

# Equity Chats

*Building Cross-Cultural Competency Through Evidence*  
<https://collabequitysolutions.org>

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*As we address  
disparities in systems  
we must also address  
the beliefs that gave  
permission for the  
disparities to persist.*

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In less than a 10-day period, schools throughout the country went from providing assessment, curriculum, instruction, and learning opportunities in a familiar space, to home-based learning. Since this shift, educators have been adjusting to the evolving dynamics of how to make assessment, curriculum, social emotional development, instruction and learning happen for all students, and to ensure these elements of school are based on equitable access and opportunity. Over the last five weeks, Collaborative Equity Solutions (CES) has heard from educators across the county about common issues arising in this new virtual space. This week's *Equity Chat* provides emerging educational concerns that require an equity lens (i.e., providing access to resources and opportunity in the form of quality in teaching and practice free of bias-based beliefs about ability). These concerns require an equity lens that prioritizes quality, robust, and culturally responsive strategies which place the most vulnerable student population at the center of its design and implementation.

## *Virtual Learning is a Civil Right*

- **Virtual learning involves a presumption of independent learning capacity.** That is, students having a sense of motivation to reach their own academic goals and evaluate their own progress. Overnight students were expected to develop the capacity to be an independent learning and educators knowing how to design virtual learning lessons that encourage independent learning development. The following are some ways to ramp up the development of independent learning for students who were traditionally exposed and/or accustomed to dependent learning:
  - Use questioning to scaffold independent learning over the course of several weeks. Assignments should move from recall and comprehension, to application and analysis, and finally to evaluation, and creation. Consider using a diet approach in which recall and comprehension are 20%, application and analysis are 40%, and evaluation and creation is 40%.
  - Encourage peer group feedback via virtual platforms such as Flipgrid and Microsoft teams or other platforms that lend themselves for reviewing the work of others and leaving several points of feedback.
  - Encourage students to identify learning goals for the week. For example, reading two chapters in a week; participating in a math study group; or, creating an SAT “word wall” on a surface or on an electronic device.
    - **Resources for thinking about independent learning:**
      - Vanderbilt University IRIS Center: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/sr/>
      - Edutopia: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/guiding-students-be-independent-learners>

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*As long as I understand racism as an individual act and not a system...I can feel absolved of any guilt and perceive the capacity of **not** seeing color as a more elevated social perspective.*

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- **Support the learning conditions your students are needing to navigate.** Check-in often, adjust amount of workload, increase asynchronous mini-lessons, and provide sufficient time for students who are navigating home-based learning conditions that interrupt or challenge their ability to focus and complete assignments. For example, some students are taking care of younger siblings which includes supervising their learning; some students are having to move in the middle of virtual learning because their guardian(s) can no longer afford housing; some students are working in essential jobs such as grocery stores because guardian(s) have been laid off; and some students are sharing one laptop and/or one wifi network in a home environment with other siblings and adults. These tenuous realities our students are enduring necessitate educators to dramatically adjust virtual learning expectations.
- **Meeting standards needs to move from quantity to quality.** Curricula is organized in such manner that multiple assignments throughout a given unit provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate their development and/or acquisition of a specific standard. In this virtual era of learning, the expectation of quantity needs to be tempered. Educators should consider identifying the *key or signature assignments* of a unit and use them to determine the adequacy of standards being met. This also requires sufficient scaffolds are provided – video mini-lessons, virtual feedback sessions on mini-lesson videos, opportunities to submit drafts of signature assignments, etc.
- **Develop social emotional opportunities to connect.** Students are not only looking for academic guidance but also social emotional development. Educators should encourage virtual “get-togethers” that are similar to after-school clubs, such as virtual [kahoot](#) quiz games on topics familiar to the age group; collaborate on a virtual puzzle game or board game such as Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, Family Feud, etc.; and, develop biweekly videos that provide motivation for students. The goal is to provide opportunities for students to continue development of social emotional competencies with adults and other students.
  - **Resources for thinking about how to meet social emotional needs:**
    - **Hechinger Report:** <https://hechingerreport.org/helping-kids-who-are-feeling-isolated-and-anxious-after-schools-shut-down/>
    - **Child Trends:** <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- **Develop or tap into student leadership group to evaluate virtual experiences.** Students are at the heart of this virtual experiment and as much as educators have the best intentions with the tools they have it does not mean the virtual learning experience is landing equitably. Connect with student leadership groups and various groups of students to learn about the highs and lows of the virtual learning experience.
  - **Create an online survey with secondary age students, e.g., google survey, survey monkey, Qualtrics, etc.**
  - **Ask for feedback on a chat forum**

- **Identify staff who are good at being resource brokers.** During this unprecedented time, district and school leadership are continuously trying to pay attention to meeting the needs of their students but at times may miss some groups of students. Each school should have a set of educators that are connected with their students and have a good sense of resources throughout the community who are meeting weekly to discuss the dynamics they are hearing from students and community. This group of educators can serve as additional eyes and ears from school and district leadership in identifying the resources needed by students and their families.
- **Start planning for hybrid learning, now:** This moment in time is introducing educators to the potential of virtual learning, and for some students it's proving to be an opportunity to expand the repertoire of learning modalities. Educators should take this opportunity to imagine the possibility of blending learning as a new normal for teaching and learning.

**Resources:**

- Hybrid Learning @ Penn State - <https://sites.psu.edu/hybridlearning/what-is-hybrid/>
  - Cornell University - <https://teaching.cornell.edu/resource/getting-started-designing-blended-learning-course>
  - Edutopia - [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RfMIOjJgK026cwGdiU\\_NipflVdBrXqd7d5eltYS28nA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RfMIOjJgK026cwGdiU_NipflVdBrXqd7d5eltYS28nA/edit?usp=sharing)
  - Blended Learning Universe - <https://www.blendedlearning.org/what-blended-learning-is-and-isnt/>
- **Provide staff with professional learning on virtual learning tools:** Limited teacher preparation programs and education masters programs offer courses on instructional technology. Educators are needing continuous supports on understanding what types of tools are available and how do they match the tool with the learning and pedagogical goals.

**Resources:**

- <https://www.common sense.org/education/top-picks/best-tools-for-virtual-and-distance-learning>



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