

Equitable & Empathic Online Practices

Author: Melanie Lewis/Health Sciences Teacher/Utah

TEACHERS - PLEASE DON'T REQUIRE YOUR STUDENTS TO HAVE THEIR CAMERAS ON!

Here are just a few reasons:

- 1. Streaming Quality** - Having the camera on uses a lot of data/bandwidth and is taxing on their computer. It can make streaming choppy for the student (and anyone else on their Wi-Fi) and they could miss parts of lessons.
- 2. Distraction** – Students aren't accustomed to looking at all the other students during lessons. Constantly scanning all those faces exacerbates Zoom/Meet fatigue and makes it difficult to focus on the lesson.
- 3. Anxiety** – Students have said having their camera on is like looking in the mirror while knowing your entire class is also looking at you for hours each day. This makes some students incredibly anxious and unable to focus.
- 4. Inequity of Living Situations** – Not all students have access to a learning location they are comfortable with their class seeing. We need to be mindful of:
 - a. Homeless students streaming from a car or shelter;
 - b. Students with disabilities who need physical supports and don't want it on display;
 - c. Families who wear cultural head coverings in public, but not at home, and would risk being seen on camera;
 - d. Students in rooms that are cramped, cluttered, or in disrepair;
 - e. Students who have multiple family members who might end up in the background;
 - f. Students with lower quality internet or computer-which would be evident in the streaming or picture quality;
 - g. Students who are also helping take care of younger siblings, who might be on camera.
- 5. Potential for Bullying** – Unfortunately, students sometimes take screenshots and share them with friends to make fun of the student or their surroundings.
- 6. Students Not Engaged** – This should be a conversation with the student and their parent/guardian, not in front of the entire class.

I realize, as a teacher, it's difficult to teach to a bunch of black screens. But it's not about US.

IDEA: Give your students time to create their own, fun [Bitmoji](#) and use it as their picture when the camera is off. Students can still use their microphone, chat, or thumbs up/reaction extensions.

