



CAMERA ON/CAMERA OFF?

@FIRSTGENLATINXEDUCATOR

**Implications behind our attempt
to replicate a traditional classroom
model into a virtual space**



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

- Asking students how they feel about showing their faces, homes, etc.? This can be done through a poll, google form survey, or a journal response.
- Asking yourself, “Am I prioritizing building rapport with my students first?” If so, which activities am I using to build community with my students at the beginning of the school year?
- Reflect: Where does my demand for students to turn on their cameras, come from? Does it stem from asserting power over my students? Am I projecting one of my own insecurities (i.e. talking to a screen of black boxes)? What message will I convey if I mandate this rule for my students before getting to know them (or students getting to know each other)? Is this my intended message?

REMEMBER

- We are guests, and because of this, we must prioritize building rapport before receiving an invitation to be in their home (in the virtual sense).
- Students' homes can reveal information that students do not want to share with others and we need to respect that. Students may not want to reveal who they live with, who is in their home, or something as small as having an array of distractions.
- Students have a right to uphold the image they want to share with the world, and in turning on their cameras, information about their home life, can conflict with their own self-perception.
- Information about a student's home life, may bring about unintended consequences such as classmates creating an unwanted social hierarchy (i.e. students associating the type of furniture in classmate's home as an indicator of class/income).

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES/TIPS TO BUILD A SAFE VIRTUAL SPACE

- Create an activity where you work on choosing virtual backgrounds together. You can ask students to create a class theme by choosing a favorite game character, or even choose a content-specific theme (favorite novel for ELA).
- Allot time for students to upload a desired image of themselves instead.
- Discuss with your students what participation looked like in the classroom and how they wish to see it virtually.
- Share your own vulnerabilities! Maybe you had a bad hair day, or maybe you're insecure about a recent breakout on your face, or maybe open up about feeling insecure when seeing a sea of black squares!
- Create opportunities for students to participate through a variety of modalities (audio, pictures, chat responses, etc.).

REFRAME YOUR APPROACH

- Instead of focusing on “camera on/off,” focus on creating a safe and welcoming virtual environment for your students first.
- Encourage students to turn on their cameras, while also assuring them that turning it off on “bad” days or personal reasons (something in your lesson was triggering, they need to use the restroom, they need to eat or drink water), is okay too.
- Hold discussions about power imbalances and how power can be redistributed when more students participate and get to see the person speaking.
- Consider creating ways to greet students as they “enter” your virtual class as a way of acknowledging and honoring their presence.

LASTLY

We are living through a global pandemic and an ongoing fight towards racial justice. Our greatest concern should always be the health and safety of our students as a student's life can completely change overnight. Building community is essential now more than ever.

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