Tips for Establishing and Maintaining Student Connections with the Course Material

It is also important for your students to engage with and comprehend the course materials. Students who fall behind or founder because they are not understanding the course materials are likely to give up and just stop coming to class or engaging on any level. Set the tone from the beginning. It is important to layout a clear course structure in your syllabus, schedule and on your course page so that students can see what is expected and when. Here are some other tips for helping your students connect with their course materials.

- Convey information regarding assignments and deadlines in a variety of ways, to support diverse learners. Send reminders via email and through the announcements feature on the LMS; create a Remind.com account and invite students to sign up for text reminders.

- Place the course schedule outside of the syllabus, so that it is more visible, and because the schedule is more likely to change than other components of the syllabus.

- For class sections in synchronous courses, long lectures -- staples in many in-person courses -- do not translate well to online courses. For synchronous class sessions, use the flipped-class model. Record lectures and have students watch them online, and then use class time for discussion, interactive, and/or hands-on activities, rather than giving a real-time lecture.

- When recording lectures for viewing online, break them into manageable chunks of no more than 7 minutes, and add variety as to how you present your material. If you wish to record long lectures, insert content checks or comprehension exercises between every segment, using an interactive plugin such as H5P player.

- Post outlines, lecture notes, or other written support materials on the LMS.

- Use discussion forums, quizzes, and small group discussions in Zoom breakout rooms to test comprehension of materials and to scaffold learning into higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

- Scaffold assignments so that students can identify key concepts and materials and then work up to analysis and synthesis of the concepts within the materials.

- Allow students to use alternatives to written discussion forum posts. Many LMS's have media creation tools, so it would be easy for students to create a video or audio response, using the built-in tools or FlipGrid, for example.