

Helping Vulnerable Students Feel Comfortable with Online Learning

For students who may be:

- From low-income families
- Experiencing homelessness
- Placed in foster care
- Dealing with a history of trauma



Online learning can expose new challenges and uncomfortable feelings. A video call means bringing teachers and students into their homes and personal spaces.

For some students, this can cause feelings of:

- Embarrassment
- Shame
- Resentment
- Fear

Students may respond by:

- Trying to cover up the lens
- Acting like there are issues with the speaker to camouflage background noises
- Not coming to virtual class

Teachers can exacerbate the issue when they give consequences or call out the student's actions resulting in:

- Increased levels of discomfort, stress, anxiety
- Trauma
- Targeting by their peers with increased teasing, harassment, and further isolation



How Educators Can Help

- ✓ **Reach out and engage in genuine communication** with the student or family. Knowing the situation can help you troubleshoot and add to the student's level of safety.
- ✓ **Make a plan** with the student to use the mute and stop video options or send you a chat through the system so they can remain on the call or in virtual class and feel comfortable. Review the functions with the student in advance.
- ✓ **Predictable schedules** and formats help. Make sure the student knows in advance of classes if something will be different or involves an activity that may be stressful for them.
- ✓ **Leave the door** open for the student to connect with you if they have an issue or problem during distance learning.