

## The Power of “Chit-Chat”

I conclude each class with a simple question to be answered via a word cloud; “How ya feeling?” Each student provides me with one word which serves as a powerful formative assessment. I’ve used this approach for years as a way to gauge the temperature of the room and adjust my teaching for the following class. After what I perceived as an engaging week 2 class, students reported feeling “burnt out”, “exhausted”, “worried” and even, “tired a-f”.

I had a flood of student comments upon asking if anyone wanted to share more about their word. They were very clear; students, like faculty, have pandemic-fatigue and miss our community. I asked was there anything I could do make pandemic-education better.<sup>1</sup>

Students had one simple request – “chit-chatting”. They miss the informal time before and after class where they discussed assignments and coffee orders with one another. The request was simple: Could I start class earlier so students could have some time to connect with one another? Easy-enough.

Week 3 started with talk of food-trucks, donuts and dogs. It took no planning, time or thought. The few minutes prior to class highlighted the great humans in each Zoom box who miss our classroom community as much as I do. I am thankful for students who reminded me education is no only about the high-impact practices, evidence-based learning and technology but, more about the community we create in our classrooms. The pandemic emphasizes the simplicity in life. Our students reminded me the power of chit-chat.

## One word- week 2



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<sup>1</sup> I should share I use an engaged pedagogy, all the Zoom bells and whistles. I juggle two screens most classes and consider even zoom teaching an aerobic exercise some days. I take my role as a teaching faculty very seriously.