Online Teaching: Research Based Practices

This document provides examples of researched instructional practices from the Colorado State University Teaching Effectiveness Framework that correlate with teaching online. It includes checklists from five of the seven teaching domains to help you transition to teaching online. Whether you start teaching face-to-face and move to online, or you start teaching online and move to face-to-face, these practices easily translate to both modes of instruction. For more information on the Teaching Effectiveness Framework, go to the TILT website.

(this icon indicates an inclusive teaching practice.

Many inclusive practices reside in more than one teaching domain.)

1. Inclusive Pedagogy	
Inclusive pedagogy is a student-centered teaching approach that considers all students' backgrounds, experiences, and learning variabilities in the planning and implementation of student engagement activities, equitable access to content, mutual respect, and a more robust learning experience for all learners. (We encourage you to go to inclusive teaching tips online by the VPDO for a deeper dive into inclusive pedagogy.)	
Consider sharing about yourself and your intentions for inclusivity. Acknowledge that we all have work to do in this area understanding and practicing inclusivity.	
Does my online curriculum represent contributions from diverse backgrounds represented in the field?	
Have I designed activities and discussions so that all voices can be "heard"?	
Have I considered how online teaching impacts different students, especially students from marginalized backgrounds in terms of technology access, schedules, etc...	
How will I model productive conversation, even when students disagree?	
Make content accessible for all learners.	

2. Classroom Climate
Class climate refers to the perceptions students have of the intellectual, social, and emotional space in which they are to learn and create relationships among peers and with the instructor. Positive and supportive relationships are the basis of class climate and enhance student success. The instructor must intentionally create a welcoming space with a sense of belonging, rapport, and an identity as a community of learners. Class climate is a strong predictor of students' satisfaction with their college experience.

Ideas for my online course: not every idea will work for every instructor. Choose one or two or go to the TILT website for more ideas.		*How I might connect this to course content or a course activity*
Sense of Belonging	• Make content accessible for all learners • Tell students often they belong in your course • Be sure your content represents contributions from a wide range of backgrounds so that all students can see themselves as belonging to the discipline.	*Example: Use positive phrases often: "You belong here." "We're in this together." "One step at a time will get you there." "It's OK to make mistakes."*
Student-student rapport	• Build community with student-student discussion • Provide opportunities for students to work with others - and for students to see the value of diverse perspectives • Give students an explicit guide to constructive online interactions, such as Netiquette: Ground Rules for Online Discussions • Work with students to create class/community norms	*Example: Before any content is delivered, set up a thread where students introduce themselves to each other and welcome each other.*
Student-instructor rapport	• Be vulnerable. Tell students when you don't know something, and find out • Vary the mode in which you respond to students: written response, video response, or oral response are all available in Canvas • Create an atmosphere that honors effort and commitment - use low-stakes assessments, revision, and language that promotes a growth mindset.	*Example: Ask students how they would like to be addressed in class; address them this way when you respond to their posts or emails.*

3. Student Motivation	
Motivation is triggered by the perceived value or benefit of the academic content or task. Student involvement and commitment to learning increases when an instructor uses a variety of researched motivation techniques.	
Motivating practices for my online course	**Opportunities to implement this practice in my course**
Establish an audio and video presence in your course to help your students feel comfortable with you	
Explain to your students, at the outset of your course and at regular intervals throughout, that you are using active learning strategies because they have been shown by research to improve student understanding and skill building	
Remember that communication in an online course is key - utilize announcements, discussions, grading tools, emails and phone calls to motivate your students	
Promote growth mindset and students' resilience by shifting attention to problem solving and working through failures	
Create an atmosphere that is open and positive and help students find personal meaning and value in the material you present	
Clearly link concepts/lessons to industry or a broader purpose, future classes/activities, or other transferable skills that are used in the field	

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4.   Feedback and Assessment

Frequent formative assessments and low-stakes assignments increase student performance on higher stakes exams; they inform both instructors and students on the extent to which students are mastering the objectives. More frequent assessments also allow instructors to adjust their teaching to meet students where they are. Timely feedback to students provides them with guidance on corrective actions to take to increase learning. Integrating a variety of assessment strategies provides students multiple opportunities to succeed.

Ideas for my online course: not every idea will work for every instructor. Choose one or two or go to the TILT website for more ideas.		*How I might connect this to course content or a course activity*
Assessments	Set up discussions, assignments, and quizzes so that students use the spacing effect by studying for 45 minutes over multiple days instead of cramming material the night before an exam. Encourage students to prepare for exams by testing themselves instead of simply reviewing material. Tests that require students to generate responses in their own words through fill-in- the-blank or essay questions are better for student learning when compared with tests that require answer recognition (multiple choice, T/F, etc.).	*Example: Organize test questions into small weekly quizzes in Canvas instead of two or three high-stakes exams.*
First Four Weeks	Consider incorporating a syllabus quiz or course scavenger hunt in the first module to ensure that students grasped the most important points regarding course policies, assignments and objectives. Set high expectations from the beginning. An instructor who holds high expectations will encourage high expectations from students. Incorporate frequent checks for understanding so students know where they stand throughout the course.	*Example: Use low stakes, practice quizzes during the First Four Weeks of class so students know where they stand before the first exam.*
Assignments and Rubrics	At the start of the course, share your grading policy, assignment descriptions and rubrics so students know what will be expected. Where possible, provide prompts that allow for more than one way of expressing mastery. Incorporate real-life, authentic assessment opportunities	*Example: Use a rubric in Canvas to provide feedback on essay assignments.*
Feedback	Provide feedback in a timely manner so students can relearn inaccurate information. Incorporate regular formative assessments strategies to gauge student understanding, modify future lessons and make in-the-moment instructional adjustments.	*Example: Use the Canvas Speedgrader to provide clear and substantive feedback in assignments and discussions.*

5.   **Instructional Strategies**

In online education, we generally talk about three types of engagement: student-to-student, student-to-content and student-to-instructor. Just as you would in an RI classroom, vary what you do in your online course to incorporate these different types of engagement. Below are some examples of instructional strategies you and your students can engage in during your course:

Instructional Strategy	How I might connect one of these to my course content:
Student-to-student engagement • group assignments • discussions - whole group or small group • peer reviews • debates • roleplaying exercises • student-led discussions or exam-reviews	
Student-to-content engagement • quizzes • discussions - whole group or small group • games • writing assignments • reflections • classroom assessment techniques that can be adapted as activities (CATs) • lab simulations • presentations • eportfolios • research • student-generated study guides or quiz and exam questions • videos of guest speakers or virtual field trips	
Student-to-instructor engagement • discussions • journals • questions • blogs • feedback	