

S.U.P.P.O.R.T. Students in Online Classrooms

The acronym “**Support**” comes to mind as I reflect upon online teaching strategies:

SUPPLEMENT

material on the syllabus with interesting and informative weekly guidance lesson plans.

Since the online curriculum is often standardized, online instructors should help students explore new concepts and provide “real world” illustrations to supplement the course content. Additional information to expand upon the content on the syllabus provides students with a more in-depth examination of each topic and enhances the learning process. It is particularly important to include current examples that students can relate to from personal experience, as well as pivotal events unfolding in the media. The inclusion of charts, graphs, diagrams and other pictorial images is another vehicle to grab the attention of students and add an element of fun to the classroom. Online course lesson plans should be written in an informal, conversational style to more closely resemble the dissemination of this material in person.

UNDERSTAND

the challenges of online learning environment for students and instructors.

Students and instructors may be confronted with challenges pertaining to technological issues or navigation through the virtual/online classroom. Instructors should be prepared to provide prompt guidance and resources to manage such situations and address unexpected glitches. This is imperative for maintaining organization in the classroom and reassuring students that there are viable solutions to these problems. The online classroom structure is unique, so instructors must be aware of necessary adjustments to accommodate this educational format. Students who are new to this form of learning may need extra attention adapting to changes from more traditional models. Consideration for individual learning styles and diversity are other key elements for effective instruction in the online environment. Flexibility is an essential factor to ensure clear presentations of course material and requirements, particularly in the absence of face-to-face communications.

PROVIDE

detailed formative and summative feedback throughout the course to monitor student progress.

Instructors should provide formative assessments with detailed comments throughout the course to monitor student progress. This is extremely helpful for students – it identifies specific areas of improvement, as well as recognizes strengths that have been demonstrated. The inclusion of positive feedback is imperative to encourage students and sustain motivation to succeed. Formative evaluations at the end of the term can be a useful tool for students to apply to future coursework and target skills that need additional attention.

Alice E. Schluger, Ph.D. | University of the Rockies // Rise Above | Alice.Schluger@faculty.rockies.edu

PROMOTE

active engagement and communication, which creates greater community among the course participants.

Maintaining an active presence throughout the term coincides with a greater sense of community among the course participants. Instructors should serve as role models to students in the tone, style, and types of communication in the virtual classroom. Utilizing a professional, but welcoming quality in all communications (announcements, postings, course expectations, etc.) creates a congenial atmosphere whereby students feel more comfortable exchanging opinions and ideas. By demonstrating enthusiasm, interest and curiosity about the topic at hand, instructors can foster motivation, self-reflection and critical thinking on the part of students.

OFFER

support and mentorship to students in coursework and career development.

In addition to fulfilling teaching responsibilities, instructors serve as mentors to students as they work towards their academic and career goals. This necessitates the establishment of mutual respect, trust and empathy towards students for the duration of the course. In order to offer effective support and guidance, it is essential to be both approachable and available to students. Instructors should also be mindful of the stressors associated with balancing school/work/life demands faced by students as they pursue their coursework.

RESPOND

to student questions, discussions and feedback in a timely fashion.

Students appreciate prompt feedback and grading of their discussions and assignments. A quick turnaround time will enable students to make necessary corrections and set clear guidelines for areas of development. This also reinforces the instructors' expectations of students to submit work prior to due dates and reply to other posts according to schedule. Responding to student inquiries within 24 hours is optimal for addressing questions and concerns, along with facilitating a collaborative approach to learning.

TEACH

with a focus on continual growth and improvement for lifelong learning.

One of the central components of a teaching philosophy is to provide a supportive and encouraging environment for learning. This overriding objective is advantageous, in conjunction with high-quality instruction that achieves the intended learning outcomes. Education is a dynamic process for both instructors and students, which contributes to the challenge and excitement of learning. As the educational field continues to evolve, these changes must be reflected in the course content and the synthesis of new information. A passion for teaching propels educators to pass along their knowledge and interest in a variety of disciplines. With this in mind, instructors should strive to inspire curiosity and lifelong learning among students.

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