

5 TIPS FOR KEEPING STUDENTS FOCUSED AND ENGAGED WHEN LEARNING REMOTELY

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Students' focus and attention were already in issue in most schools before COVID-19, but with online classes, now becoming the norm for the majority in the UAE, this is only being exacerbated. Al Kingsley looks at five ways that schools can help teachers maintain student focus and engagement while delivering remote learning.

Continuity

To support successful classrooms in your school, don't underestimate the importance of continuity for both students and teachers. Choosing a platform that allows them to switch seamlessly between in-school and remote learning, does not only help to minimize disruption for students (and reduce the negative impact on learning outcomes), but also supports teachers' wellbeing, by removing the extra stress involved in having to learn how to use and switch between multiple applications.

Monitor and control

Equip teachers with tools that allow them to control activity online and eliminate distractions. Key features to look out for include; internet metering, the ability to lock certain apps completely (or certain web pages), and to be able to monitor students' screens. By selecting EdTech platforms that allow accessible monitoring, teachers will find it much easier to ensure their students remain on task throughout lessons. But don't forget, the platform must also have a range of tools allowing teachers to deliver engaging content, from chat and discussion to surveys and more.

Interaction

Interaction is at the heart of learning, so it should be a priority when it comes to remote teaching. Without the tools for effective interaction, lessons delivered via technology risk becoming a passive experience for students. Doing something as simple as acknowledging someone's presence in a live chat and engaging them, there, can be a great start – while group chats ensure that students can work collaboratively, even if they are physically distanced.

Communication has to be a two-way street, and so it's also important that students can communicate directly with the teacher and resolve queries quickly through features like help requests. Additionally, student surveys and feedback forms, provide the opportunity for teachers to determine which areas students may be struggling with and what virtual learning techniques they are gaining the most from.

Gamified assessment

In reality, the issue with engagement and online classes is not really about the format as such, but how it is used. Some schools have incorporated aspects of gaming into their teaching – and online courses are the perfect medium for this approach. For example, quizzes can be given, and points can be awarded after passing a test on a particular module. Badges can be given for certain accomplishments and displayed on a

leaderboard. All of this could help trigger students' competitive instincts and keep them all the more engaged.

Accessibility

At the end of the day, there can't be any engagement if schoolwork is not available to your students. This is why accessibility should be a priority. Making sure that content is easily reachable during and after classes, and that students have a reference area they can consult, in case they have issues, will give them the best possible chance to engage with their learning.

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