MCPS Athletics
Virtual Engagement Best Practices

We CAN, We Will, We R.A.I.S.E Checklist for Virtual Engagement
☑ Let student-athletes decide whether to turn on or keep on, their video.
☑ Teach students to setup their <u>Zoom profile picture</u> as a bitmoji, school photo, or a favorite selfie. When the video is off, the students' profile picture will show up, giving you a virtual audience to talk to.
☑ Ask student-athletes questions to provide an inclusive experience during engagement sessions.
☑ Allow student-athletes to respond via audio, chat box, polls or nonverbal reactions (thumbs up).
☑ Utilize a variety of digital tools to engage student-athletes in providing feedback (Google Forms, Kahoot, etc)

Why We R.A.I.S.E.

➤ **Privacy** – Student-athletes might be uncomfortable displaying their living space to their peers.

➤ **Safety** – Student-athletes (and their family members) may not want their image captured, recorded, or shared. Students-athletes could be cyberbullied if another student-athletes takes a screenshot of their video.

➤ **Equity** – Students-athletes might have unreliable Internet access, low bandwidth, devices without video capabilities, or limited access to a device.

➤ **Personal** – Student-athletes might feel shy or anxious to be on camera.

12 THINGS EQUITY-FOCUSED TEACHERS CAN SAY TO STUDENTS AS YOU RETURN TO SCHOOL

As school returns, we know this year presents unique challenges and changes to both educators and students. With such change, it may be especially difficult to communicate with students. While your intentions may be good, sometimes the impact of what we say can have unintended consequences. Consider some of these alternatives to have the impact you wish to have to start the year on a strong note.

AVOID SAYING | HERE'S WHY | INSTEAD, SAY:

AVOID SAYING:
"Now class, everyone please turn on your video."
-Or-
"[Insert student name], why don't you have on your video?"

HERE'S WHY:
Not every student is in a position where they can afford to turn on their video. Shift your focus away from pointing out which students are not on video or making video mandatory, to instead focus on making space for each student to navigate the complexities of this moment with creativity and support.

INSTEAD, SAY:
"Good morning, everyone! If you are able to, join the class by video. If not, feel free to participate in the lesson by chat or use the reactions button to give a thumbs up. You can also unmute yourself when you would like to share."

Or have the class all create cool virtual backgrounds together perhaps around a class theme

Or have students share about how they feel about having their cameras on in a survey or journal response

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AVOID SAYING:
"With everything happening in the world, the riots and looting - I just want to check-in on everyone. Did anyone have their homes damaged?"

HERE'S WHY:
While there were agent provocateurs amongst the crowds at BLM protests nationwide, demonstrations were primarily composed of peaceful protesters. Avoid using language that puts emphasis on destruction and property damage. The conversation should focus on people, not property.

INSTEAD, SAY:
"This year there have been many Black Lives Matter protests across the world. I know this has impacted everyone in different ways. So I just want to check-in and see how you are doing. If you don't wish to talk about it, that's ok as well. Either way, I'm here."


AVOID SAYING:
"Good to see that you're all alive and well"

HERE'S WHY:
For those impacted by the virus, racial injustice, or other traumas not as readily visible, they may feel a need to "perform wellness" to meet this standard. Also, considering the profound loss of life this year, statements that put such emphasis on living and health may be triggering for students.

INSTEAD, SAY:
"Welcome everyone! I am excited to learn from and with each of you this year."

AVOID SAYING:
"I know that learning this way is not ideal. I'm not that worried about the virus, but this is what we have to do for now."
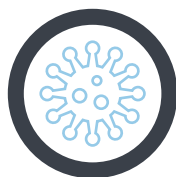
HERE'S WHY:
For those that have lost family members, friends, and acquaintances to COVID-19, any comment that diminishes the impact of the virus can be hurtful. Focus more on finding ways to shift everyone's thinking around distance learning toward excitement.

INSTEAD, SAY:
"I know that there are many changes to how we are learning for now, but I'm excited to try some new things with you all this year!"

Consider trying an activity that is enhanced by -or- only possible through virtual platforms like zoom or google hangouts.

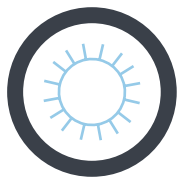| AVOID SAYING	HERE'S WHY	INSTEAD, SAY:
"Since you're all stuck at home, I know you have plenty of time to complete this assignment."	Every student's situation is different. Consider the kinds of familial, financial, and communal responsibilities a student may have that you are not aware of at this moment. Just because students are not being schooled in the same way does not mean that they are lacking in other responsibilities or demands on their time.	"Please submit your work by [insert due date]. If you think you will have some trouble submitting it on time, reach out to me and let me know."
"I've done all that I can, (blank) hasn't responded to any of my messages."	It is possible that a number of changes may have occurred over recent months. Explore community connections and alternate modes of communication to build bridges with students.	"Our team has the ability and the connections to get in contact with every student."
"They're all tech savvy/digital natives so this should be easy for them."	While we are in a digital age, it is important to recognize that not all students have access to all kinds of devices, and their familiarity to certain platforms will vary. Tailor your approach to account for diversity of experience.	"Students are at different places in their learning around digital tools."
"How was your summer?"	The summer has meant profound loss, trauma, and suffering for many. Rather than focus on resurfacing those feelings and experiences, instead focus on prompting excitement and hope for the new school year.	"What would make these first two weeks feel like a success for you?"
"I know last Spring was a terrible time for all of us."	Though the pandemic has brought about profound change and inequity, there have been some benefits for students (e.g. independent learning, personalized support). It's important to know what those benefits are to optimize them in the new school year.	"What worked for you last spring, if anything? What is something your teacher did last year to support you?"
"I'm giving you plenty of time to do this, no excuses."	Consider unseen obligations and demands on a student's plate. Shift away from a rhetoric of shame toward one of understanding.	"Did you understand the lesson? How can I support you in completing this? Here are some tips that I use to help manage my time now that I work from home."
"It's hard to teach [insert topic here] through zoom, but I'm doing my best."	Adopt a growth mindset - not just toward your students but also toward your own learning of virtual instruction strategies. Students are powerful resources for assessing what virtual practices are working well.	"What tips do you have for how I can improve? Time to be resilient. We're going to learn this together. I'll need you to fight through these tough moments with me."
"I don't know if that's exactly how (insert news story here) went."	Instead of challenging students' accounts of sociopolitical events, use the opportunity to foster a digital literacy exercise to encourage them to seek out facts for themselves.	"Thank you for sharing your understanding of the story, let's research this a bit more."