists and scholars that I really appreciate. And that is because I want to visually represent the diversity in my own thinking and in my talk. One of the things that we try to do when we teach equitable and inclusive classes is to help our students feel seen, and to help them see themselves in our class materials.

Now, I'm not doing this in a trite or surface fashion. I'm deliberately choosing to show you the people and the faces to show that I have a diversity represented here. And I would encourage us to think critically about our class materials, our activities, our assignments, and look to see if students can see themselves, differently-abled people, LGBTQIA, these kinds of representations among our materials.

And so with that, we are going to jump right in to some of the really practical ideas that I have to share with you. Once again, even before we get going, though, we're just going to think for one moment about equity and inclusion. That it's about helping people feel that they belong, that they are welcome here, that we value and respect them. It's about helping our students feel that they are seen.

Online students still tell me all the time that they feel invisible, that they don't feel that they see their instructor-- or sorry, that their instructors see them. And online students tell me all the time that they don't think their online teachers are real people. They really do tell me that. So we want to make that effort to be that real person, to be outside of our Zoom box or outside of our Canvas shell, as it might be, and help students feel that they are in the right place. And that everybody has that equal chance of being successful in our classes.

So it won't surprise you to know that I want to start with fostering that sense of belonging. Because if we don't feel that we're part of the group, we're not going to be very motivated and engaged. So several recommendations related to helping students

know that they are a part of this community, and that they matter.

That came up in the chat box earlier as well, feeling as if I matter to you is very, very important when I'm your online student.

So we're going to think about how we foreground relationships. Now again, this is why I started with that introduction of my family to you so that we have a point of connection. Maybe you have a strong partner who's a collaborator in your work. Maybe you have teenagers and you're going, ay-ay-ay, teenagers, what a crazy time we're living in. Maybe you like to travel internationally. Maybe you have kids who are doing online learning last year and it was a struggle to keep them focused and engaged.

These are points of connection. And the more that we're willing to reveal about ourselves, understanding that there may be comfort zones, that we have personal professional boundaries. That we may have identities that we don't necessarily want to foreground. But I would argue that the more that we're willing to show our students that we are real people, the more they're going to connect with us. And connectedness predicts academic achievement and persistence. It promotes that sense of belonging. So some of the ways that I like to foreground relationships, I'm going to share a couple of ideas here with you now. This one is a brand new one that I just came across from Faculty Focus Magna Publications. If you're not familiar with them, they're doing wonderful work.

And this idea is from Tom Saleska at the University of Concordia, Wisconsin. I think I got that right. And he recommended-- in his example, it was actually three photos. But I'm always about simplifying. So I took this activity and I pared it down to share one photo. And I tried this myself in the class that I teach at Estrella Mountain Community College. Now, I happen to do that one as an individual opportunity to connect with each individual student, but you could also do this as a discussion forum. And let me explain the way this works.

In week 1 of my eight-week online class, I asked students as an introductory assignment, an individual submission to look through their camera roll, based on this idea from Tom Saleska, look through their photo library on their smartphone and pick a photo-- in his case, he had three-- that is meaningful. That tells me something about who you are as a person. And paste that photo into a Word document or a Google Doc, whatever it might be. Add a few lines about why that is significant and turn that in as a getting to know you foundational piece.

Now, because we know that students like to have an example of some idea of what we're expecting them to do, I chose this photo and I told them that this is a picture of my family. And I was taking the picture, of course. We were at Disneyland pre-pandemic. We were on the Jungle Cruise, which is my favorite ride on the planet. I know it's corny. That's how I am. And so I told them this is something that our family also likes to do is to go to Disneyland.

Now that's a pretty surface example, but I was blown away by what my students chose to share with me. Again, this was an individual submission. This might not have been the same in a discussion forum, but maybe it might have. And I found that it created those meaningful and much deeper points of connection than I expected, and very culturally sustaining and celebrating as well.

This is at Estrella Mountain Community College. We're a Hispanic serving institution. The majority of my students are students of color. And in many Latinx cultures and African-American cultures, many of our Indigenous cultures, community and family is very important.

And that's what my students chose to share with me, pictures of their family.

Comments like my family is everything. We get together for a big meal every Sunday. They are getting me through this degree. I couldn't do it without them. And one student even chose to show a picture-- she sent in a picture of her grandmother on her COVID deathbed, and the entire family gathered around the bed. And I was like, whoa, wow, did you open up to me?

Now, it took me a few seconds. I just wrote a quick response to each student. It was check it off kind of an assignment worth a few points. And I was able to write just a little bit about how important it was to recognize what students were choosing to share with me. I saw pictures of pandemic pets. I saw pictures of high school graduation. I saw pictures of my students in their youth clubs where they're supporting local youth. It was just astonishing what I learned from my students.

You could also do this as an introductory discussion forum, for example. The point is not to go out and take a new picture, but find something that's in your photo library. And I was having this conversation with Tim, my husband, who you see there. He's an introvert, and he was teaching also in that October session this past fall. And he admitted to me one day, he's like, I haven't done my welcome video yet. And he was really guilty because he knows this is what I do and what I recommend.

And so he said, I just don't like to be right here in my students' faces all the time. As I mentioned, he's an introvert. That doesn't suit his style. I shared with him this idea as an alternative, and he said, I love that I would choose a picture of my hobby, of a figure that I created and painted. And that would tell my students more about who I am and what my interests are without it necessarily having to be my face all the time.

So I love the inclusivity and the way that we can peel back-- I saw a couple of pictures of my students hiking. It can be whatever they choose to share whatever level they want to do. So really see some power here in this.

And to answer the question that I see here in the chat, I think from Barbara, I did an individual assignment submission. So students only shared it with me. That was a choice that I made in the context of that particular class. But I do think this could be really powerful in the discussion forum. Again, that's a more public space. Students would want to choose their picture, recognizing that the entire class would see that. Now, along that line, I want to share another recommendation. This is absolutely something that I recommend for checking in with students in more of a group setting. And you can do this here again in a live synchronous setting or in an online asynchronous discussion forum. This also could be an individual assignment submission. But I want to share with you here and invite you, in fact, to engage with me in this activity.

So it's Thursday. We're coming up to the weekend. I would love for you to pick a picture that best shows how you're feeling about your weekend. How are you feeling about the upcoming weekend? Feel free in the chat box to put a cat. Absolutely. And again, remember that you want to show that to everyone. And then maybe a word or two about why, why you would choose that image. Which picture best shows the way that you're feeling about your weekend?

The balloons. Happy birthday, Tracy. Awesome. I won't sing. I'll spare you that. But good for you. I hope you have a wonderful birthday celebration. Tom is on team happy puppy. The weekend is completely open. Wow, that's a wonderful feeling.

Lisa says the cat because you're hiding from the snowstorm. Christy says, OK, we're resting. The mountain because you're hoping for snow this weekend. The window because you're feeling kind of overwhelmed, and the light is small and maybe distant. The cat, you're staying warm. The mountains, you're expecting up to a foot of snow. The

balloons, the hummingbird, you love to see those, the hummingbirds outside. The mountain and the snow. Good.

Now here, again, let me just debrief this. Feel free to keep on posting your comments. And I'm going to unpack why this activity works. So what this is just a nice way to check in with students in a way that is not all about the words all the time.

So again, this could be a discussion forum. It could be a Zoom activity. It's just a matter of saying, how are you? How are things? And you can provide alt tags on these images, alternative descriptions, so that even students with a vision impairment or students who kind of like to read those words to help them really think about the meaning of these images. You can provide those as well on a slide.

You can also, as Tom has so effectively recommended, you could narrate and speak what each of these images are. In the interest of time, I didn't do that, but that is a great way to include and help people to process information in different ways.

And so you can also do this activity on a more social level or on a more academic level. You can ask your students, how was your weekend, which picture best shows? You can say, how are you feeling about the upcoming test? Which picture shows how you're doing? And what this does is it indicates to your students that you care about them as people.

You could circle back-- now, somebody here in the chat said, I'm feeling pretty overwhelmed. That window in that dark room kind of captures how I feel. You could circle back to that individual and say, hey, I noticed your response here. It gave me a little bit of concern, curiosity. How are you? Is there anything I can do to support you? And then maybe have some resources available for counseling or for food services. Or just, do you need a concept explained again? Would you like to meet so that we can go through that material?

So I love the way that this fosters the connection between you and your students, but also with each other. You may have seen people in the chat box who were choosing the same images that you were. And again, it just sparks that quick, spontaneous connection that doesn't happen very readily necessarily in these online spaces. Again, Zoom is better, but you have to engineer these experiences is the argument that I'm making here.

And when we do that, we go a long way toward building rapport. Now, I was just reading a fascinating article from 2017. And this one was actually 2020. And what it was about

is the impact that it makes when we create online spaces, especially asynchronous online spaces, with an effort to build that rapport. As I mentioned, students tell me all the time that their teachers don't feel like real people.

So there was an experiment that these researchers ran. They created two mock modules. They were fake. And in the one, it was just very straightforward. Jump in. There was a quiz. There was a reading. You had to send an email to the professor. There was a syllabus, kind of like week 1 kind of activities.

There was no instructor bio, no instructor photo. When the students took the quiz, they didn't get automatic feedback. And when they sent the email that was required to the professor, they got a canned, cold, terse kind of response. Similarly, the syllabus was written in cold, impersonal language.

Now, they also created this very same materials, but with an effort to help their students see the online instructor as a real person who is interested in them and their success. There was an instructor bio. There was a photo. It was actually just a stock photo, but there was a face to associate with the name.

The syllabus had warmer, friendlier, more approachable language. The quiz gave automated feedback so students could see immediately how they were doing. When they sent that email to the professor, there was a warmer and friendlier response. And there were some instructions on how to get started in the module. And this won't surprise you. The researchers were able to demonstrate increased persistence and engagement in the module, with even the minimum of rapport building efforts.

There wasn't a great big fancy produced video from the instructor. It was just a stock photo, but at least the students could associate a person with what was happening in the class. So I really encourage us to think about ways to build rapport through foregrounding relationships through fostering those connections, through helping our students see us as people who care about their success.

Now, another way that we can do this is to practice immediacy. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, I make a very deliberate effort to be with you right here. That's a great way to do nonverbal immediacy. And what immediacy is, just in case you're not familiar with that, it comes out of communication studies and it is a set of behaviors, verbal and nonverbal, that communicate liking based on approach avoidance theory.

If I am immediate with you, if I am present with you, if I am engaged and interested in you, it communicates to you that this is a safe space, a supportive space, and it's likely that you will draw closer to me. But if we don't practice immediacy, it invites people to avoid us and increases the distance. Now I'm all about closing the distance in our online spaces, and immediacy is a powerful, powerful way to do that.

Nonverbal ways can be a little challenging. I'm going to hit that second. First of all, in a especially asynchronous class but also synchronous online class, verbal ways to practice immediacy are to use a warm, supportive, encouraging tone of voice, to call students by name so that even if you're responding to them in a discussion post or in an assignment feedback, a reply to an email, make it a point to address them by name. Also, make it a point to spell and try to pronounce the name correctly. You could use a tool such as name coach, or ask your students to help you with a phonetic spelling of how to pronounce their names. Because names are important. We don't like it when people don't acknowledge and make some effort to pronounce our names correctly. The nonverbal ways of practicing immediacy are actually even more fascinating to me. Again, this is research that was done in asynchronous classes in 2017 before the pandemic, but I'm really intrigued by some of these ideas. One is the visual tone of the class.

Especially in Canvas and Blackboard, some of these environments are just sort of bland to look at. And so warming up the tone of the class with even the most basic graphic design approaches, such as whitespace and subheadings, maybe bringing in some color. Remembering that all of our images and videos, we want to have captions and alternative text descriptions.

But making an effort, the researchers even found that using emojis in our online classes can really warm up the tone of the class. And one other that I will share with you that I really think is very powerful is that time communicates, and we can demonstrate distance with a greater length of time and immediacy or closeness with a shorter amount of time.

Now, I'm not saying that we are chat bots and we are online 24/7. And it's not even necessarily the response time, although I do believe we should be responsive with our online students. These researchers were saying that students perceive the amount of time that you spend on them.

And so the amount of time that you spend writing assignment comments or drafting an announcement. Is it a really robotic, quick, terse announcement, or have we taken a few moments to include a few phrases like, hey, I hope your week is going really well. Just wanted to remind you of some upcoming projects that we're working on. Just to add a few phrases doesn't really take a whole lot more of your time, but it communicates to your students because there is a little bit more to those communications that you are spending time on them and with them.

Of course, we have to protect our own time as well. We can't just keep on pouring out and out and out and writing endless comments and such. But thinking about just a few supportive comments or phrases as opposed to a really terse written communication or an impersonal piece of assignment feedback, really valid ways of helping your students see that you are present and engaged and interested in them as people.

That was a lot about helping students feel like they belong in the group. We're going to move to cultural inclusion and also individual preferences and needs. So this combines universal design for learning and also that more cultural responsive approach.

So one of the things that actually Tom pointed out to me and helped me to recognize is that a big piece of universal design for learning and online spaces is to help students with their executive function skills. We know that online classes, even synchronous, do require more autonomy.

There is more natural existing support when we're meeting in a physical classroom two or three days a week. Online students require more independence, more ability to regulate their own learning and work processes. So when we provide markers to our students, it helps them to stay on track.

Now, there have been a few markers already here today. That agenda slide at the beginning. Some of my verbal signposting about what's happening next. These kinds of things can really help your students. Progress bars in your online courses, or indications that this reading should take you about 15 minutes. Anything like that that you can provide, progress feedback, all of these things can help them understand, help our students know that they are making progress and get a sense of where they are in the class, in the module in the week.

We also want to think about including stories and games. Now, this is actually really powerful for everybody, and especially for some students from varying cultural

backgrounds. Now, as you saw at the beginning, I told that story about Pilates. If you've seen my work before, you've heard that before. But I use that story intentionally to help us frame the importance of helping students to feel that they are welcome.

And I would encourage you to do the same thing. Relevant stories, illustrations, examples from your own experience, case studies, scenarios, even a two-sentence narrative to set a scene that really grabs our attention. We are wired for stories, and that really helps students stay engaged and understand concepts.

Similarly, games, these can be either learning games, like, trivia games, Jeopardy, Kahoot, these kinds of things. They can also be just fun getting to know you games, because we want to foreground relationships to foster that sense of belonging. So I'm a big fan of thinking a little bit outside our academic box and thinking about how we can communicate effectively with students in online environments.

Now, certainly one of the things that we think about is to be responsive to students, see what they need, amplify their voice. These are all ways of being more equitable and inclusive. So thinking about asking students how things are going. How is your experience in this class?

One of my favorites because it's so simple is stop-start-continue. You can ask your students periodically, or maybe even just at midterm, what is one thing you want us to stop doing, one thing you want us to start doing, one thing that we should continue doing?

Now, you could give your students some guidance and say, OK, we're not going to stop preparing for the final exam. That is a part of the class that we are going to keep. But you might be really surprised what students tell you that they are not finding helpful for their learning. Or maybe they're seeing another instructor do something in a class, and they're asking you to start practicing that method in your class.

I would also recommend another approach from Mays Imad. I did not have her picture on the slide here, but she's doing fabulous work with trauma-informed teaching. And she asks her students a very powerful question periodically throughout the semester. And this is what it is. What am I doing in this class that is making you feel excluded? That's an anonymous question. She sends it out using a simple survey in the learning management system or Google form, one of these things. And she said the answers have been transformative. Really, really powerful. What am I doing that is making you

feel excluded, or other people in the class making them feel excluded? Or what are other people doing that's excluding you? So really important to know our students again, to see what we might want to do in order to adjust our approaches.

When we think about the individual people that we have in our class, we know that we want to or offer choice and variety where possible. It doesn't mean that we offer choice everywhere. But as one example, years ago, I started offering my online discussion students the opportunity to write their post or to post that quick video response instead. And Canvas makes that easy. There are other platforms. I'm sure many of you do this as well.

My good friend Tom recommends that we start with the pinch points. Where is a point that students are not really being successful when you've taught this class before? That would be one place to think about one choice that you could offer a different way to engage with materials, a different way to get the information.

How about a variety of showing what they know? Students from oral cultures may prefer to reflect verbally as opposed to in writing, or English language learners may actually prefer to reflect in writing because that way they can check their grammar. There's so many unique circumstances, but offering people choices and variety is one way to support their success.

And in this vein, also offering various assessment types. So not all high stakes exams, not all long papers, but maybe a combination or again, some options, some quizzes, some low-stakes quizzes, projects, discussion forums. Maybe you use something like Padlet as a way to check in with your students and see how they're doing. The variety really does help.

And then we also want to think about being clear and objective in order to help our students know what to expect. So in online spaces, it can be even more important to be really explicit. Give your students rubrics. Give them checklists. Give them examples of your own work. Remember I said— share one photo. I put that picture of my family at Disneyland. Give them examples so they kind have a sense of what you're looking for. And if you're not familiar with the TILT framework, I highly recommend it. Transparency in Learning and Teaching has been shown to benefit all students, but especially students of color and from other marginalized population groups. It's about helping students know exactly what you're asking them to do, why you want them to do it.

Because when we see the purpose of something, we're more invested, and how you want students to do an activity.

I would also recommend that we structure more purposeful activities and tasks. Now this goes back to the high structure. We don't lower our standards, but we do provide exercises, discussion forums, quizzes, things that help students stay on track with their learning and help them to get the practice that they need.

I'm not a fan of giving students a whole week's worth of stuff and not having any deadlines in there, or even worse, not giving them very many practice activities at all. Giving students, helping them structure their own learning and study is really, really helpful.

And on that line, structuring opportunities for reflection and metacognition, drawing on the work of Sandra McGuire and others, make it a class assignment that we're going to ask students. How did you prepare for that exam? What do you think you might do differently next time based on the results that you got on that exam? Or ask for reflections on group work. How is the group doing? Ask them to really think about the study methods that they are using week to week, and whether those are really supporting their well-being and success.

You can make this an informal part of class where you're writing or talking about it in maybe a recorded video or a live online event like this. Or again, you can structure assignments and activities that will hold students accountable to engage in these activities that we know are really important.

We also know that one of the most equitable and inclusive things that we can do is to help students see the relevance of what they are learning and what they are doing, the usefulness. So there's a good body of literature that shows that when students recognize that what they're learning will help them in their future goals or relates to their everyday lived experience, that they will be more engaged. So I would encourage you to be explicit in how you message that kind of relevance, and to think creatively about the kinds of activities that you're going to ask students to do.

I have a biology friend. He has his students go to the local Target or grocery store take a handle from the shop-- sorry, take a sample from the shopping cart handle and analyze it for microbes. I mean, gross, but also relatable. That's the cart that I use every week. And so when we think about learning activities and interactions that draw in our

everyday experiences, that relate to our personal, academic, and career goals, that's going to help students, again, continue to stay more engaged.

I have a couple more ideas to share with you, and these last ones are on learning science. And again, a little bit more from the high structure theme. I'm going to share these last few ideas, and then we'll have a few minutes for your questions as well. This one I already mentioned. Getting students to think about what they already know can really help prime the pump for new learning.

So at the beginning when I asked you what promotes equitable learning and you had all these great ideas, that was one way that you could do this. You can also do this in terms of a discussion forum, conversational question. Have you ever had a boss that kind of did this and it made you feel like that? Or it could be an ungraded survey.

[PHONE RINGING]

Try to answer these five questions and see-- I don't know why my phone is going off. I'm so sorry. Normally I have it on airplane mode, but there we go. Let me turn off the ringer, at least. I don't know if you could hear that. It was distracting to me.

So activating prior knowledge, it could be a survey. Answer these five questions. I just want to see what you remember about this concept from the last time that you experienced this in a previous class or in high school, for example. Key thing here is that you don't want to penalize students for not knowing information. So ungraded or purely conversational, that kind of an approach can be really helpful.

We want to provide the framework. Now for me this is about giving students a partial structure to hang the new information on. And a great way to do this is a guided notes document or a skeletal outline that you provide for a module. Or maybe it's reading questions for a textbook chapter. Or maybe it's a video guide. Maybe it's a partial diagram that students annotate while they're doing the reading or watching the video, or live with you in class.

Anything that is a partial structure that students can annotate, either for their own good or again, you can make that an assignment and have them turn that in, that will help novice learners process information, see connections, and therefore better remember that information when they need it.

We talked a few minutes ago about intentionally spacing the practice. So you have multiple deadlines throughout a week. I really love consistent deadlines so students

know how to organize and plan their time. Maybe there's always something due on Wednesday and always something on Saturday.

You could have more deadlines than that, depending on your context and what you teach. But you also want to make sure that you're giving feedback so that students are taking that quiz, perhaps with the automated feedback. That students might be able to do exercise or problem sets online, where, again, they can see if they're on track. Really, really important to help that equitable progress.

And finally, we want to talk about connecting the dots. I believe that when we teach in person, we do a lot of narrative around what we're teaching. But sometimes or often, in fact, I would say this gets lost in especially asynchronous environments. We're not helping students see how concepts relate to each other, or even what they learned last week relates to what they're doing this week. A lot of that is lost in the list-like presentation of materials in Canvas or BB Learn or D2L.

So when we think about what you as a novice-- or sorry, you as an expert knows and what novices know, what we have here is an example that maybe somebody who's just learning about wireless radio frequency networks, maybe this is all that they know. But if you're teaching this class, maybe this is what you know. Your neural network is dense with connections. You see how everything relates to each other. And students when they're first learning that information, they just don't have that density. They don't see all the connections.

So when we connect the dots by saying, remember what we learned in module 1, now we're going to use that and apply it here in module 3. Or even maybe it's a module overview where you say in this module, these are the main themes that we're going to be addressing. Here's an overview and introduction to some of the concepts. That can help provide a conceptual framework for students to use as well. And again, I would argue that those kinds of connective pieces are oftentimes lost online.

Now, I know I've shared a lot with you today. I'm going to finish with one question for you. And then we have a few minutes left for your questions and comments. Yes, Gabi, I love the comment that you just put. Claire, nice to see you from Australia. Thank you so much for being here. What are some ideas that you think might work for you, or even just one? Feel free to put that in the chat box right now.

And other than that, we're going to actually bring down the slides while you're doing that. And the reason that I'm going to bring down the slides is because research is

showing that all the slide time in Zoom is even more draining and fatiguing than just being in Zoom in the first place. So one thing that we can do is to bring down our slides when possible, and I'm going to just see what's coming into the chat box. And then I will also check in with Norma and Patti and see if things have come in the Q&A.

So I see some good things. Share one photo. So powerful. [CHUCKLES] Using photos to get at how students feel. The words might be scarier. Yeah, it's another way to connect with students. Flipgrid and Padlet, those are both so powerful. I've used Flipgrid recently myself. That was new to me. The share the photo. Yeah, predictable, consistent deadlines, connecting the dots. Absolutely. So much potential. And I will stop talking.

Norma, what has come in?

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: You have an interesting question that has come in from Tom Tobin. Says hi, Flower. How would you respond to colleagues who say that making time for games, check-ins, and such is taking precious time away from class content coverage? And I have had that question posed to me as well, so I ask that too. I agree with you. What would you say?

FLOWER DARBY: Yeah. Tom, thank you for raising that interesting question. We do hear that, and it is a valid concern. I don't want to pretend like it's not something that we should be concerned about.

The analogy that I like to use is something that a workshop participant shared with me right at the beginning of the pandemic, and he was talking about his experience in medical school and how the recommendation for doctors in residency is that they should take a few moments to try to establish a personal connection with patients. Now we know doctors are pressed for time. We've all had the experience as patients where we just don't really feel like we're getting the time and attention we need.

But this faculty member was sharing that there is evidence to show that those few minutes of asking how you are on that more personal level results in a better connection in terms of diagnosis and understanding the problem in these kinds of things. So I like that analogy. And I absolutely believe that the more that we connect with students and help them to connect with us and each other as a community, actually the more engaged and motivated they will be.

So within reason, I'm a big fan of inviting us all to do what we can. And if we are really pressed for time, certainly maybe you're not going to do all of the things, but maybe

begin with a little bit of an opportunity to foster that connection.

Because as I mentioned earlier in passing, connectedness predicts academic persistence and achievement.

And so taking that quick little moment of time here and there, creating space in the syllabus or the module to engage in these activities, I am convinced-- and there is research to back me up on this-- that it will foster increased engagement, persistence, and learning as well. Great question. Thank you.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: We also earlier had a question regarding your mock setup, the online course that was very flat versus the one that was more rapport building. Do you by chance off the top of your head know the citation for that?

FLOWER DARBY: I knew that was going to come up. And I will be really honest, I don't have that at the tip of my tongue. I almost thought about not including it. I think the researcher's name starts with a G and a Z. I'm happy to provide--

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: Glaser, Rebecca Glaser from University of Arkansas?

FLOWER DARBY: No, no.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: No? OK.

FLOWER DARBY: Great person doing great work. But this is not a great answer, but I'd be happy to send that citation after this concludes. It's a fascinating study because it's such a simple thing. They literally wanted to see what is the bare minimum that we can do to help students persist. And so it's really simple, easy stuff for week 1 only. But I will send the citation when we're done here. Thanks.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: I do that too. It's like, I know it, but I can't-- yeah. Our neural networks are compacted. As you said, it's just full of so much stuff.

FLOWER DARBY: Yes. Yeah.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: I get it, I get it. We've had a wonderful bunch of questions and feedback, and you've just really stimulated everybody's brains today. We are running a little lower on time, but if there's one more really stand out question that somebody has that we can target. I know there was questions on the connecting the dots and some examples for that one. And I think you gave some. And the building rapport, you gave some good examples on that one.

FLOWER DARBY: Sorry. I can just speak to another example from the connecting the dots thing. I was speaking with a student who was taking statistics in graduate school, and this was new for the student. We know that many students are intimidated by

statistics if it's new for them. And what this student was telling me was that the instructor was really good at setting the framework and describing conceptually how these things work, and just really providing a good overview and introduction and context.

Now, you could do this by way of a short mini recorded video, or by way of reading a short little text blurb that people read. But just it's hard to dive into concepts that are unfamiliar and foreign without some kind of an introduction. So again, whether that's a story, whether that's an example, whether that's a hey, look what happened in the news, anything to set kind of a context for students, that's another way to connect the dots and help people see what they're learning relates to other kind of big conceptual ideas. So just another example.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: This was all really wonderful. It was exciting. We do have one more question. I'm going to toss your way.

FLOWER DARBY: Yes, absolutely.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: How can I set up a communication time when all of my students are in different time zones?

FLOWER DARBY: Great question. And I was being a little bit on the simplistic side here today. Although you know what I have to say, I just have to say really quickly if you're still here, Scott Ham, I was kind of referring to some of your research. I didn't name you. But I've known Scott through a different workshop and he did some great research, is doing some great research on how relevance is a real predictor of equity in terms of online classes.

OK, how to connect with students in real time. So across different time zones, I certainly don't think-- honestly, I've taught asynchronous for 15 years, and it's rare for me to connect in real time with my students because my students choose that program because they need the asynchronous element to make that class fit in.

However, so I don't think you necessarily need it. I do think we want to be responsive in a timely fashion and not leave students hanging when they have submitted a question on a discussion forum or an email, for example. But if you are doing real-time interactions with your students, which certainly strengthens community and connection, maybe something like a Doodle poll where you can invite your students to choose a time and then you can lay out sometimes that you're available. If you're not familiar with Doodle, it's a really great, easy to use tool.

I'm a big fan of a tool-- one that I use myself is called Kalendly, Kalendly-- K-A-L-E-N-D-L-Y. And it's free. There's probably a paid version, but I use the free one. And you can set up time students can make a quick appointment with you. So that automatically translates the time zones.

And another way that you can do it, of course, is to preschedule some optional synchronous meeting times, especially if it's asynchronous class. I don't recommend that we make any synchronous meetings required. But you can announce that in the first week of class, even before class starts, hey, we're going to have some meet and greets and here's where they are. And then maybe you want to be intentional to schedule them at a range of days and times, maybe even on a weekend or an evening, so that students have options and maybe they can come to one of those.

And certainly if you're doing synchronous for review sessions or something, it's always a great idea to record that and then to post it so that students who couldn't make that time can still benefit from the questions that other students may have asked.

NORMA HOLLEBEKE: This was all so wonderful. It was enthusiastic, energetic, phenomenal. [CHUCKLES] We do ask that our audience take a few minutes out to complete our survey for today's presentation, using the link that Patti's posted in the chat. If you've got something else going on immediately after, don't worry, we will send you the link to the survey when we send you the recording link.

Also, you will receive an email with that survey link and the recording link, so keep an eye out for that. Sometimes it ends up in your spam folder, so keep your eyes open for that. Tomorrow, we have our final session for this reprise on formative assessment, and our two speakers are going to be actually touching on that TILT framework that they use at Colorado State University. So we hope that you all have time to come tomorrow. We just really want to thank our speaker. Flower has been awesome today and very energizing for me. Now I want to go out and jump into course and redesign it a little bit. [CHUCKLES] I want to thank our audience for being here as well and being so engaged and so energetic.

Real quick reminder, we do encourage you to visit the Every Learner Everywhere website and our resource page, including our workshop page to find out about future Every Learner Everywhere events. So we look forward to that as well. So this has been great. This has been wonderful. We hope that all of you all have a wonderful day and enjoy your weekend that's coming up.

FLOWER DARBY: Thank you everyone. Take care.

