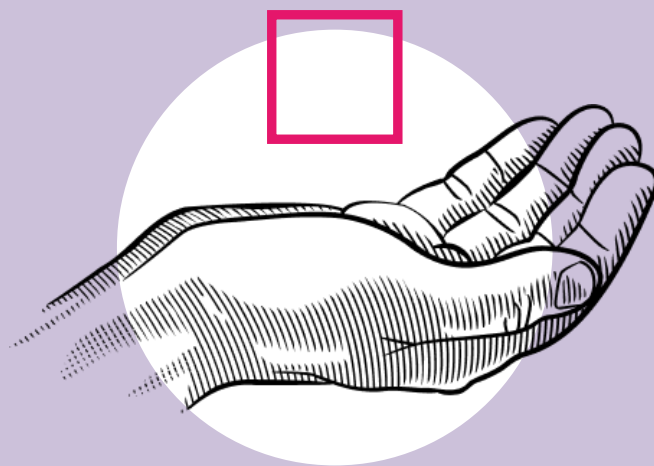
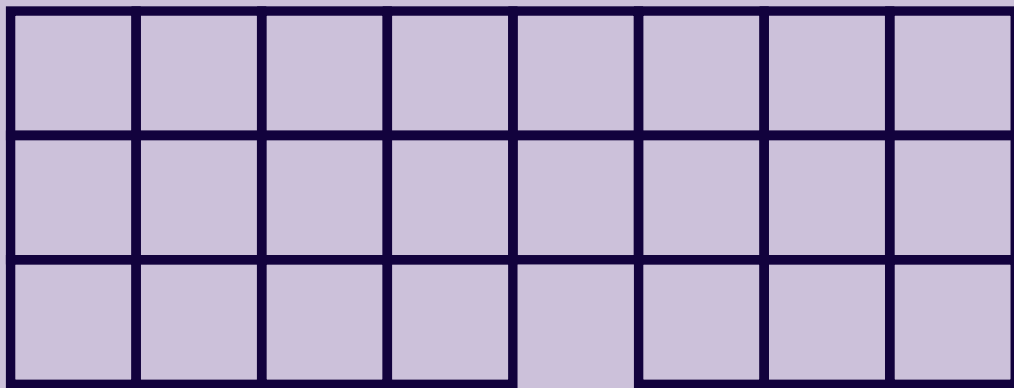




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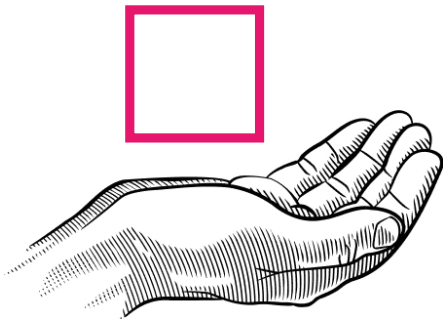
# Post-Pandemic Pedagogy:

20+ Tips from Six Innovative Educators



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Best practices from the online classroom that will motivate  
and engage students in your 2021 courses



In-person learning is expected to make a celebrated return to higher ed campuses next term. While excitement abounds, much will fall on educators to ensure every student can navigate the return to—and in many cases, first experience with—face-to-face learning at the higher ed level.

This is no easy task, but instructors have at their disposal the freshly-minted best practices for engaging their students and creating a learning community through technology that worked in the online classroom. These tactics can now be leveraged to create better in-person learning experiences than ever before.

Here, six innovative professors share forward-thinking, easy-to-implement strategies from pandemic teaching that will make learning in the next normal a familiar and welcoming experience for students.

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**WHO**

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**WHERE**

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**CLASS**

English

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[19 Student Engagement  
Strategies to Start with in  
Your Course](#)

[How to Spark Great In-Class  
Discussions: 6 Ideas That  
Work](#)

[Free Guide: Reaching Today's  
Distracted Students](#)

**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Get Creative to Minimize Distractions**

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**WHAT IS IT**

Distractions are the things that get in the way of pursuing and achieving goals. Technology makes it easy to go down these neverending rabbit holes. The longer you try to pay attention to something, the more challenging it becomes. That's because our attention fatigues over time, but change renews our attention.

Technology intensifies the problem of distraction in the classroom, but it's not really the source of the problem. The source of the problem is the human brain. Our brains are always looking for novelty. The middle ground is the place to be. If you say, "I've got to focus for three hours and do this without a break," that doesn't work. It also doesn't work to be changing every five minutes. You've got to find a happy medium.

**“What we need to think about is how we structure the class in a way that sustains someone's attention through an extended period of time.”**

**WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT**

Today's technology is really good at taking advantage of our attention fatigue and giving us quick little bursts of satisfaction. As teachers, we can do a lot more to create learning environments that cultivate attention—and reward and support attention.

The way instructors teach is often at odds with how students learn. We take for granted that students should pay attention. Instead, what we need to think about is how we structure the class in a way that sustains someone's attention through an extended period of time. We need to think like playwrights. They have acts and scenes, there's an intermission, the action rises and falls. You also have to think like a poet in terms of "what's going to reawaken the attention of my students?"

## HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

**Help students be more attentive to one another:** If I pay attention to you, you're more likely to pay attention to me. Cultivate a sense of belonging from the beginning of your class to help your students engage in collaborative, attentive dialog.

**Be deliberate in choosing learning exercises:** Alternate lecturing with something that will give students a break and let them engage in a task (like turning to a neighbor in a face-to-face class, or via the live chat feature if learning is happening online, to share one new thing they have learned thus far). Afterwards, we can come back to another exercise or topic that might be more cognitively challenging.

**Intersperse 'signature attention activities' throughout class time:** In my class, signature attention activities are the exercises and units planned throughout the semester. Forty-five minutes into your lecture, what are you going to do to get people reawakened for the last half hour? These are the moments that are going to re-energize the class.

**Set goals with your students:** If you have a strong commitment to a goal, you're probably more likely to stay focused on it. In a classroom setting, you want to make the goal clear to students—or you want to give them the opportunity to form their own goals.

**Use the first five minutes of class to cultivate attention:** Often, students come to class trailing with all the distractions of their lives. An opening activity is a great way to transition students from the world outside to 'now we're here and this is where our attention is going to be.' I use five- to ten-minute writing exercises for this or even polls. It's not so much about doing a deep dive on content during the opening moments, it's more about getting students in the mode of class.



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**WHERE**

Western University of Health  
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**CLASS**

Optics and Contact Lenses

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[21 Team-Building Activities  
for Students](#)

[10 Essential Icebreaker  
Activities for Any Online  
Course](#)

[Active Learning Exercises for  
Multiple Teaching Modalities](#)

[Customer Story: Simplifying  
the Switch to Online Teaching  
with Interactive Content and  
Courseware](#)

**LESSONS LEARNED**

## Connect with Students Through Interactive Activities

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**WHAT IS IT**

During the pandemic, I wanted to make sure my students stayed engaged—and that meant keeping learning interactive. I designed a series of activities purpose-built with flexibility in mind, which helped meet students on their level. These activities were created to provide me with essential insights into student progress. Regardless of what modality you may be teaching in, I know activities like these will come in handy this fall.

**"Lecturing works, but it needs to be carefully facilitated with opportunities for student engagement."**

**WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT**

College students, particularly incoming freshmen, may be ill-prepared for the rigor of primarily in-person college classes. That makes interactive learning all the more important.

Infusing a human element into your course through frequent interactive activities and opportunities for building connections can help sustain community, collaboration and engagement, wherever learning takes place.

Student participation is integral to building an engaged classroom community. In hybrid or blended learning courses, it's important to build in opportunities for students to stay engaged with their learning before, during, and after class.

## HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

**Pre-lecture assessments:** Pre-lecture assessments can spike student interest, while polls interspersed throughout the lecture allow students to apply their understanding of course content.

**Interactive homework:** Encourage students to continue learning after class with interactive homework assignments complemented by in-class discussions, polls and activities—and use the generated insights to offer help to those who might need it.

**Peer-peer learning:** Consider how you can use technology to provide opportunities for students to learn from and interact with one another in small groups, keeping diverse learning styles in mind. Instructors and TAs can act as a support system by being available through accessible virtual channels.

**Weekly quizzes:** Frequent low-stakes assessments provide valuable insight into student progress. Understanding where students may be struggling helps instructors tailor lecture content to address areas where learners need further clarification.



**WHO**

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Northern Arizona University,  
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**CLASS**

Psychological Sciences

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[How These 8 Educators  
Maintain Flexibility in Their  
Online Classes](#)

[16 Strategies to Make Online  
Teaching More Inclusive](#)

[Free Resource: Customizable  
Syllabus Template](#)

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Build Flexibility Into Your Course Design

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**WHAT IS IT**

Flexible teaching provides instructors with different ways to engage their students. We incorporate contingencies and alternatives that respond to, and acknowledge, student challenges. Flexibility allows us to change teaching approaches at any point—for example, going from a hybrid model with in-person instruction to an entirely synchronous approach.

**“When we’re clear on the objective, it makes it easier to identify the right technology.”**

**WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT**

Flexible course design ties into my priorities and trade-offs as an instructor. It forces me to step back and understand that I can’t do everything, and it allows me to hone in on the most critical and essential stuff.

I design my course according to a goal as opposed to a tool. Is my goal to get students talking to each other? Is it to develop a particular thinking skill? When we’re clear on the objective, it makes it easier to identify the right technology. And a flexible approach allows me to do that when I need to.

From a cognitive science perspective, we retain knowledge better when it maps onto immediate goals. That’s the way your mind and brain are set up to take in information. So when students understand what they’re trying to accomplish in class and how it fits into their goals, they can soak up information like a sponge.

### HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

**Host small-stakes assignments:** Swap the one, big killer assignment for small-stakes assignments that recur every single week. Students have larger capstone assignments and projects, but we work up to that. This structure also includes alternatives, so if a student can't make one of my synchronous meetings, similar concepts can be explored in an asynchronous discussion forum.

**Use an online scheduler system when running office hours:** I've incorporated an outside application that allows me to message students in a class and allows them to message each other. I ditched traditional office hours in favor of an online scheduler system to meet students' needs in a more immediate way. This is my way of being 'radically available.'

**Implement an optional camera policy for synchronous online classes:** My policy is that having your webcam on is appreciated but not required. I try to take an inclusive-first approach to camera use. I say, "However you can join us is how you can join us." Accept that some of your students may not have all eyes on you at all times in all of your synchronous meetings, and that's okay.





**WHO**

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**WHERE**

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**CLASS**

College Algebra

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[How Technology In The Classroom Can Impact Student Learning](#)

[Strategies to Make Online Teaching and Learning Stick](#)

[8 Essential Active Learning Strategies for Your Next Class—In Any Modality](#)

[Customer Story: Using Ed Tech to Find the ‘Aha!’ Moment](#)

**TOP HAT**

**LESSONS LEARNED**

## **Inject Learning Science Into Your Teaching**

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**WHAT IS IT**

For genuine learning to take place, it must be effortful. The goal of learning science tactics is to lead students to deeper and more long-term learning. These strategies overcome the illusion of competence that can occur when students are familiar with course concepts.

**"The key is building activities—grounded in learning science—on a foundation of actionable learning objectives."**

**WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT**

In my experience, the key to successful learning is recognizing that durable, long-lasting and serviceable knowledge is acquired when there is increased cognitive effort. However, that’s not always easy to achieve. The key is building activities—grounded in learning science—on a foundation of actionable learning objectives.

Why is this important? The reality is, if there is a shortcut available, most students will take it. They’ll skip readings or skim them in order to complete the homework questions. And while this might be enough to achieve a passing grade on an assignment, many of these same students would end up failing a high-stakes assessment.

I’ve come to realize that even small changes can have a significant impact. The tenets of learning science have transformed the way I engage students and maximize outcomes throughout the learning process.

### HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

I've made a few small tweaks that changed the way I conduct my courses and the way students interact with the material. These worked well for me while teaching online during COVID and they're just as appropriate in a face-to-face classroom.

**Elaboration** is the process of summarizing concepts and connecting these concepts to prior knowledge. I end each section with a discussion question through platforms like [Edstem](#) to give students time and space to answer some leading questions about the concepts and how they build on prior material.

**Retrieval practice** is the act of recalling facts from memory. I implement this practice by incorporating quick checks throughout the assigned readings by answering a simple question about that concept.

**Interleaving** is the process of mixing up your assignments with similar but related topics. Rather than 'block' practice where students work on the same type of problem in the same way, I intersperse a related type of problem that requires students to retrieve information from their brains.

**Generation** is the process of thinking and struggling with a concept prior to being formally introduced to it. I start each section with a real-world problem. Using a discussion platform like [Harmonize](#), students have to think about that problem and how they could solve it.

**Spaced practice** is the process of returning to a topic periodically over time. I employ this tactic by adding questions on each homework assignment that students missed from earlier chapters that are essential to the course.



#### WHO

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#### WHERE

Kansas State University,  
Manhattan, KS

#### CLASS

Human Development

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[You Need Weekly Feedback  
From Your Students.  
Here's How](#)

[Why Student Insight Is  
Essential In The Virtual  
Classroom](#)

[Free Guide: How to Teach  
With Insights](#)

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **Harness the Power of Small Data**

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#### **WHAT IS IT**

Small data gives me frequent, regular insights on where my students are excelling and where they're struggling. These insights are generated from in-class polls and discussions, the textbook that I use and the custom assessments I facilitate. This data-rich strategy lets me see how my students are performing before, during and after class—not just in lectures.

**“I make sure that my students engage with the material at least three times per week—it really helps them with their learning and with their retention of the material.”**

#### **WHY SHOULD YOU DO IT**

Small data provides me with instant feedback on student comprehension. By facilitating pre-lecture assignments, students are given the chance to gauge their understanding of key concepts before class. I then use this feedback from my students to help inform the pace and breadth of my course delivery. For example, I can take a look at their performance on pre-lecture assignments and decide what I need to reinforce during lectures.

After class, homework assignments enable students to explore topics in depth and apply what they've learned in class. I make sure that my students engage with the material at least three times per week—it really helps them with their learning and with their retention of the material.

## HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

**Use pre-lecture assignments to gauge understanding:** These assignments make sure students are engaging with the material to the fullest that week. The assignment is always due the night before the lecture so that I can take a look at student performance and figure out what I need to reinforce during class.

**Adopt a digital textbook to track comprehension and completion:** Authoring my own digital interactive textbook helps me reduce course costs for students, but it also engages learners through readings and homework outside of class. The questions embedded within my textbook give me a sense of who will come to class prepared and ready to have meaningful discussions.

**Host live polls and discussions during class:** I'm able to use pre-lecture insights and re-ask questions to see if students now understand a particular concept. These embedded questions during my lectures also help students stay alert and engaged.

**Rethink high-stakes summative assignments:** Prior to a large high-stakes assessment, my students simply weren't engaged. I found this to be quite counterproductive to learning. As a result, I removed all high-stakes exams and assignments. Students now earn their points by engaging with the material week in and week out—which not only reduces their anxiety but also gives me frequent data that I can use to shore up learning gaps early and often.

**Ask students what assignments they want in your course:** To help students stay energized in your course, don't be afraid to ask them what they want: How do they learn best? What assignments promote their learning? Asking these questions often helps students learn by doing, and in a way that's appealing to them. Plus, a variety of assignment types—essays, polls, podcasts, infographics—gives me a wider range of data (both qualitative and quantitative) on their progress.



**WHO**

**Josh Eyer**

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University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

**CLASS**

Writing and Rhetoric

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[Pedagogy: What Educators Need to Know](#)

[Customer Story: How Flipping the Classroom with Top Hat Gave This Prof the Tools for Synchronous and Asynchronous Online Learning](#)

[Curriculum Development and The 3 Models](#)

**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Embrace Resilient Pedagogy**

**WHAT IS IT**

Resilient pedagogy is a course design strategy that helps make your classes, assignments and assessments as resistant to disruption as possible.

The way to think about this is, regardless of which modality you're teaching in—online, in person, or blended—you're designing your course one time and one time only.

**“With the resilient pedagogy model, you’re designing once. The heavy lifting is on the front end and if things change, you’re already set up.”**

**WHY YOU SHOULD DO IT**

A lot is being asked of faculty in preparing for whatever approach their campus is taking. With the resilient pedagogy model, you're designing once. The heavy lifting is on the front end and if things change, you're already set up.

There is some reconceptualization required as you consider what will work for students, no matter where they are. And yes, the initial design phase is a little more intensive. But it ultimately minimizes the different types of design you're doing.

With resilient pedagogy, we're focusing our efforts on identifying the activities and interactions that support meaningful learning and finding ways to make these work regardless of where learning takes place. So we are laser-focused on student engagement from the very beginning.

### HOW TO DO IT POST-PANDEMIC

Let's say I'm teaching a hybrid course and all my students are doing the one activity I designed. I may ask discussion questions in class, but I'd ask those same discussion questions again if I'm teaching synchronously on Zoom, and I'd ask those same questions but in a different environment if I'm using asynchronous methods. That way, no matter what happens on campus or to my classes, I have designed my course so it's a much easier shift.

**Assessment styles:** Consider having shorter, more frequent assignments or evaluations to minimize any test anxiety that students may be feeling. Weekly quizzes or end-of-chapter tests are lower-stakes alternatives to final exams or papers.

**Build in opportunities for collaboration:** Assign collaborative assignments and offer students tools that allow them to meet their learning goals regardless of which environment they are in.

**Establish a rapport asynchronously:** Using online asynchronous tools ensures that students can connect with one another and with their instructors—wherever learning takes place. Use online discussion tools to extend learning outside the classroom.

## **EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO TEACH YOUR COURSE**

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Use Top Hat to increase engagement and keep students motivated and connected

### **One platform, one less thing to manage**

Take attendance, present slides, host discussions, give homework, assign interactive readings and run tests—all in one place. (Phew!)

### **Crank engagement up to 11**

Make learning active with live discussions, polls and quizzes students can respond to on any device. Videos, GIFs and 3D images can easily be added to your course materials, so you'll always have plenty of tricks up your sleeve.

### **Assess your class early and often**

Let instant feedback from polls, quizzes and assignments guide your teaching. Save time with question packs and auto-grading, and run secure in-class tests or remote proctored exams. Plus, get insights to support class and individual progress. Reaching out to struggling students is only a click away.

[Learn more](#) about the capabilities of the Top Hat platform.

[Click here](#) to get a personalized demonstration of Top Hat.

**We empower educators to engage students  
and unleash their potential.**



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