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## Active learning academy

Instructors can adapt many active learning strategies to online courses. Online active learning can also provide new ways for students to interact, participate, and collaborate. For effective active learning, consider ways to combine practice with feedback, peer learning, and clear structure. Below are a selection of strategies that are used in Cornell courses for active learning in online teaching. Practice with Feedback Alternate short periods of lecturing (live or lecture videos) with time for students to apply what they have just learned and receive feedback. Students can work individually, in small groups, or both. Strategies include: If you are giving lectures in person and including Zoom recordings, periodically pause your lecture and ask students a question about the content in real-time using iClicker Student polling online, Poll Everywhere, or Zoom polling. You can also pair polling with small groups in the classroom or Zoom breakout rooms for students to discuss the question. Ask students to share their answers and reasoning and wrap up by explaining the correct answer or your perspective on the issue. During a Zoom class meeting, you can ask students to post an answer to a question or their thoughts about class content in the Zoom chat window (best for smaller classes). For large classes, you could ask students in Zoom breakout rooms to choose a group notetaker to post group discussion notes in the chat window after returning to the main class session. You can ask students to post just to you (private chat) or for everyone in the class to see. Ask students to download worksheets and then upload completed work to Gradescope. Gradescope is now integrated with Canvas. Peer Learning Through discussion with their peers, students may see additional patterns and connections between concepts, correct misconceptions, and organize their knowledge. It can also help create a sense of community in the class. If using Zoom in a live online class, pause your lecture and place students into small groups in breakout rooms in Zoom to discuss a topic or solve a problem for 5-15 minutes. Instructors report that providing an interesting topic, clear instructions, and accountability helps foster productive discussions. For example, post the discussion prompt and instructions in the Zoom chat window, and ask groups to write their ideas in a collaborative document (e.g., Google doc, Google sheet, Jamboard) or post their answers in the chat window when they return to the main session. This activity also works well as an in-class small group exercise. Ask students to post questions, observations, or answers to questions either before or after class on the online discussion boards in Canvas (Ed Discussion, Canvas Discussions). If you want them to respond to other students' posts, remember to give two due dates: one for the first post and the second for a response. Student discussion posts are also a great way to start the next class discussion, identify areas of confusion, and encourage students to complete reading and other assignments. Social annotation tools such as Perusall support online course discussions focused on a text. Instructors can set up Canvas Groups as a dedicated place where students can collaboratively develop and discuss their projects and share materials (they can collaborate on Google Docs, create their own discussion boards, post project announcements, use the Conferences tool, and share files). Students can also submit their team projects to Group Assignments in Canvas. Students can exchange written work, videos, presentations, or other assignments for peer feedback. Providing feedback expectations or a rubric is helpful. The online tool, Feedback Fruits helps organize and structure peer feedback. You can ask students to create a short (3-5) minute video to explain a course concept to their peers and post it to a discussion board in Canvas. Consider a Canvas Discussion in which students can share short videos via Kaltura. Other alternatives are to ask students to post a concept map, infographic, or content review questions to share with peers. Consider using Google Docs or Google Sheets for student collaborations. For example, worksheets or handouts that you might have used for in-person activities can be made into a Google doc. Students can contribute to them simultaneously, as well as provide a way for you to give feedback. Students should access Google Suite using their authenticated Cornell accounts. Students can annotate readings online and respond to each others' comments using the social annotation tools in Canvas. It encourages students to read closely and thoughtfully and can identify areas of common interest or confusion. Structure Provide clear instructions, expectations, and accountability. If using Zoom, especially when asking students to work or discuss in groups, provide clear written instructions (can be posted in Zoom chat) and guidance on what they are expected to do at the end (report back to the class, answer a question, complete a worksheet etc.). Explain the purpose and value of the learning activities. How will they help students develop their knowledge and skills? Build in some low-stakes accountability to encourage students to participate in the activities (e.g., participation credit, minimum number of required posts per semester in discussion boards, etc.). For example, if using online discussion boards, consider providing examples of a good post and your expectations (e.g., the post refers to the reading, poses a question, considers evidence, etc.). If doing a peer review assignment, give examples of constructive feedback and/or provide a rubric. Be clear about grading and deadlines. When are activities due? Are they worth any points? What if students cannot attend or miss a deadline? Cornell instructors have reported that having some flexibility (e.g., dropping lowest grades, student choice in ways to participate or type of assignments) has been helpful, especially in accommodating students' varied circumstances. Some challenges encountered when doing active learning online: Spend time building a sense of community, especially in the first week, but also throughout the semester. Give students time to get to know each other so they are more comfortable in talking with one another. We offer additional resources on building community and inclusion in online courses. Consider asking students for their input on online etiquette, use of Zoom features, and expectations for participation, either with the entire class or as an exercise in building a team contract (if working in permanent teams). This is a good activity in the first week of class. Students may not see the purpose or value of the learning activities and discussions. Make sure that activities are well aligned with the learning outcomes and assessments for the course. Talk with students about the goals of the activity and the educational value of discussing with others and applying what they are learning. Consider having more accountability: tell students that each group needs to post an answer in chat, or that groups will be called on to report out, or will need to submit a document. Assign roles (like notetaker, reporter) to the group members (and rotate). Try adjusting the group size to see if larger or smaller groups seem to work better. Generally, we suggest around 3-5 students in a group, but it may depend on your class. Consider having permanent groups throughout the semester by pre-assigning breakout rooms in Zoom. Working with the same group each time may help students feel more comfortable in talking. If groups are responsible for assignments, a peer feedback survey around mid-semester can help identify and solve problems in group participation. Remind students of the "Ask for Help" feature in Zoom breakout rooms. Visit the breakout rooms and ask TAs to join the rooms as well. If you have TAs who join breakout rooms, consider setting up another channel (such as Slack) where they can tell you if questions are coming up or if groups are finished or need more time. Take advantage of asynchronous options: posting to online discussion boards, downloading/uploading worksheets, short quizzes after lecture videos. Allow a window of time to complete activities (e.g., 24 or 48 hours). Organize student groups in Canvas to find a time to meet that works for them. Offer different options for participation, for example students who cannot participate with video/audio in Zoom, can post their comments in the chat box. Putting it all together: Cornell courses using active learning online: Many Cornell courses have adapted active learning strategies. Often instructors used several approaches to meet their learning goals and to support students. Some Cornell examples of active learning online scenarios: Students worked in permanently assigned teams throughout the semester. During synchronous class meetings on Zoom, the instructor alternated between short periods of lectures and time for the student teams to work together in Zoom breakout rooms to solve problems. iClicker Student polling was also used as a way for students to submit answers to questions as individual work. The student teams also met outside of the regular class time to collaborate on a semester-long data analysis project and on a group portion of the exams. Students watched short lecture videos followed by a Canvas quiz to check their understanding. They were assigned to permanent teams for the entire semester and teams were expected to meet regularly and complete assignments together. In addition to turning in the assignments, teams were also asked to take a screenshot photo of everyone in the online meeting (to show that team members participated) and to submit a mid-semester peer feedback form for their team members. Students also met weekly online with their instructors in Q&A sessions and in TA-led discussion sections. In addition to short quizzes in Canvas after the lecture videos, students were asked to post to the online discussion boards and respond to other students. They also completed peer-reviewed essay assignments. For this art history course, the first discussion board post after moving to remote teaching asked students to find and analyze an object in their homes according to the "Big Nine" concepts of the course. The instructor provided an example analysis of an object in their home. The instructor reports "It was amazingly effective, produced great analyses, and fostered belonging remotely." The final assignment asked the students to come up with their own "24th Object" for the course, which produced some wonderful reflections on what was missing from the syllabus and what they would have liked to incorporate (whether a more diverse representation of ethnic, regional or religious groups, more attention to women, a broader range of media, etc.). Please contact CTEI for assistance with any of these strategies. The Center for Educational Innovation provides research-informed, transformative, and inclusive leadership in teaching and learning across the University of Minnesota system. Partner with us to achieve your educational goals. Explore this resource to find a range of approaches to plan, navigate, and respond to challenging course conversations. In addition to concrete suggestions to design and facilitate potentially "hot" class discussions, this resource includes curated supplemental materials and instructor reflection questions to help guide your course planning process. Teaching During the Election Season This resource, which will be regularly updated as the November election approaches, aims to support civic engagement and learning, describe pedagogical approaches to controversy, and guide instructors navigating how to address protected speech that disrupts the academic environment. The sample timetable below highlights exciting activities led by specialist coaches from Active Learning Academy and BlueFin Water Sports. Each session aims to engage participants and enhance their skills in a fun environment. Join us for an unforgettable experience filled with learning and adventure! With a large team of coaches, we are able to offer specialist coaching and tuition across more than 30 different activities. This means that we can partner with schools to provide a wide range of activities, from sports and fitness to arts and crafts, with a quality assurance guarantee. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. With passion and expertise in learning and design, our award-winning studio helps institutions rethink what's possible, plan for success, and bring online learning to life. Meet the studio We follow strict guidelines in regard to our sick policies. This is the most difficult policy for parents and we want to support every family in understanding our sick policy. We are committed to maintaining a healthy environment for all of our students and teachers. If your child is sent home they may not return to school the next day. All sicknesses require a child to be symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours and without the use of medication. Your child may not attend school if they have the following: Fever over 100F Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool) - may return after 24 hours and when a normal, solid BM has happened Vomiting - may return after a minimum of 24 hours symptom free Nausea Severe cough Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed above Difficult breathing or abnormal wheezing Complaints of severe pain Colds A normal cold will present with symptoms such as runny nose and cough and may not have a fever. While mild symptoms are permitted at school if your child is coughing persistently and has a runny nose that is a constant faucet they may not attend school. Mild symptoms is an occasional cough or an occasional need to wipe a nose. Children must be able to participate in their normal daily activities. Fevers A fever is a temperature over 100F. Your child must be fever-free for a minimum of 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. Hand, Foot, and Mouth This is a very common and very contagious childhood virus. Most often small dots appear in the mouth, on palms of hands and feet. Other common areas include: all around the mouth, creases of legs or elbows. Typically a fever occurs before the rash/sores do. Your child may not attend school for 5 days no exceptions. If there is a HFV case in the classroom and a rash of any kind appears on your child you may not attend school without a diagnosis from a doctor. Siblings must remain home together should one have HFV. If there are several children who come down with HFV we will close the classroom for 24 hours to sanitize and allow for the children to either come down with the virus or not, this really helps minimize the spread of this highly contagious virus. RSV Symptoms include runny nose, low appetite, coughing, sneezing and fever. This virus is particularly dangerous for young children and their respiratory system and can cause hospitalization. Labored breathing is something to monitor for. Children diagnosed with RSV may not attend school for a minimum of 5 days. Sibling must remain home together should one have RSV. If multiple children come down with RSV we will close the class for 24 hours to sanitize. CROUPS Croup is a highly contagious illness with symptoms that include a seal like barking cough, fever and runny nose. Your child and sibling may not attend school if one child has this virus. Please keep your child for 72 hours from the onset of symptoms and they must also be 24 hours fever free without the use of reducing medication. Your child must remain home for 72 hours even if they do not present a fever and especially if the illness is reported to your child's class. COVID-19 When diagnosed with COVID children will follow the same guidelines as a typical cold / flu. They may not attend school unless they are not using fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours and symptoms are improving and very mild. Sibling Policy Communication when children are sick is of the utmost importance. We are very reasonable when determining when children are able to return to school. There are some sicknesses, such as the ones listed above, that siblings must remain home together due to the severity and how contagious a virus may be. Please don't hesitate to contact Jen for questions or to determine sibling requirements 541-633-4723 - you can also contact her using the Admin feature on Brightwheel. Being sent home from school / Returning to school Children must be able to participate in all activities. A child who has signs of illness shall be isolated and the parent(s) notified to pick up the child within 30 minutes. If a child is sent home from school they may not return the very next day. We require children to be symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours. If a child has diarrhea they must have a solid bowel movement before returning to school as well. Children in preschool are not diligent in preventing the spread of illness. We can encourage washing hands often, try to ask children to cover their mouth and wipe noses but the spread of illness happens quickly among groups of children. We strive to keep our classes healthy and ask parents to please keep children home if they are not well. If Active Learning Academy has to close classes due to lack of staffing due to sicknesses or other situations, tuition is still due in full. Please contact Jen at any time to review symptoms and exclusion requirements (541) 633-4723 - you can also contact her using the Admin feature on Brightwheel. PLEASE NOTE: THE ABOVE LIST IS NOT COMPLETE OF ALL ILLNESS - BUT CORRELATES TO EXISTING KNOWN VIRUSES AMONG THE COMMUNITY. WHEN IN DOUBT, PLEASE CONTACT JEN TO REVIEW SYMPTOMS AS EACH CHILD HANDLES SICKNESSES DIFFERENTLY. We do everything we can to cover classes when teachers are sick however, if both teachers get sick the class will close, following our sick policies doesn't just avoid sickness in children but it also keeps our teachers healthy. The best teaching is often both an intellectual creation and a performing art. Ken Bain Center for Educational Innovation Active learning is any approach to instruction in which all students are asked to engage in the learning process. Active learning stands in contrast to "traditional" modes of instruction in which students are passive recipients of knowledge from an expert. Active learning can take many forms and be executed in any discipline. Commonly, students will engage in small or large activities centered around writing, talking, problem solving, or reflecting. What is active learning? Active learning refers to a broad range of teaching strategies which engage students as active participants in their learning during class time with their instructor. Typically, these strategies involve some amount of students working together during class, but may also involve individual work and/or reflection. These teaching approaches range from short, simple activities like journal writing, problem solving and paired discussions, to longer, involved activities or pedagogical frameworks like case studies, role plays, and structured team-based learning. Samples of Active Learning Activities In a "traditional" class, it is common for only some students in a given course to participate in asking or responding to questions. In contrast, a class with successful active learning activities provide an opportunity for all students in a class to think and engage with course material and practice skills for learning, applying, synthesizing, or summarizing that material. Image adapted by the Center for Educational Innovation, based on original content by Chris O'Neal and Teresia Pinder-Grover, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan. Making Time for Active Learning Using active learning strategies does not require abandoning the lecture format. Rather, adding small active learning strategies can make lecturing more effective for student learning. These activities give students just a minute or two to check their understanding of recent material, practice a skill or highlight gaps in their knowledge before giving an explanation. Image adapted from Thinking Together: Collaborative Learning in the Sciences, Harvard University, Derek Bok Center. We are actively enrolling for the 2025/26 school year and hosting tours for this enrollment period, if interested in future enrollment please add yourself to our notification page, request information Complete and submit the Information Form on this page. Ms Jen will contact you within 3 business days and schedule a tour. Attend a tour of our school. If we're a good fit we'll iron out the details and you can rest easy knowing your child is in great hands!