Building Your Online Learning Community

Since remote students typically work alone, they report feelings of isolation, lack of motivation, and have more difficulty staying on schedule. The table below includes some ideas for helping students feel that they are part of a community of learners.

Strategy	Examples[1]
Invest in get-to-know-you activities	❏ Record a 5-minute welcome video introducing yourself to the students. ❏ Begin class with a get-to-know you discussion on Canvas and respond to students' posts (students could record a short video of themselves and upload it).
Demonstrate your presence in the Canvas course	❏ Create a schedule for meaningful involvement in Canvas that is equivalent to your time-commitment in an in-person class. ❏ Post announcements, give further explanations, provide tips on forthcoming assignments, answer questions, reply to online discussion posts, grade and give feedback on students' work.
Infuse your writing with kindness, warmth, and constantly **convey your support**.	❏ Rather than *"That question was answered in the video."* , say *"Thanks for your question [Name]! I hope you had the chance to watch the video, which tried to address that important question. Let me try to answer it in a different way..."* ❏ Instead of *"Questions? Post them in the Q&A discussion forum."* A more friendly, caring, and reassuring way to say this is: *"If you have any questions about what you are supposed to do on this assignment, please remember I am here to help. Contact me so I can support your success."*
Be **transparent** in your instructions	❏ Explain your expectations as clearly as possible (as if you were having a 1-1 conversation with a student). ❏ Create an informal two-minute explainer video to flesh out some details of an assignment. ❏ Provide rubrics for discussions and assignments. ❏ Share an example of student work that earned top marks. Maybe even share an example of mediocre work so students can compare the two.
Collect feedback from your students about your teaching.	Students often see your request for feedback as a demonstration that you care about their learning. ❏ Use anonymous Canvas surveys or Zoom polls to ask questions about how the course is going. ❏ Schedule a [Midterm Student Feedback](#) with CRLT-Engin.
Structure group work for students to interact with each other	❏ Use Zoom breakout rooms for icebreakers, for students to explain concepts to one another, or for students to brainstorm solutions to a problem. ❏ Create group assignments and discussions for students to interact with each other on similar activities asynchronously.

Co-create **community norms** and **engagement expectations** with your students.	❏ Start with simple guidelines like:
	  ✓ *Actively engage with Canvas on a regular basis.*
	  ✓ *Read and respond to the discussion threads and other assignments.*
	  ✓ *Embrace the diversity among our students.*
	and ask students for feedback, then revise and adopt them. You can find more ideas in this [CRLT Discussion-Guidelines Page](#).

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[1] Some examples adapted from Darby, F. (2019, April 17). How to Be a Better Online Teacher. Retrieved July 31, 2020, from https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-be-a-better-online-teacher/