Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption

Teaching during times of potential disruption requires creative and flexible thinking about how educators can support students in achieving essential learning objectives. This document offers suggestions for creating a student-centered learning experience in a remote or online learning environment.

Synchronous Versus Asynchronous

There are two options for educators to facilitate learning remotely:

> **Synchronous:** Educators and students gather at the same time and interact in "real time" with very short or "near-real time" exchanges between educators and students.

> **Asynchronous:** Educators prepare course materials for students in advance. Students may access the course materials at a time of their choosing and will interact with each other over a longer period of time.

Educators may choose to engage their students synchronously or asynchronously depending on the content or material that needs to be taught. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.
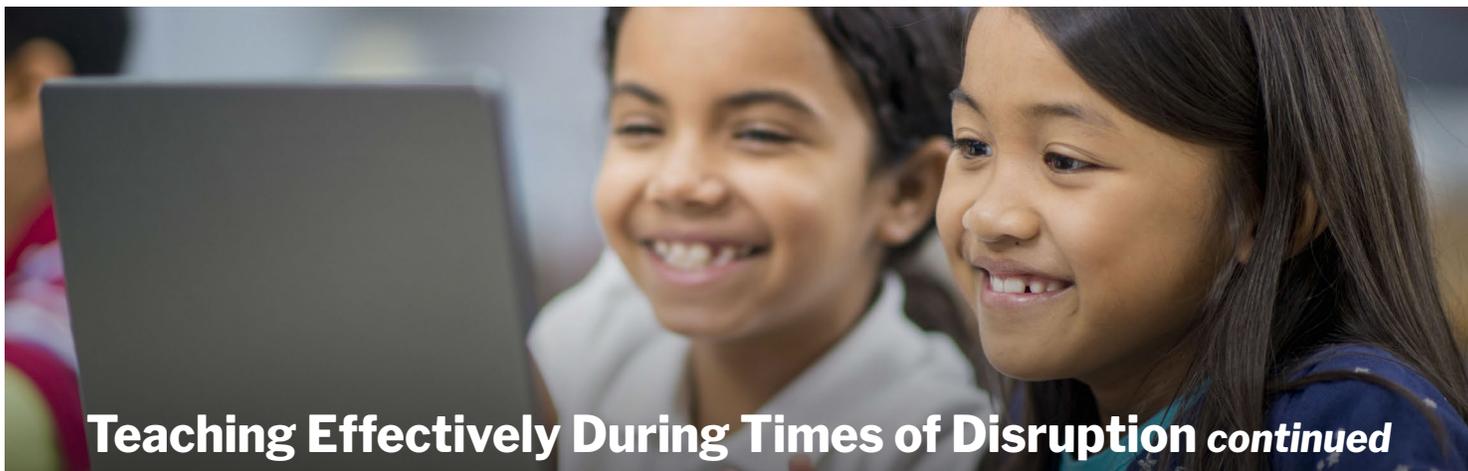
Advantages of Synchronous Teaching

> Immediate personal engagement between students and educators, which may create greater feelings of community and lessen feelings of isolation.

> More responsive exchanges between students and instructors, which may prevent miscommunication or misunderstanding.

Disadvantages of Synchronous Teaching

> More challenging to schedule shared times for all students and teachers.

> Some students may face technical challenges or difficulties.

Advantages of Asynchronous Teaching

> Higher levels of temporal flexibility, which may simultaneously make the learning experiences more accessible to different students and also make an archive of past materials accessible.

> Increased cognitive engagement since students will have more time to engage with and explore the course material.

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Disadvantages of Asynchronous Teaching

> Students may feel less satisfied without the social interaction between their peers and teachers.

> Course material may be misunderstood or have the potential to be misconstrued without the real-time interaction.

Educators may also choose to use both synchronous and asynchronous teaching.

Technology

Your school or district may have already invested in technology to support remote instruction. However, if that is not the case, below are a few no cost tools to support your teaching.

> **Canvas.** Canvas is an easy to use learning management platform that is free for teachers and students. Canvas helps teachers organize materials and assignments and facilitate online discussions. Canvas works best for asynchronous teaching.

> **Zoom.** Zoom is a free video conferencing platform. Zoom allows educators to engage in live conversations with their students using audio, video, and text-based chat features. Zoom works best for synchronous teaching. However, you can also use Zoom to record lectures and upload them to Canvas. Zoom will also generate automatic closed-captions for students.

> There are many other tools available such as **Google for Education, Screencast-O-Matic, Edmodo, Padlet, TEDEd, Flipgrid,** and **Kahoot** that educators may already be familiar with.

Whatever technology you choose, remember to organize materials intuitively and set realistic expectations for your students *and yourself.*

Pedagogical Suggestions

> **Breakdown Complex Tasks.** Help your students pace their work and feel confident that they are meeting your expectations by chunking assignments into manageable pieces. Provide a checklist of tasks for students to complete.

> **Notice and Respond to Cues.** Are multiple students asking the same question? Have online discussions gone astray? Post announcements or send emails that answer common questions. Reply in the discussion forums to praise a strong post or correct a misunderstanding to help students stay engaged and productive.

> **Give Feedback Frequently.** Look for opportunities to help students know how they are doing. It's easy for online students to feel isolated and unsupported. Tell students when they are on track or what to change to get back on track.

> **Create Zones of Proximal Development.** Intentionally structure student-to-student interactions. Design engaging and meaningful discussion forums. Assign small groups to lead discussions on certain topics or engage students in peer reviews using student friendly rubrics.

> **Focus on Mastery.** Create low stakes assignments that help students master content instead of worrying about grades or points.

Finally, schedule time to remotely check-in with your colleagues and discuss what's going well and what you might need help with to promote your remote teaching practice and your well-being.

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