Connecting with student are one of the most rewarding aspects of a teacher’s job. There is just not enough interaction and engagement online. Teacher are not alone in yearning for this connection but students also.

These insights provide four (4) strategies for optimizing the student experience in synchronous sessions.

1. Plan and Organize Thoughtfully

Organizing of course designs are especially important in online environments. In designing synchronous class, think the pedagogical value of each component, placing your students’ learning and experience at the heart of your plan.

Online classes are now multitasking more than ever, balance the extra demands on their time. Running long session, 60-90 minutes, increases the distractions. Carefully review your lesson plan before each session and create a minute by minute schedule.

2. Clarify Purposes, Norms, and Expectations

While in synchronous sessions may be new to some teachers, also students are unfamiliar with this format. Even though they have participated in synchronous sessions before, those experiences may vary greatly today. Laying the foundations of why and how you conduct your classes help set expectations, creating a shared class culture where student take more responsibility for their participation.

3. Build Community through Faculty-Student and Student-Student Interaction
Social check-ins create community. In turning on camera and audio right at the start of class, that is similar in walking the door of my in-person class right at the scheduled start time and going straight into teaching. Whether in person or online, before and after class are critical for answering questions and connecting with students.


At present platforms are equipped with so many engagement tools it can feel overwhelming for students as well as for the teacher. The COVID-19 pandemic many of us teaching in unfamiliar situations. Practicing synchronous instruction, a potential remedy for the connection students and teacher often miss in traditional online classes. The growth of synchronous classes will shape a “new normal” for online learning, after the pandemic had passed.

References: