

# Creating a Community of Learning in the Zoom Classroom

Strategies for establishing a positive online learning environment

**Alysia Wright, BSW, MSW, Ph.D Candidate**

Educational Development Consultant  
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning,  
University of Calgary  
434 Collegiate Boulevard NW, Calgary  
AB T2N 1N4, Canada

**Haboun Bair, BEd, MEd**

*Learning and Instructional Design Specialist*  
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning,  
University of Calgary  
434 Collegiate Boulevard NW, Calgary  
AB T2N 1N4, Canada  
[haboun.bair@ucalgary.ca](mailto:haboun.bair@ucalgary.ca)



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

We would like to acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), as well as the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.



# Zoom Guidelines for Today

Welcome to this



Online session!

- Today's powerpoint will be shared after the session
- Additional information and hyperlinks will be shared through the chat

## By the end of the session you will be able to:

- **Identify** important characteristics to create community in your virtual classroom
- **Select** strategies that can be modified to cultivate active, engaged, and respectful learning in your Zoom teaching and learning context
- **Share** these strategies with colleagues in other educational settings

# How has the transition to predominantly online learning changed the way that you approach learner engagement?

(Feel free to use the chat box or unmute your mic to speak)



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

# Let's make this an informal, interactive session

- Unmute your mic to speak
- Raise your hand to let us know you want to speak
- Use chat to ask questions or share information

**What are some challenges you face or anticipate facing in your Zoom classroom?**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**



# What features of a face-to-face classroom are important for you to bring to an online classroom?

(Feel free to use the chat box or unmute your mic to speak)



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY



## Opportunity to establish community in the Zoom classroom

### Strategies:

- Establishing routines and clear expectations for how sessions will look
- Collaborating with students to create classroom rules and norms
- Telling students how you plan to be accountable to them
- Setting up expectations of how they will engage in class, too

# Common Challenges

1. Lack of participation
2. A chaotic classroom
3. Getting off track
4. Uneven participation and opportunities



# Common Challenges

**1. Lack of participation:** How do I get students to speak up when I ask a question or invite discussion?

- Think-pair-share using breakout rooms
- Think-chat-share using the chat feature
- Take the focus off the speaker
  - Share your whiteboard and annotate student comments there
- Ask everyone to respond simultaneously
  - A quick thumbs up or thumbs down
  - Use the polling option

# Common Challenges

## 2. A Chaotic Classroom: How do I ensure that students share the airtime?

### Strategies

Establish classroom rules and norms

- What do they want to get from the class?
- How do they want to be heard?
- What expectations do you have for communication?

Leverage Zoom settings

- Reactions
- Participation buttons (yes, no, faster, slower)
- Single speaker mode
- Hand raising
- Global muting

# Common Challenges

**3. Getting off track:** How do I prevent distractions and keep students focused during the class?

## Strategies

- Have a discussion about distractions at the start of term and add to your classroom norms:
  - Close programs on your device that are not relevant to today's class
  - Try to find a quiet space to attend class
  - Have note-taking tools ready
- Disable private chat

# Create Chat Guidelines

- *Ask questions that are relevant to the topic. Please hold other questions until the end of class (I will stay after class in the Zoom space to answer questions or check-in)*
- *Share information or resources that are relevant to the topic*
- *Let us know about any technical problems you may be having*
- *Keep comments brief and be aware of grammar and tone*
- *Avoid profanity, slang or disruptive comments*

# Common Challenges

## 4. Strategies for improving equitable participation and opportunities:

- Set up Zoom guidelines (microphones, hand-raising, video, recording of sessions, privacy, etc.)
- Recognize possible limitations for students, share your own, and be flexible
- Implement multiple and anonymous ways of participating
- Arrive early, greet students, pose a question for the **chat** as a bridge into the class (Lang, 2016), and stay after class when possible
- Be intentional about who you call on when hands are raised and let students know why (Tanner, 2013)
  - “Move up, Move up”
- Implement breakout rooms to create smaller, informal spaces for discussion (have students **unmute their mics**)

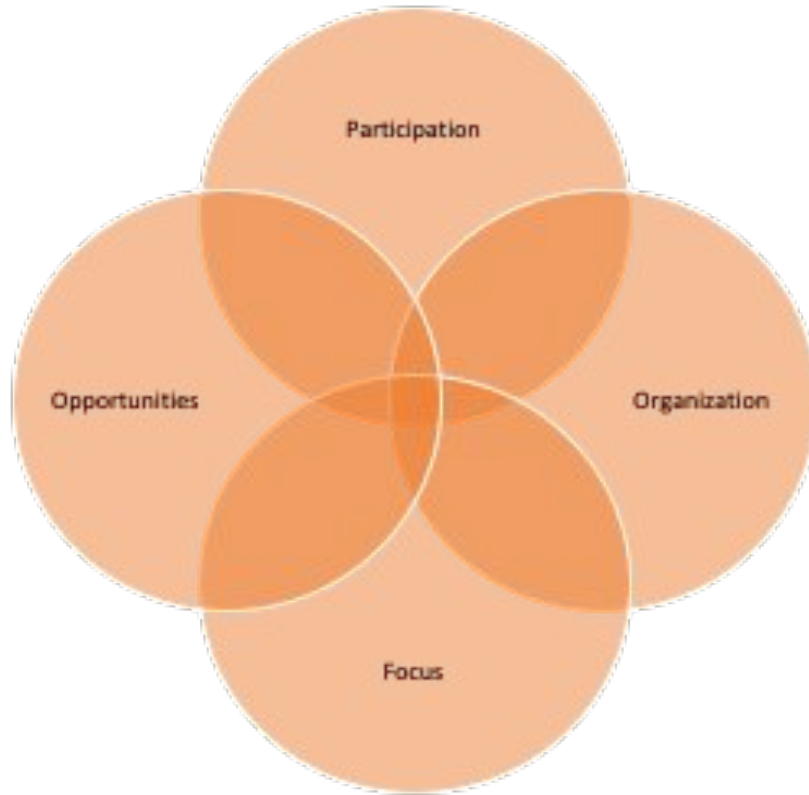


**What's one strategy from today's session that you can take-away to implement or adapt in your teaching context?**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

# Revisiting Creating Community



**Based on your experience and the content presented here, what are two considerations educators should keep in mind when designing their Zoom classroom?**



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

# Q & A

## Our Contact Information:

Emails:

Alysia Wright - [acwright@ucalgary.ca](mailto:acwright@ucalgary.ca)

Haboun Bair - [haboun.bair@ucalgary.ca](mailto:haboun.bair@ucalgary.ca)

*Thank you so much and be well!*

# Resources and references



Hogan, K.A. & Sathy, V. (April 8, 2020). 8 ways to be more inclusive in your Zoom teaching. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/8-Ways-to-Be-More-Inclusive-in/248460/>

Lang, J.M. (2016). *Small teaching: Everyday lessons from the science of learning*. San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass

MIT (n.d.). Teach remote: Promoting equity and inclusion. Retrieved from <http://teachremote.mit.edu/promoting-equity-inclusion>

MIT Information Systems and Technology Knowledge Base (April 8, 2020). Limiting access and reducing disruptive behavior in Zoom. Retrieved from <http://kb.mit.edu/confluence/x/JIaqCQ>

Tanner, K.D. (2013). Structure matters: Twenty-one teaching strategies to promote student engagement and cultivate classroom equity. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, 12(Fall), 322-331.

UC San Diego Teaching and Learning Commons (n.d.). Getting started with active learning guide for remote classrooms. Retrieved from [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JKu--MewLV47pA1iRGJUUIHEOlV\\_Ebj\\_A6I-EFlvMPKs/preview](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JKu--MewLV47pA1iRGJUUIHEOlV_Ebj_A6I-EFlvMPKs/preview)

University of Calgary (n.d.). Guidelines for Zoom. Retrieved from <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/zoom-guidelines/>

University of North Carolina (n.d.) A students guide to Zoom. Retrieved from <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1x2H1bIKddyIpON57ML2zU-SOVqwMWsN484eRMzhGiu0/edit>