NDEO's Zoom Session with OPDI Professors
March 24, 2020
Patricia Cohen, Speaker

There are three central concepts that drive my online, and in fact, all my teaching.

In this new environment, we all must now teach remotely. The learning curve is steep, but quick. While the OPDI's Sakai platform has become comfortably familiar for asynchronous teaching and learning, I hadn't used ZOOM prior to our current crisis. Zoom allows us to be present in the moment, but we're connected to our students via tiny individual screens on our desktop monitors.

As I prepared to teach my NYU courses online, one "Aha" moment was the realization that the 3 central concepts I'll offer here have always existed in my approach to teaching. I now think that virtual teaching & learning simply magnifies them.

COMMUNITY –
We are a virtual community, dance educators who have gathered for a shared purpose. In the OPDI, individual goals may include
- obtaining new information,
- validating (or modifying) current practices,
- sharing ideas and resources,
- developing collegial relationships and
- communicating with like-minded dancers and teachers, who are proactive and self-motivated

Strategies I use for establishing community online (*asynchronous teaching: OPDI*)
- Introduce myself with a very short bio and my interests (first module of every course)
- Read and comment on participants' bios – shared or unique experiences and interests
- Encourage participants to share their own expertise and like experiences with their peers, and to extend the dialogue beyond the course, if they are interested
- Communicate frequently to individuals and/or the group, both before and after a session/lesson

Strategies I use for establishing community online (*synchronous teaching: NYU*)
Some additions to the above strategies:
- Start each session by taking a deep collective breath
- Invite participants to use the Chat function in Zoom
- Use the students' technological expertise to benefit everyone. Thank them.
- Invite students to share information that is relevant to the lesson
- Ask for comments and questions – allow time for students to think
- Allow others to speak fully without interruption
- Use break out rooms to encourage student interactions in small groups
- Invite others in the students' homes to participate in activities

COMPASSION –
Take into consideration that this is new, and that we all "have lives" beyond the course, per se, e.g., work, family, extenuating circumstances.
Strategies I use to develop compassion
- Laugh a lot!
- Acknowledge a crying baby or other interruption with a greeting and/or smile
- Allow yourself to be nervous – this is new territory
- Develop alternative plans for students who don't have access to technology or connectivity, e.g., record your session
- Extend deadlines when, if and as appropriate
- Modify grading procedures, as needed and if possible
- Acknowledge that students often have expertise that we do not, especially with technology. Accept it with gratitude.

TOLERANCE –
Allowing leeway vs confronting chaos can be a fine line
Strategies I use to manifest tolerance
- Prioritize sharing in a safe, non-judgmental space – the rules may need to be modified
- Build trust between teacher & students; among students – "yes, and"
- Accept that we all make errors and can learn from our mistakes
- Rethink – revise – resubmit without penalty (written or performative work)
- Applaud appropriate risk-taking as a learning tool
- Adapt lessons, and be willing to improvise