



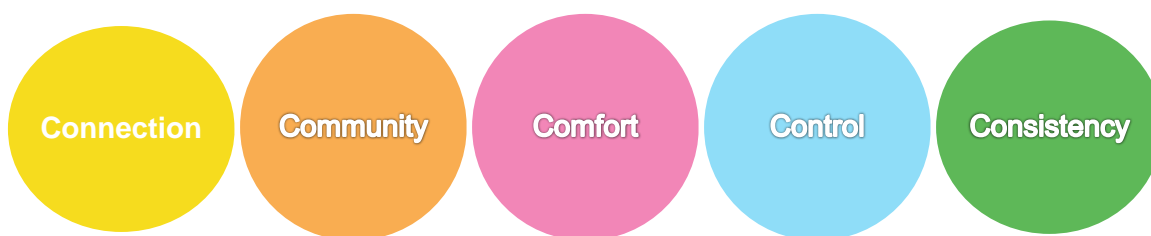
Maintaining Relationships with Students During Remote Learning

Relationships & social and emotional well-being continue to be the cornerstones for learning.

- Remote learning makes connecting with students feel more difficult, and relationships may feel harder to prioritize due to concerns about academic content and growth.
- Taking time to be thoughtful and intentional about maintaining student-teacher relationships will not only help students to engage in remote learning, but will also provide students with an important sense of normalcy, connection, and comfort during this difficult time.
- Encouraging students to share their feelings promotes key SEL competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.
- And the best way to help students develop SEL capacities is to help them *feel* seen, heard, and understood.
- Most importantly, letting your students know that you care about them, and are interested in whatever they want to share with you, whether it is their feelings or something else, will strengthen your relationships.

You also need and deserve support, always, and especially now.

- Right now, it may feel particularly difficult to consider relationships with students and their social and emotional well-being, as you are managing your own experiences related to the pandemic.
- It is important to [prioritize attending to your own well-being](#) and connect with your own sources of support.



Below are suggestions to help you maintain relationships and support the emotional well-being of students during remote learning. Some of the suggestions may not feel doable or relevant to you at this moment. Even identifying one or two ways that you can prioritize relationships during remote learning can have a big impact on your students. Many suggestions connect to one or more of the above 5 C's. It is always important for students to experience each of these C's, and it especially critical that they do during times of stress/crisis.

Teacher- Student Relationship Provides Connection & Continuity

- Find ways to check in with individual students/families as much as you can.
- Create opportunities for bi-directional exchange with students if possible.
- When addressing the class or individual students, let them know you miss being together.
- When you hear from students, express being excited or glad to hear from them.
- Even if students can't or don't respond, conveying that you are thinking about them can have a big impact.
- If students don't engage or express anger towards you, don't take it personally.

Peer Relationships Provide Community

- Incorporate or refer to previously created school/classroom values, rules, goals, rituals as best you can.
- Use language related to the school community, i.e. classroom names/school mascots.
- Find ways to share memories of the classroom and student relationships with one another.
- In communication to the whole class, shout out individual students, including everyone at some point.
- Create opportunities for students to connect with or just encourage them to think about one another.



Listening Provides Comfort & Connection

- Frequently ask students, “How are you doing?”
- Even when students can’t respond directly, asking this question can still help them feel seen and heard.
- Create opportunities for students to reflect on and express their feelings.
- Follow their lead; students will have varying abilities to talk about their feelings.
- If a student does not want to share their feelings, ask if there is anything else they would like to share.
- Tell them that you are glad they shared something about themselves with you.

Acknowledging Loss Provides Comfort & Supports Regulation

- Ask students what things/experiences/people they are missing right now.
- Ask if they have any questions about what is going on. If you have an answer, share it, but if you don’t it is okay to say that you don’t know- it is important not to promise something that you don’t know.
- You may feel inclined to try and help students feel better, problem solve, or push past their more negative feelings, but the most important thing you can do is listen.
- Name the feelings you hear, let them know that many students/people have similar feelings right now.
- You can provide brief guidance for coping strategies, referring to classroom lessons/strategies.
- While it is important to acknowledge the difficult reality you and your students are experiencing, it is also important to convey a sense of hope for the future.
- Give students the opportunity to think or talk about what they are looking forward to in the future.

Choice Provides a Sense of Control

- Offer options for the ways in which students/families can communicate with you.
- Whenever possible, create opportunities for students to choose what they are working on.
- Give students the opportunity to vote on an activity.
- If video conferencing, allow students to pick a background or choose not to use the video function.

Routines Provide a Sense of Consistency & Predictability

- Identify classroom routines/rituals that you might be able to continue remotely.
- Incorporate hellos and goodbyes each day, and when beginning and ending the week.
- Post lessons at the same time every day/week and have due dates at the same time every day/week.
- If making individual contact with families, try to identify a consistent time/day that you will reach out.

Realistic Expectations Provide Opportunities for Success

- Expectations for students and yourself will likely need to be adjusted.
- Share your expectations clearly, identifying where there is and is not flexibility.
- Acknowledge that everyone is adjusting and that you are all learning how to do this together.
- Let them know that this may feel hard, everyone will make mistakes, and everyone can keep on trying.
- Your expectations may vary, depending on learning needs and student access to/support with technology.
- Learn from each week- As time goes on, your expectations and goals may need to change.
- Share recognition and appreciation for whatever students may be doing- Praise efforts over outcomes.