

Care and Connection

Distance Learning Resources



Care, connection and relationship building are key to promoting and supporting the health and well-being of students and staff. There are many ways in which care and connection can be maintained in distance learning environments. This document provides a number of curated resources by developmental group to ensure ongoing care and connection in distance learning environments.

Some of the key ways to build care and connection include devoting time and space for interaction and relationship building. These can include:

- Holding regular, synchronous whole-group sessions focused on community building (e.g. virtual clubs and social activities).
- Offering synchronous small-group sessions to develop strong personal relationships (e.g. one-on-one check-ins, tutoring, small-group lessons).
- Providing informal and personalized ways for students to connect with staff through office hours or non-academic activities (e.g. lunch and learns, empathy interviews, classroom helper roles).
- Dedicating time and space for community building activities such as those adapted from [this article](#) by [middle school teacher Isabel Morales](#).

Additional Resources, Ideas, and Suggestions:

Suggestions for all ages (can be leveled appropriately):

- Individual teacher-student breakout conferences.
- Create student small groups to chat.
- Encourage use of reaction buttons/emojis when appropriate.
- Invite students to bring their pets on camera when appropriate.
- Create, share, and regularly revisit [community agreements](#).
- Frame challenges and struggles as positives when appropriate (e.g., “accelerated learning” rather than “learning loss,” positives rather than restrictions of distance learning) - more ideas at [Focusing on Learning Gains](#).
- Generate positive and predictable [routines and rhythms](#).
- Create surveys that invite students to share meaningful feedback ([view tips specific to equity surveys](#)).
- Share back-to-school encouragement cards
 - [For elementary students](#)
 - [For older students](#)

Care and Connection Distance Learning Resources



Activities by Developmental Group

Care and connection activities will vary depending on the age of students. The following are suggested activities by developmental group:

Elementary School Students:

- Assign buddies who can check in with each other.
- Teach students mindfulness skills such as body-scanning ([additional information from Child Mind Institute](#)).
- [25 Ways to Build an Online Classroom Community](#) (specifically designed for 1st and 2nd grade).
- Encourage students to introduce themselves and get to know others using [inclusive identity reflection activities](#).
- Invite students to participate in fun, [mind-body group activities](#).

Middle and High School Students:

- Ask students to change profile pictures to highlight hobbies, interests, moods, etc.
- Try these [Community Building Tips from Columbia](#).
- Also check out [Community Building Tips from Harvard](#).
- See suggestions regarding [6 Ways to Build Community in Online Classrooms](#).
- Make sure to create an [Inclusive Online Classroom](#).

For Staff:

Care and connection activities for staff that promote their health and well-being are also essential. Suggested activities may include:

- Offerings that prioritize staff wellness, especially at the beginning of the year ([more in this article](#)).
- Creating professional development opportunities that meaningfully utilize virtual engagement strategies such as breaks and breakout rooms ([more in this article](#)).

For additional support and resources, check out [OHA's Safe and Strong Campaign](#).