

## Strategies for Developing and Maintaining a Virtual Classroom Community

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Developing and maintaining a virtual classroom community requires even more intentionality than we are used to (and a little more dedicated class time). It's helpful to build routines into your classes that promote personal, human interactions between individuals, small groups, and your full class.

<b>Face-to-Face Community</b>	<b>Virtual Pitfall</b>	<b>Virtual Community</b>
You meet your students in person on the first day of class	This is simply harder on a virtual platform.	In addition to introducing themselves on the first day of class, consider having all students post an introduction to a shared Google Slides deck or to your Google Classroom stream before your first meeting. Encourage creativity - bullet points are acceptable, but memes, a flipgrid video, etc. are even better. Birthday templates, etc.
Students & instructors chat as a group before class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants may keep their video/audio off until class begins</li> <li>- No opportunities to make a human connection</li> <li>- Participants may not log on until class is beginning</li> </ul>	<p>Pre-class entertainment: Open the Zoom meeting 10 minutes before class starts. Prepare something fun for everyone to do or discuss before class begins</p> <p>Bonus perk: Students get to class early and are ready-to-go when you want to begin</p>
Students & instructors chat in small groups/have one-on-one check-ins before class	When everyone is logged on for a Zoom call, a typical norm is to keep all mics muted. So if anyone talks, everyone is listening.	<p>Incorporate a 3-5 minute check-in at the beginning of class (after prayer, but before going over the day's agenda). Put students in random breakout rooms and let them talk about something unrelated to class.</p> <p>Suggested prompt: How are you? What are the top three feelings you've had since we last met?</p> <p>If you need to check in with a student individually, you can simply keep them out of a breakout group. No one else will even realize that you're having a one-on-one</p>

<p>Productive side conversations and tangents occur</p>	<p>Since all mics are muted, there is less likelihood of students piggy-backing on each other's comments.</p>	<p>Encourage use of the chat for both academic and "human" responses. Set a norm to differentiate.</p> <p>Academic comments that require a response should always start with an all-caps word:  <i>QUESTION Can you repeat the directions...?</i>  <i>JEN Have you thought about trying...</i></p> <p>"Human" reactions do not have an all-caps code:  <i>Haha. I wish!</i>  <i>+1 Austin</i></p>
<p>Students rely on seat neighbors for logistical reasons</p>	<p>This concept doesn't make sense in an online platform.  (Also, attendance is hard on Zoom.)</p>	<p>Pair students and make them responsible for each other. If one student has connection issues and has to reboot in the middle of class, their partner can catch them up via chat.</p> <p>(They can also be in charge of flagging the other's absence at the beginning of class.)</p>
<p>Students rely on seat neighbors for academic reasons</p>	<p>This concept doesn't make sense in an online platform.</p>	<p>Think-Pair-Share &gt;&gt; Think-Type-Post (into the Chat)</p> <p>In other words, students think, type their thoughts into the chat, and when the teacher says "Post," the students post their thoughts.</p>
<p>Students "move around" to different stations as in a Gallery Walk</p>	<p>This concept doesn't happen as automatically in an online platform.</p>	<p>Create a "Gallery Walk" using Zoom breakouts and Google Docs. See <a href="#">here</a> for an example of a Gallery Walk used in an virtual ELA classroom.</p>
<p>Students engage in smaller group</p>	<p>This may not always be possible, especially in</p>	<p>Consider staging an online "fishbowl." You designate a small group of students</p>

<p>discussions.</p>	<p>platforms where the breakout room function isn't available.</p>	<p>to be the spotlight group. They are the ones orally responding to a question or series of questions you've posed. Meanwhile, the rest of the class is using the chat function to pose responses to the small group's contributions.</p>
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## **Participation Norms & Best Practices**

### For All:

- Restart your computer often
- Access the Zoom call a few minutes before class is scheduled to begin
- Use the “gallery view” so that you can see as many people as possible
- Keep your video on as much as possible (unless you’re having connectivity issues)
  - Connect via phone if necessary
- If you aren’t talking, keep your mic muted
- Use hand signals (thumbs up/down) and head nods instead of vocal cues

### For Students:

- Open a local copy of the materials so that the instructor doesn’t have to screenshare as much
- Contact the instructor (or some other point-person) if you are having connectivity issues

### For Instructors:

- Share Zoom meetings via Google Calendar links & post a master document that has all of the links (this could be the first page of your syllabus)
  - All-class
  - Separate small groups
- Send a form email before each class (or post it to the top of your Google Classroom stream) with the link to the call and any materials that students will need. Also post these links in the chat at the start of class
- Embed links to collaborative documents in your slides, especially for breakouts

*And a bonus resource...the [TeachingWorks Resource Library](#)*