STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOMS DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

A collaboration of the Missouri Association of School Psychologists and the Missouri School Counselor Association

Strategies for Student Engagement

Virtual

- Greet each student by name as they enter the virtual classroom, and wish them a good day when they leave (again, use their name).
- When a student writes something in the chat box, use their name when you respond.
- Focus on team building within your classroom during the first two weeks. As a group, get to know one another, establish classroom norms, hold class meetings and build a sense of safety and group cohesion. For example, if you teach in a PBIS school, use your school's acronym and create a padlet for them to write examples of how they can demonstrate those tenants in a virtual setting.
- Write the expectations for the day where students can see and anticipate what's coming next. This can be a motivator, reassure students who may feel anxious, and give the students a sense of responsibility and ownership. For students who have a tough time sitting still, they can easily see when they'll have a chance to move around. Have older students write these expectations in their planner everyday and have parents check student planners daily/weekly.
- Hold daily classroom meetings or check-ins (virtually) to allow for students to have a safe space to express their feelings and experiences during this pandemic. Do not minimize student feelings and seek outside supports if needed. One way to do this is by creating a google form that students fill-out each morning prior to logging into their classroom.
- Provide choice. Instead of having everyone do the same thing at the same time, make a list of "must-do's" for the day and let each student choose the order in which s/he will do the various assignments. This can include utilizing break-out rooms if your technology

allows and setting aside time for individual and/or small group meetings for each academic subject.

● During classroom meetings, teach strategies for problem solving. Model those strategies with your students, and have them practice. The school counselor will have lessons on problem solving, so reach out and collaborate with your school counselor to provide this piece. You can even mail home visuals to students to help maintain cohesion.

● Collaborate with your school counselor(s) who can assist you with student issues, team-building, problem solving, and "meaningful breaks"

● For students who are disengaged or have "disappeared" from online learning, try reaching them by sending a personalized recorded video message to them (see this article here for more about this idea).

● Include parents and guardians into one of your first classroom meetings to go over expectations and hold a parent meeting to go over virtual expectations and/or answer any questions that parents may have about virtual learning.

● Have students share pictures of their learning and reading spots with the class!

● If a student is struggling academically or behaviorally, do not hesitate to reach out to your school psychology, counselor, and/or administrator to problem-solve and determine how to best support this student during virtual learning. Early intervention is extremely important!

Fully In-Person

● Focus on team building within your classroom during the first two weeks. As a group, get to know one another, establish classroom norms, hold class meetings and build a sense of safety and group cohesion. One example of this is posting a list of "socially distant" greeting choices for students to utilize as they sign into their classrooms.

● Build lots of movement and brain breaks into your day.

● Write the expectations for the day where students can see and anticipate what's coming next. This can be a motivator, and can be reassuring to students feeling anxious. For students who have a tough time sitting still, they can easily see when they'll have a chance to move around.

● Provide choice. Instead of having everyone do the same thing at the same time, make a list of "must-do's" for the day and let each student choose the order in which s/he will do the various assignments.

● Go outside as much as the weather and your school permits, and let light in the classroom by opening shades.

● Establish a "calm place" where students can go when feeling upset or anxious. TEACH them how to use the various calming strategies, like Mindfulness Techniques or how to use stress balls. Pipe cleaners make easy, inexpensive fidgets for students. A rubber band around the front two legs of a chair can give an opportunity for movement that isn't

disruptive. Wobble chairs are also helpful for the student who needs to move; make one leg a bit shorter so the student can quietly be in motion.

- During classroom meetings, teach strategies for problem solving. Model those strategies with your students, and have them practice. The school counselor will have lessons on problem solving, so reach out and collaborate with your school counselor to provide this piece.
- Explicitly teach any new safety rules that have been put in place by your school and be honest about the importance of these rules and why they have been put in place. Allow students to ask questions about these new rules and precautions. If disciplinary action can be taken when students do not follow these rules, be clear about those consequences.
- Hold daily classroom meetings or check-ins to allow for students to have a safe space to express their feelings and experiences during this pandemic. Do not minimize student feelings and seek outside supports if needed.
- Collaborate with your school counselor(s) who can assist you with student issues, team-building, problem solving, and "meaningful breaks"

Hybrid
- Focus on team building within your classroom during the first two weeks. As a group, get to know one another, establish classroom norms, hold class meetings and build a sense of safety and group cohesion.
- During the first month of the school year, explicitly teach expectations for both virtual and in-person learning. Problem-solve and model the new processes and virtual learning technology that the students will be using.
- Build lots of movement and brain breaks into your day.
- Write the expectations for the day where students can see and anticipate what's coming next. This can be a motivator, and can be reassuring to students feeling anxious. For students who have a tough time sitting still, they can easily see when they'll have a chance to move around.
- Explicitly teach any new safety rules that have been put in place by your school and be honest about the importance of these rules and why they have been put in place. Allow students to ask questions about these new rules and precautions. If disciplinary action can be taken when students do not follow these rules, be clear about those consequences.
- Provide choice. Instead of having everyone do the same thing at the same time, make a list of "must-do's" for the day and let each student choose the order in which s/he will do the various assignments.
- Go outside as much as the weather and your school permits and let light in the classroom by opening shades to have exposure to light.
- Establish a "calm place" where students can go when feeling upset or anxious. TEACH them how to use the various calming strategies, like Mindfulness Techniques or how to

use stress balls. Pipe cleaners make easy, inexpensive fidgets for students. A rubber band around the front two legs of a chair can give an opportunity for movement that isn't disruptive. Wobble chairs are also helpful for the student who needs to move; make one leg a bit shorter so the student can quietly be in motion.

● Hold daily classroom meetings or check-ins (virtually and in-person) to allow for students to have a safe space to express their feelings and experiences during this pandemic. Do not minimize student feelings and seek outside supports if needed.

● During classroom meetings, teach strategies for problem solving. Model those strategies with your students, and have them practice. The school counselor will have lessons on problem solving, so reach out and collaborate with your school counselor to provide this piece.

● Ensure that the technology being utilized during virtual learning is also being utilized during in-person instruction to help keep a sense of consistency and normalcy. This will also help to diminish technical difficulties and questions that may arise when students are learning virtually.

● For students who are disengaged or have "disappeared" from online learning, try reaching them by sending a personalized recorded video message to them (see this article here for more about this idea)

● Collaborate with your school counselor(s) who can assist you with student issues, team-building, problem solving, and "meaningful breaks".

● Include parents and guardians into one of your first virtual classroom meetings to go over expectations and hold a parent meeting to go over hybrid expectations and/or answer any questions that parents may have about virtual learning.

Helpful Websites

● National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) COVID Resources
● American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Back to School Resources
● Missouri Association of School Psychologists (MASP) COVID Resources
● Missouri School Counselor Association (MSCA) COVID Resources
● MO DESE COVID Update
● Child Mind Institute for Educators
● Understood Back to School Educators Resources
● Missouri Preventions Science Institute Teacher Resources
● Centers for Disease Control and Prevention- Schools and Child Care Page

Helpful Resources

- ASCA-NASP school Re-Entry SEL Considerations Guidance
- NASP Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism
- NASP Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting from COVID-19
- DESE Back to School During COVID Tips for Teachers
- Online Classroom Management Strategies Overview
- Online Classroom Management Detailed Examples
- Online Learning Expectations for Students
- Online Learning Behavior Matrix
- Five Reasons Why Students Aren't Engaging in Distance Learning
- Understood- Brain Breaks What you Need to Know
- Assigning Classroom Jobs
- ASCA Elementary Virtual Learning Resource
- ASCA Middle School Virtual Learning Resource
- ASCA High School Virtual Learning Resources
- Child MInd Institute- Anxiety and Coping with COVID
- Tolerance- Equity in Education during COVID

Books

- *Guided Imagery Work with Kids: Essential Practices to Help Them Manage Stress, Reduce Anxiety and Build Self-Esteem,* Melissa Dormoy
- *Practicing Presence: Simple Self-Care Strategies for Teachers*, Lisa J. Lucas