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## HOW TEACHERS CAN TALK TO STUDENTS ABOUT COVID-19 AND ONLINE TEACHING

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**Abstract:** *As public conversations around coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) increase, children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting ill with COVID-19. Parents, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and minimizes anxiety or fear. The coronavirus has caused widespread school closures for an unknownduration. Teachers are scrambling to find ways to support students from a far trough distance and online teaching. Online/distance learning does not need to be expensive; there are many inexpensive or even free software solutions that can meet your needs. For example, Google’s G Suite (which you are likely already using) provides a reliable system for the exchange of student work at a distance. One can also use Google Classroom as an effective mechanism for managing a distance classroom—this platform allows you to assign, review, and grade student work using Google Docs. Similarly, Zoom us offers users a low cost but highly effective video conferencing solution with which it is possible to host a real-time distance classroom.*

**Keywords:** *coronavirus, COVID-19, health, online teaching, protection, school.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In December 2019 a new disease was identified in China. On investigation, the disease was caused by a new virus of the coronavirus family, and has since been officially named COVID-19. It is believed that COVID-19 originated in a meat and live-animal market in the city of Wuhan in the province of Hubei in the country of China. It subsequently spread to other countries and was officially pronounced a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020.

## **EXPOSITION**

As people around the world are taking precautions to protect themselves, their families and their communities from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) it’s also important that children can continue to learn, and that they can do so in an environment that is welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive to all. Schools and teachers play a vital role in this. Sharing accurate information and science-based facts about COVID-19 will help diminish students’ fears and anxieties around the disease and support their ability to cope with any secondary impacts in their lives. Here are some suggestions about how teachers can engage students of different ages (preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary) on preventing and controlling the spreadof COVID-19 and other viruses.

### ***Lower secondary school***

- Emphasize that children can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe. For example, introduce the concept of social distancing (standing further away from friends, avoiding large

crowds, not touching people if they don't need to, etc.). Also, focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.

- Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, you can put coloured water in a spray bottle and spray it on a piece of white paper, then observe how far the droplets travel.

- Have students analyse texts to identify high risk behaviours and suggest ways to change them. For example, a teacher comes to school with a cold. He sneezes and covers it with his hand. He shakes hands with a colleague. He wipes his hands afterwards with a handkerchief, then goes to class to teach. What did the teacher do that was risky? What should he have done instead?

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.

- Emphasize that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe. For example, introduce the concept of social distancing, and focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.

- Have students make their own Public Service Announcements through school announcements and poster.

### ***Upper secondary school***

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.

- Discuss the reactions they may experience around discrimination, and explain that these are normal reactions in emergency situations. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings, but also explain that fear and stigma make a difficult situation worse. Words matter, and using language that perpetuates existing stereotypes can drive people away from taking the actions they need to protect themselves.

- Have students make their own Public Service Announcements via social media, radio or even local TV broadcasting.

- Ask students, after discussing in groups, to write a short resume for their school newspaper/site about Queen Elizabeth's speech "We will meet again".

- Invite students for a project work on the topic "Comparative study of Coronavirus measures in Bulgaria and the UK."

- Ask students to create a blog/vlog about COVID-19 and share the latest pandemic news, such as Boris Johnson's speech on Skynews "Coronavirus: Boris Johnson return to work - a boost for the country". Explore other media as Foxnews, CNN, CNBC, Euronews. Bloomberg TV.

### **Simple tips for better online teaching**

The last month have seen increasing numbers of schools and universities across the world announce that they are moving to online-only learning. Hundreds of thousands of teachers are busy working to move their face-to-face lessons online. Designing online courses takes significant time and effort. Right now, however, we need a simpler formula. Here are quick tips to make online teaching better, from an expert in online learning.

#### **1. Show your face**

Research has shown that lecture videos that show instructors' faces are more effective than simple narrated slideshows. Intersperse your slides with video of yourself.

#### **2. Test out slides.**

Make sure you test slides on a smartphone before shooting your lectures so all text is readable on small screens. Font sizes, colours, template designs and screen ratios can be double-checked.

#### **3. Provide interactive activities**

Most learning management systems, such as Moodle, Edmodo and Blackboard, include a range of functions to create interactive learning activities such as quizzes. Step-by-step guides to creating them are widely available online. Use them.

#### **4. Set reasonable expectations**

When you create quizzes, you should make sure all questions can be answered by referring to the given learning resources. When you ask students to write a summary of lecture videos, you should make it clear that this is not a serious report. Making this as a mandatory assignment but a low-stakes task will produce the best outcomes and responses from students. A set of 15 quiz questions or a 300-word limit will be sufficient to engage students for 30 minutes.

#### **5. Use group communication carefully**

Group communication shouldn't be used for direct teaching. Instead, set up "virtual office hours" on a video conferencing tool like Zoom. Simply log in at the appointed time and wait for students. Focus on providing social support and checking if any issues need to be addressed immediately. This can be a great way to collect student feedback on your online teaching as well. Make meetings optional and be relaxed. No need to be frustrated when no one shows up: students are still happy to know that this option is available.

#### **6. Don't hide your feelings**

Online teachers' emotional openness is a great instructional strategy. Tell your students that it is your first time teaching online and you are learning while teaching. Explicitly ask them to help you, reassuring them that you will do your very best to support their learning as well. They will be sympathetic since they share the same emotions, and you will be set up for success.

#### **7. Repeat**

Online students do not like frequent changes in their learning style. They are happy to repeat the same structure and activities. Once you find a teaching style working for you, feel free to repeat it each week until you are back in your classroom.

### **CONCLUSION**

The protection of children and educational facilities is particularly important. Precautions are necessary to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 in school settings; however, care must also be taken to avoid stigmatizing students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus. It is important to remember that COVID-19 does not differentiate between borders, ethnicities, disability status, age or gender. Education settings should continue to be welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environments to all. Measures taken by schools can prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 by students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus, while minimizing disruption and protecting students and staff from discrimination. The purpose of the topic is teaching as well as informing students "How to survive in pandemic situation" and motivating them while raising their awareness to study. In this pandemic situation teachers need some quick and easily applicable methods for teaching their students. I think that these pedagogical tips are helpful for teachers to make online teaching accessible and successful.

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