

Virtual Teaching Academy
Session 5 Recap
Supporting and Communicating with Families When Learning Moves Home
Noon-1:30pm EDT
June 29, 2020

On behalf of the University of Phoenix, Blackboard and everyone associated with the Alliance for Virtual Learning, thank you for attending our inaugural Virtual Teaching Academy. Following each session, a high-level outline will be emailed to you.

For your convenience, important links can be found below. Additionally, please feel free to use the hashtag #VTA2020 across your social media platforms. Don't be shy about the fantastic work you're doing on behalf of your students!

*Please use the "Webinar link" provided below, to join each daily session.

Important links:

*Webinar link: https://applauncher.gotowebinar.com/#notStarted/280718920414727439/en_US

Link to presentations: <https://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

Link to VTA sessions: <http://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

General contact email: info@blackboard.com

Note: If you have chosen to add our Webinar sessions directly to your virtual calendar of choice, you will be notified to attend each daily session at the correct local time.

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Session Resource: changedirection.org

- Goals for the Session:
 - We hope you gain an understanding of the critical importance of the parent/teacher and parent/school relationship when learning moves home.
 - We hope you gain an understanding of the emotional impact the dramatic shift to learning from home had on teachers, students as well as parents.
 - We want you to become familiar with the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering and the Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-Being.
 - We hope you gain an understanding regarding the important role school leaders play in the parent/school relationship-building process.
 - We hope you gain an understanding regarding the importance of proactive, overt communication with families when learning moves home.
 - We hope you learn key and effective virtual counseling practices.
- Relevance of this Session:
 - According to a recent survey of approximately 1,000 K-12 educators, teachers are feeling overwhelmed, stressed and anxious during this time of change.
 - Seventy-seven percent are feeling increased stress since learning has moved home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 75% are feeling anxious
 - 74% are feeling overwhelmed
 - Thirty-nine percent of survey respondents believe that their students will be negatively affected by the sudden and current shift to virtual learning.
- The Five Signs of Emotional Suffering:
 - Personality change
 - Feeling agitated
 - Feeling withdrawn
 - Poor self-care
 - Warning sign: Someone may be suffering emotionally if he/she stops bathing/showering regularly because they feel the activity is pointless.
 - Feeling hopeless

- Knowing the signs of emotional suffering is important now more than ever because:
 - Fifty percent of the mental disorders diagnosed during an individual’s lifetime begin by age 14.
 - Between twenty and thirty percent of adolescents have one major depressive episode before they reach adulthood.
 - More than 14.5 million people in the United States have Major Depressive Disorder.
 - More than 44,900 people die by suicide annually in the United States.
 - The leading cause of death in the United States for people between 15 and 30-years-old is suicide.
 - This data illustrates perfectly why we have to pay attention to the emotional needs of our students.
 - An event like the COVID-19 pandemic can:
 - Intensify the “suffering” of people with existing mental health disorders.
 - Result in new cases of emotional suffering directly tied to the stress and anxiety people feel regarding COVID-19.
- How do we cope with increased levels of stress and anxiety?
 - Focus on the Healthy Habits of Emotional Well-Being:
 - Take care of yourself:
 - Eat well
 - Sleep
 - Exercise
 - Check-in with family and friends frequently.
 - Engage
 - You can’t be healthy emotionally if your relationships aren’t healthy.
 - Relax
 - Be active
 - Reconnect with a hobby or make time for a new one.
 - Know the signs of emotional suffering
- The majority of teachers aren’t mental health experts. However, knowing what to look for in terms of warning signs, the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering, could save a life.
 - Myth: Asking someone if they’re suicidal isn’t advisable because doing so will plant the seed of suicide. This is FALSE.
 - If you observe signs of emotional suffering in someone, ask that person how they’re feeling.
- Tips to proactively address the emotional well-being of students:
 - Consider establishing a Mental/Emotional Health Taskforce within your school or district so that, as educators, you have a defined plan in place to help students.
 - Making resources available for students online is critical.
 - Consider:
 - Implementing the use of a “virtual counseling” service
 - Provide parent/students with a concise list of free resources available to them.
 - Note: In terms of the current pandemic, lots of companies want to help. As a result, some parents may not know where to turn for help because they’re bombarded with information.
 - Teachers and administrators should communicate often with each other in an effort to make sure students don’t “fall through the cracks.”
 - Regular communication is even more important in a virtual environment.
 - If a student does need services, what is the protocol for making sure they get the help they require?
 - For many schools and districts, trained counselors are the first line of defense and a fantastic resource.

- Remember, in a virtual environment School Resource Officers cannot be sent to check on students. Hence, having a virtual plan in place to help students with mental and emotional challenges is paramount.
- Connecting with Parents:
 - Remember, this is all new to parents too.
 - They may be feeling overwhelmed with our new normal.
 - Communicate with parents frequently via phone or text.
 - Pro tip: Use a service like Google Voice so you're not divulging your personal contact information.
 - Be a supportive "coach" to parents.
- Remind parents that they don't need to have all of the answers.
 - As a teacher, let parents know you're here to help.
 - Teachers, set clear communication boundaries in terms of:
 - How you will communicate:
 - Phone
 - Text
 - Video chat
 - Email
 - When you will communicate (frequency and time of day):
 - Schedule regular check-in calls.
 - Note: Resist the temptation to overcommunicate with parents.
 - In terms of meeting parents virtually for the first time this fall, teachers should do their best to schedule a video call with them the first week of school.
 - This is even more important in the fall because teachers won't have previously built relationships to rely on like they did when things changed suddenly this past March.
- Closing Thought:
 - As a teacher, you can't take care of anyone unless you take care of yourself first!