Sub-Trends in Student Responses to Online Learning During COVID-19

In addition to the primary trends, something I personally found very interesting was a more underlying theme around the **need for re-thinking assessment.** With the switch to online learning it became especially apparent that traditional tests are not the best assessment method. When you combine the number of responses noting test cheating, not wanting tests, wanting more collaboration, and more project work, this idea of "new assessment" becomes a primary trend.

Several students talked about how easy it is to cheat on an online test (pointing to the current scandal with the College Board and AP tests as well in several instances) and how they know many students did, so those grades really are just measuring a student's ability to do quick research. Furthermore, students suggested that project work would actually demonstrate learner knowledge on a topic because, "You can't easily cheat on a project, especially since it's so easy to catch plagiarism." Plus, even despite knowing projects might take more work and time, students wished they had more group project work during this distant time as an excuse to stay connected with classmates and, in a practical sense, to get a new skill/experience for the "real world" where a lot of teams work remotely and sometimes around the world even without a pandemic.

This leads to another sub-trend around students wishing for **more socialization, interaction, and meaningful conversations with peers and teachers.** These trends are more relevant in the current distant-learning situation in terms of being a challenge to solve for, but they are also relevant as a reminder of how important school is for reasons beyond just academic growth. For this reason, if online learning must continue in the fall, I believe it is vitally important that we continue to brainstorm and further implement ways to maintain a sense of community even while being apart. Students suggested some ways to achieve this could include supporting and funding student organizations so they can continue to provide activities while online, having access to resources that would typically be offered on campus like office-hours and tutors, starting conversations about good work/life balance, and offering voluntary community-building virtual events.

Finally, students were concerned and frustrated about how **some teachers' expectations didn't change when the environment did and it's making life unnecessarily more challenging for students.** There are some teachers still requiring mandatory meetings at the same times that they would've met in person, 3 hour-long video chats, and deadlines that simply aren't compatible with new responsibilities and priorities that have fallen on students during this time. College students especially expressed this opinion as many had to deal with moving off-campus, re-adjusting to living/working with family present again, and trying to reschedule their summer/fall work, life, and school plans all while also trying to worry about 1500 word essays due, or worse just boring busywork. It's too much. Not to mention, some younger students even are complaining because their eyes hurt with so much screen time. Schools must embrace a whole-child approach to education because now more than ever the line between school and not-school is especially blurry and it can't be expected that students always put school first with so many competing demands.