

It has been a goal - not for the sake of setting goals, but for the sake of getting to know each one of my students as human beings, to have individual conversations with each of them during the semester. I began this practice years before during my secondary teaching career with Indianapolis Public Schools and continued this into my higher education career. This year with the support of my chancellor, I was able to buy students coffee at our new campus Ground Up Cafe. This provided an opportunity to get to know students in more of a casual setting and allowed for rapport-building. Before the pandemic outbreak, this was a beautiful face-to-face practice. Once COVID-19 struck, virtual coffee meetings and zooming with students became the “new normal”.

One day during the spring semester, my family and I had gone for a much-needed bike ride to the nearby park. The sun had brightly christened the blossoms, and the fresh intoxicating air was a blessing after several days spent inside our home. That day one of my students texted me with questions about an assignment for our Using Computers in Education course. My preference has always been to talk rather than text, so I called and asked my student if she would like to FaceTime. I had sensed through our phone conversation that she needed to talk face-to-face. I sat down at a park bench and through virtual face-to-face conversation was able to help her and her group members with the upcoming assignment. Emailing or texting just would not have been the same. We were able to see one another through technology and could read our facial expressions and listen to voice tones. It also allowed us to see each other's settings, which allowed for the initial ice breaker.

Face-Timing in the park with my student that day marked *how* I would communicate with students during the remainder of the semester. As an excellent opportunity for me to be able to immediately address my students' concerns with a project I was also able to encourage them during the time of uncertainty and non-normative virtual learning, I have continued to practice this kind of availability with the blessing of technology, and have become more in-tuned

to my students' needs, which sometimes centers on academics and sometimes on the basic need to just have a conversation.