A teacher of online instruction “plans, designs, and incorporates strategies to encourage active learning, interaction, participation, and collaboration in the online environment.”

- **Guide learners** through the learning process
- **Encourage collaboration** and effective **communication**
- **Model active participation** in the learning environment

1. **Facilitate Effective Collaboration and Provide for the Formation of a Learning Community**

   Collaboration is a cornerstone of effective online instruction and an essential part of building an online learning community.  
   
   - Use icebreakers, personal introductions, and bio pages on or prior to week one
   - Designate a “virtual café” or “water cooler” for off-topic discussion
   - Counter the potential for students and faculty to feel isolated when working online (Social disconnect is a commonly cited reason for dropping out of an online course)
   - Provide guidance and structure in order to facilitate positive, effective collaboration throughout the course
   - Encourage frequent contact among students (e.g., student-led discussion topics, group projects, collaborative brainstorming, peer reviews)

2. **Encourage Active and Transformative Learning**

   Active learning encourages the formation of higher order thinking skills and the integration of newly learned content within a real world context. Learning that is transformative generates new meaning based upon both what was previously known and what is being learned at present.

   - Ask students to state what they expect to learn from the course
   - Pose discussion questions that require critical thinking
   - Give students the opportunity to teach each other
   - Craft project-based assignments that require students to make real world applications
   - Provide opportunities for self-reflection (summarize, reflect, relate, apply)
   - Monitor for student engagement; learn to decipher between “being quiet” and “tuning out”

(over)
3. **Apply Appropriate Online Teaching Strategies**

   The instructor’s role is to facilitate student learning rather than simply imparting information to be consumed. However, this does not come naturally for students and should be scaffolded through guidance and consistent structure.

   - For each module, present content and then follow up with interactive multimedia, project-based learning, and diverse assessment methods.
   - Incorporate a variety of modalities in order to accommodate diverse learning style needs and preferences.
   - Design course activities to be flexible enough so that they might be adapted to the professional needs of each learner.
   - When possible, provide options that allow students to choose the type of project they complete.

4. **Maintain Ongoing and Timely Communication with Students**

   Students need regular opportunities to perform and receive feedback. An ongoing, active presence by the instructor is considered critical to students’ success and satisfaction in online learning experiences.

   - Provide frequent, individualized, and timely feedback (e.g., within one week of submission)
     - Information feedback
     - Acknowledgement feedback
   - Occasionally contribute brief comments within discussion threads.
   - Reach out to students with periodic messages via e-mail and even telephone.
   - Consider multiple communication modalities in order to enable student contact:
     - E-mail (suggested 24-hour response window)
     - Office/mobile phone
     - Chat (e.g., Google, AIM)
     - Videoconferencing (e.g., Skype, Google+)

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