



# Connect five

5 engagement strategies  
for bringing out the best  
in your online students



# Overview

In a remote environment, it can be challenging (but not impossible!) to recreate the camaraderie of in-classroom learning. If you're looking to deepen the engagement and get back the authenticity and robustness you're missing from your in-person classes, try these **five proven strategies** for connecting with students, enhancing class collaboration, and increasing the quality of class discussion and coursework.

1

## **Building bridges**

ENCOURAGE A COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM VIBE

2

## **Authentic connections**

INSPIRE YOUR STUDENTS TO OPEN UP

3

## **A little more conversation**

RAISE THE BAR FOR YOUR CLASS DISCUSSIONS

4

## **Making it matter**

GIVE STUDENTS A VOICE AND  
HOLD THEM TO HIGHER STANDARDS

5

## **Leveling up**

BETTER THINKING, BETTER WORK



# 1

## Building bridges

Encourage a collaborative classroom vibe

### I WANT TO...

Help build camaraderie among my students



### THE PROBLEM IS...

My students don't feel connected to each other and collaboration is limited



### TRY THIS:

- » **Break your class into smaller groups** for more thoughtful, intimate discussions
- » **Assign pair and group projects** and breakouts to encourage teamwork and accountability



## 2 Authentic connections

Inspire your students to open up

### I WANT TO...

Feel more connected to my online students



### THE PROBLEM IS...

We don't interact enough, and their in-class contributions are minimal



### TRY THIS:

- » **Use voice and video often** by recording your lectures and module intros, using VoiceThread and Flipgrid for assignments, and mixing things up with YouTube and TED Talk videos
- » **Share your contact information** and encourage your students to reach out with questions—or even just check in and chat
- » **Encourage students to share** personal experiences and photos during discussions, posts, and assignments—and share your own, too



# 3 A little more conversation

Raise the bar for your class discussions

## I WANT TO...

Improve the quality and quantity of student participation on our discussion boards



## THE PROBLEM IS...

My students don't post enough—and when they do, their comments are lackluster and repetitive



## TRY THIS:

- » **Ask open-ended questions** to prevent yes/no answers and other limited responses
- » **Solicit multiple points of view** through research assignments
- » **Encourage students to share their experiences** for more personal, engaging responses
- » **Break your class into smaller groups** for more thoughtful, intimate discussions
- » **Grade for class participation** to prompt more serious and thoughtful posts



# 4 Making it matter

Give students a voice and hold them to higher standards

## I WANT TO...

See student work that applies and demonstrates topical knowledge



## THE PROBLEM IS...

My students' submissions don't connect to the material



## TRY THIS:

- » **Make assignments feel meaningful and relevant** by asking students to connect course materials to the issues and organizations that matter to them
- » **Give students a choice** in assignment development by allowing them to choose (or vote as a class) on topics and formats
- » **Build your students' conversational skills** by assigning interviews with guest speakers, class presentations, and student-led teaching projects



# 5 Leveling up

Better thinking, better work

## I WANT TO...

Improve the quality of my students' submissions



## THE PROBLEM IS...

Completed work is unoriginal and shows a lack of critical thinking



## TRY THIS:

- » **Assign pair and group projects** and breakouts to encourage teamwork and accountability
- » **Give students a choice** in assignment development by allowing them to choose (or vote as a class) on topics and formats
- » **Create assignments that build on each other** and on class discussions to help students understand the relevance and purpose of each day's work





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