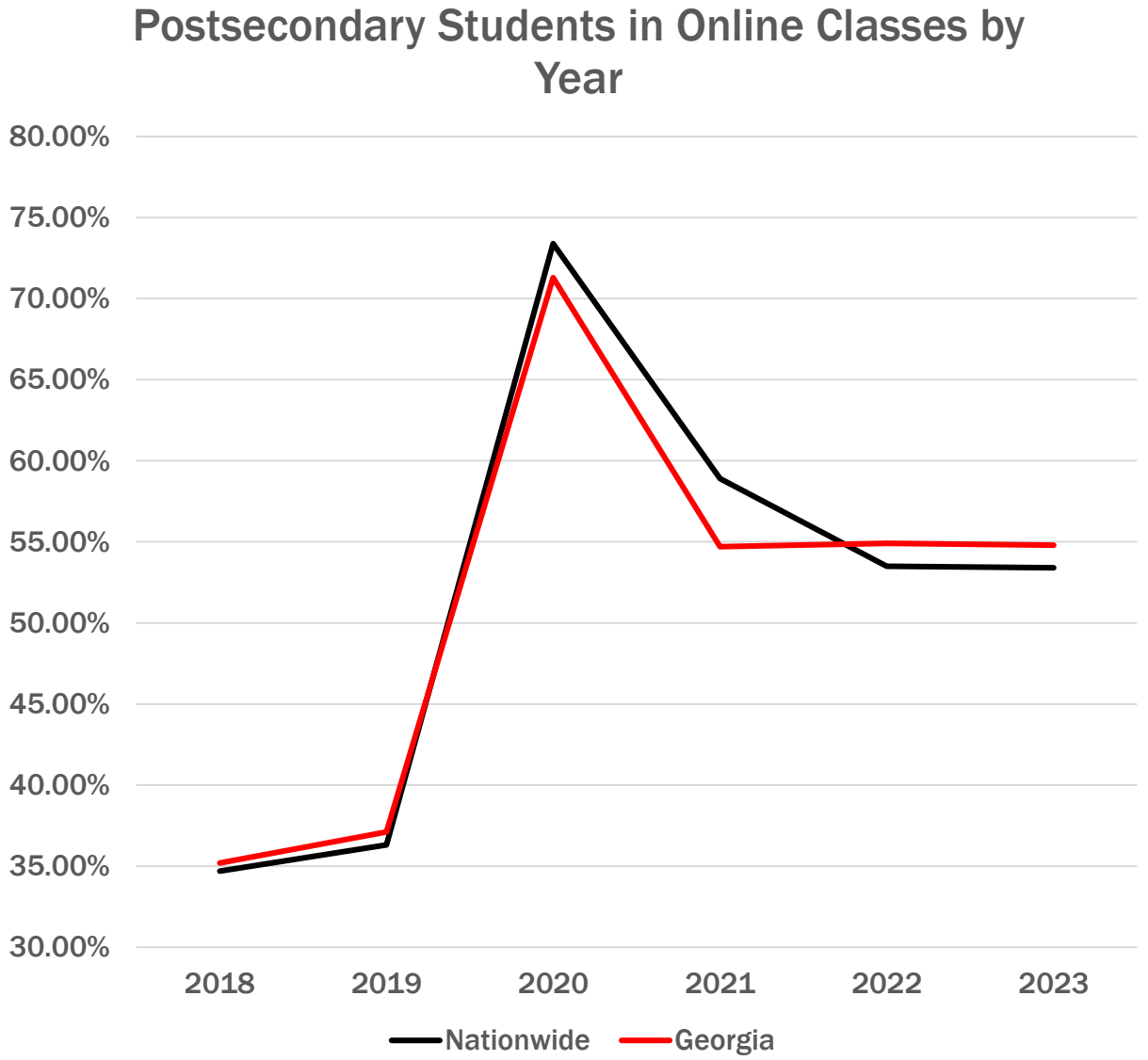
A TEACHER SHOULDN'T BE INVISIBLE!

Maintaining Teacher Presence in Online Courses

ONLINE EDUCATION HAS GONE THROUGH THE ROOF!



Source: IPEDS, NCES, and Univstats. See sources 1, 2, and 3

LOVE IT OR HATE IT, ONLINE EDUCATION IS HERE TO STAY

- Once controversial, the “online education debate” was settled by the 2020 pandemic.
- There are upsides and downsides aplenty: accessibility, learner engagement, internet access, schedule flexibility—the list goes on.
- But it’s here now, so how do we deal with it?

THE CHALLENGE TO OVERCOME

Quotes from a really remarkable study by Ela Sjolie in, *Computers & Education:*

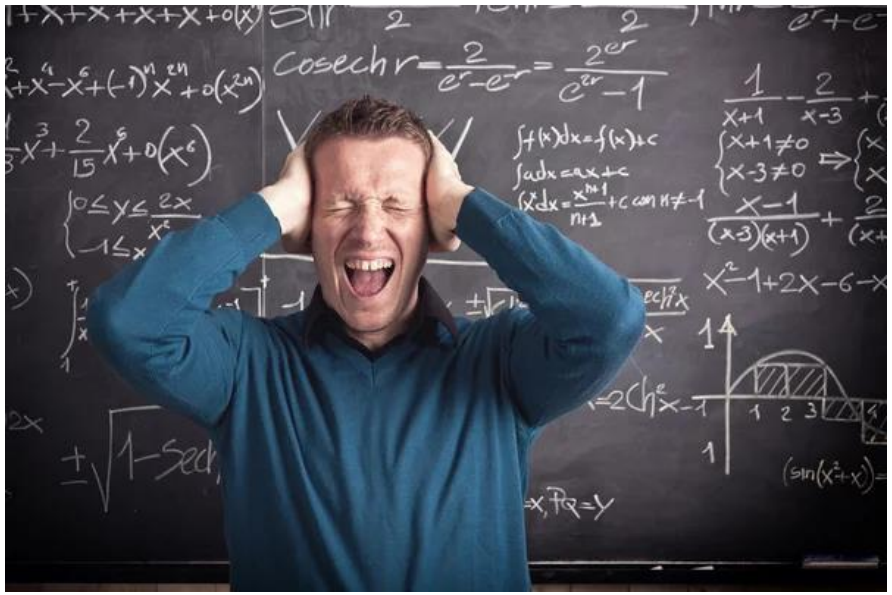
“The digital medium acted as a filter…Overall, these factors led to a sense of distance and reduced social interaction.”

“Social presence in virtual learning environments refers to the perception of being 'real' and connected with others in the online space…social interaction fosters the emergence of a sound social space, either directly or via social presence.”

To put those outcome changes into numbers…

Source: Computers & Education, See Note 4

A 4-YEAR HARVARD STUDY FOUND TAKING A COURSE ONLINE VS. IN PERSON MAKES YOUR LIKELIHOOD TO GET A GOOD GRADE MUCH LESS LIKELY:



90 or higher	**-12.2%**
80 or higher	-13.5%
70 or higher	-10.1%
60 or higher	-8.5%

See Citation 10

TEACHER PRESENCE IS THE KEY!

3 ELEMENTS OF TEACHER PRESENCE

From the Journal of Asynchronous Learning:	
	Design/organize the learning experience ahead of time
	Contribute academic knowledge through forms of direct instruction
	Create, implement, and monitor activities that encourage communication and interaction between students and themselves, as well as with content resources

See Citation 5 and 6

It's important to note that while having "a good relationship," or even "a friendship" with a teacher can have positive outcomes, the above elements are what has the strongest effect on *outcome*, whereas personal relationships are less important.

DESIGN AND ORGANIZE

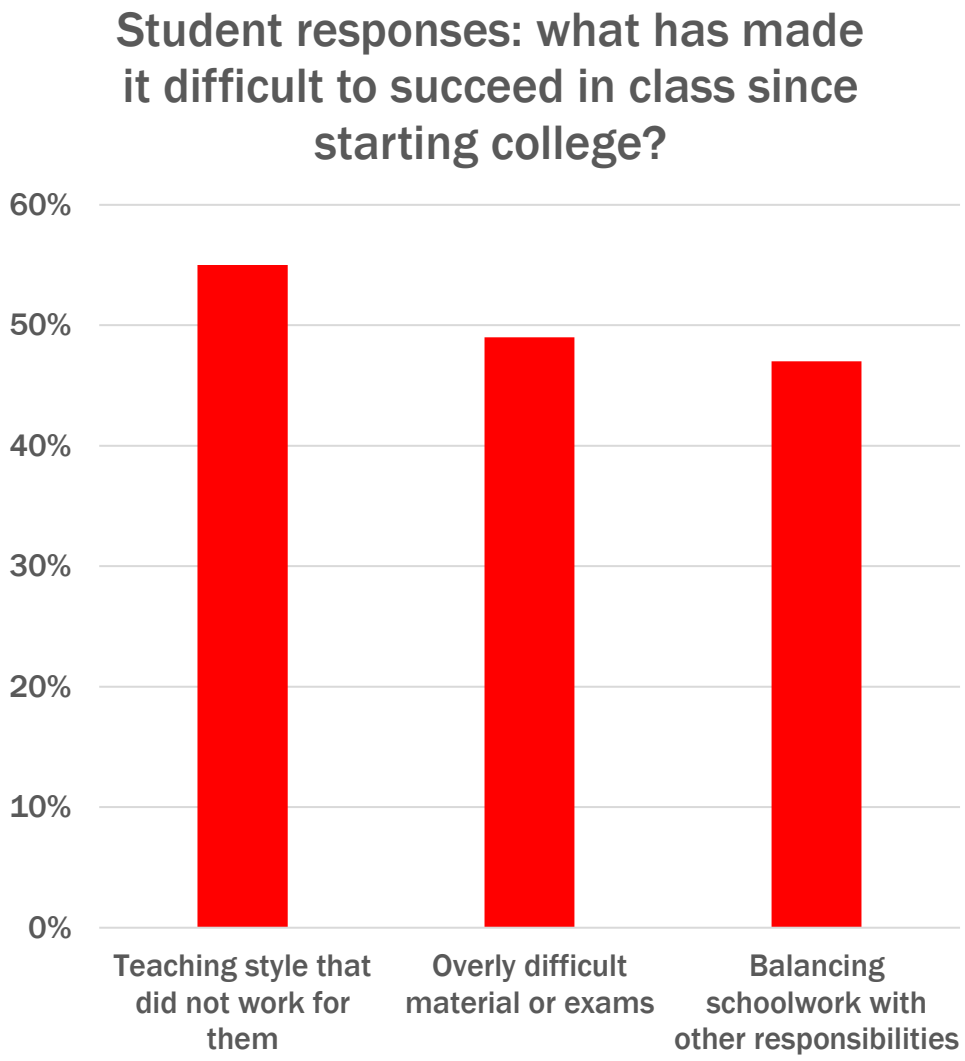
- Online courses are most effective when designed as online courses. Professors need training and support in doing this.
- A comprehensive study on the effects of remote learning on university students by Central China Normal University, the Chinese Ministry of Education, and Beijing University found teacher presence could enhance cognitive engagement even in an asynchronous course—provided the course is planned to provide such presence.
- On the other hand, “jamming” an in-person design into a virtual format can often be a recipe for failure.
- **Lesson: In-person/online classes cannot be planned as interchangeable!**

See Footnote 7

DIRECT INSTRUCTION

In 2023, the number one barrier to academic success—according to college students—was struggling with "teaching style," ranking even above "difficulty" and "other responsibilities."

Unfortunately, a challenge emerges when you look for preference on teaching style...

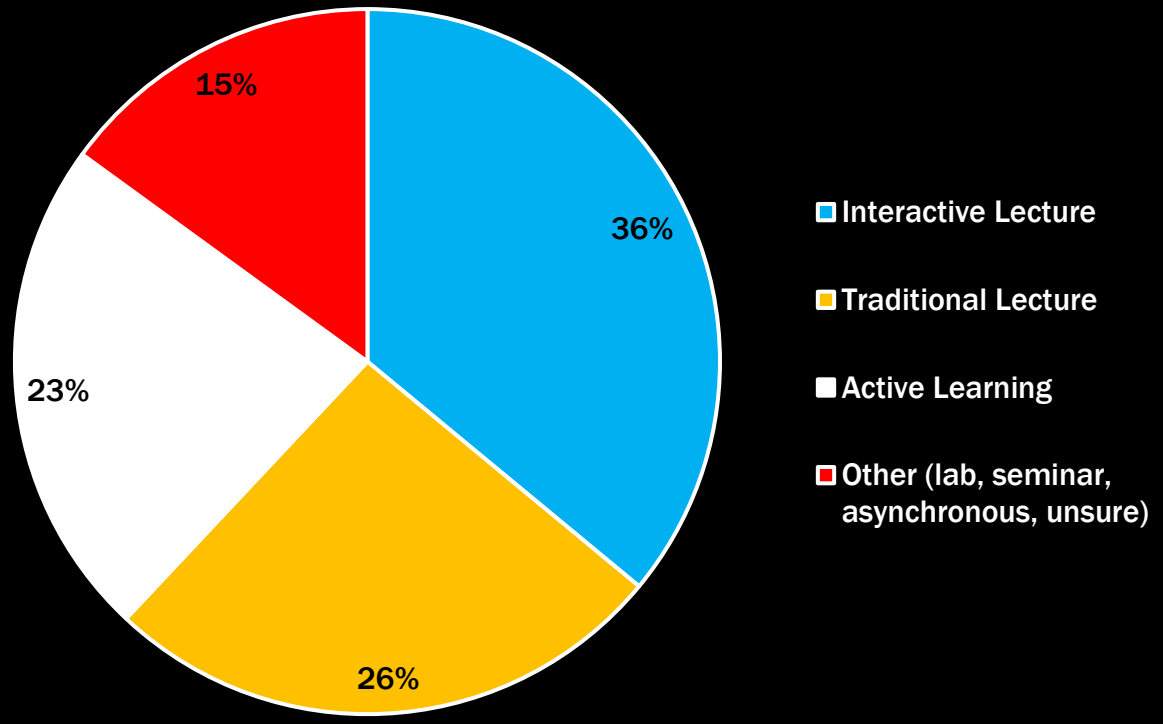


See citation 8

STUDENTS CAN'T AGREE ON WHAT THEY WANT!

See citation 9

Preferred Teaching Style



DIRECT INSTRUCTION PT 2

- Surveys of students and faculty, as well as grade data, show massive variation on what type of direct instruction works best in an online course.
- **Lesson: There is no silver bullet for direct instruction. Professors must develop their style virtually just as they do in-person.**

CREATE, IMPLEMENT, AND MONITOR ACTIVITIES

Here's where we tie it together.

As we established at the top, the lack of the social element is the primary challenge posed by online learning.

Interactive activities are how we overcome these challenges.

There are two tried and true activities for interactivity in online classes: Breakout rooms and discussion boards

THE TOP 3 STUDENT NEEDS IN IMPROVING CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES (ACCORDING TO STUDENTS)

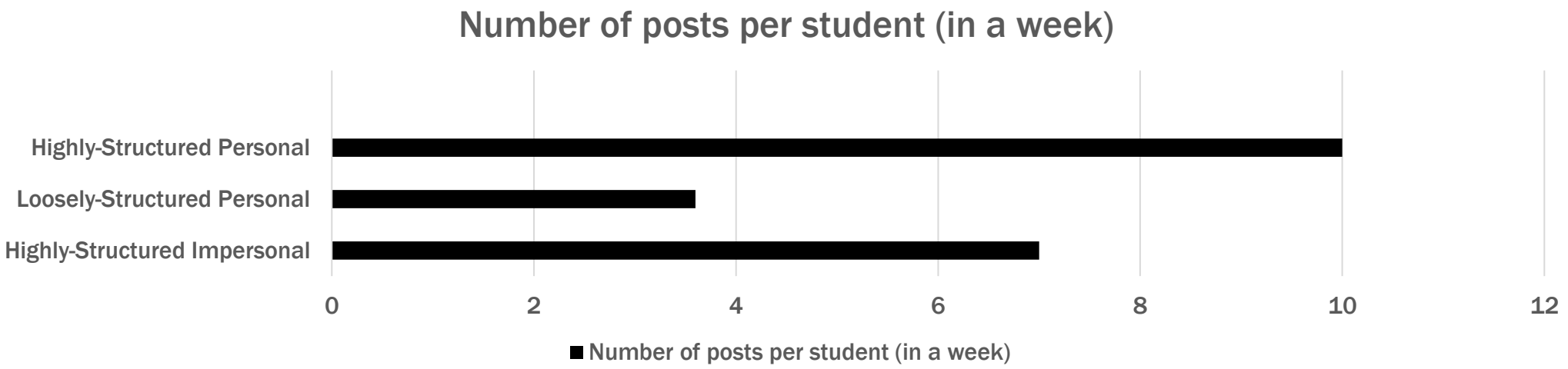
1. Flexibility

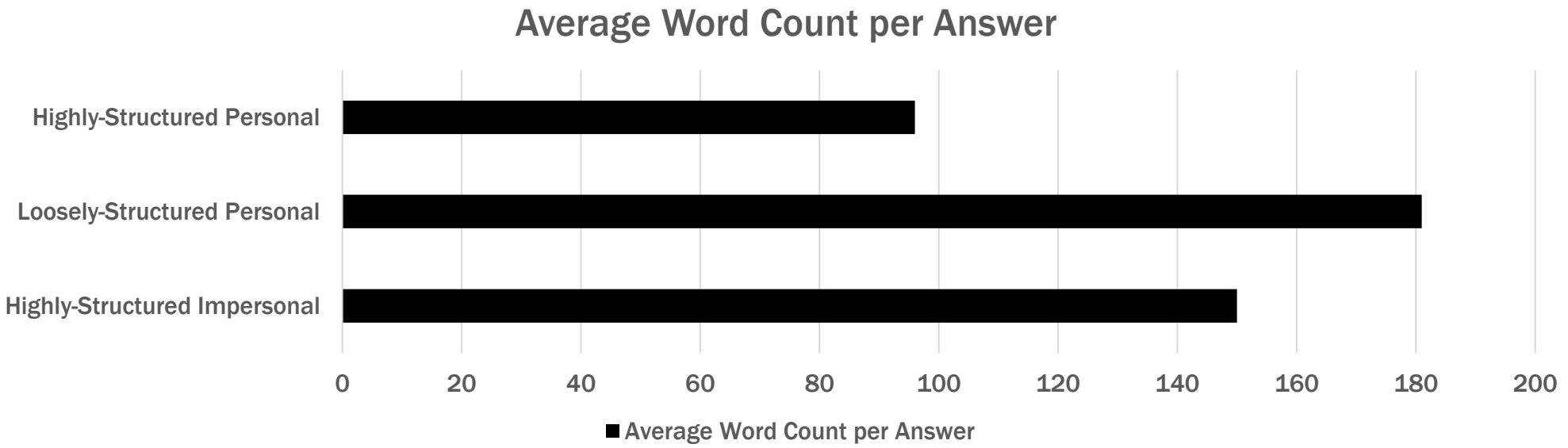
2. Clearer Expectations

3. More Interest in a Personal Connection with Students

See Citation 8

Discussion Board Study—Iowa State University





See Citation 11

BREAKOUT ROOMS

From a 2023 North Dakota State University study:

75.4% of students say breakout room activities fail due to lack of participation

The top two most important features of a successful breakout room according to students: encouraged participation and clear structure/goals

Other vital features are manageable size and working technology

See Citation 12

TWO VITAL NEEDS:

Structure

Personal Connection

REMOTE LEARNING POSES NEW CHALLENGES, BUT THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS REMAIN SIMILAR

- Connection
- Structure
- Teacher Flexibility
- Ability to Prepare for the Particular Challenge

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

Teachers need:

- Practical training on how to design online classes
- The ability to design online courses as separate from in-person or hybrid (one size does NOT fit all!)
- The ability to personalize an online course to their own style

Students need:

- Structure/Expectations
- Regular interactivity
- The chance to communicate

QUESTIONS?

CITATIONS

1. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment component final data (2012 - 2021) and provisional data (2022).
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4. Social interaction and agency in self-organizing student teams during their transition from face-to-face to online learning – ScienceDirect
5. (PDF) Assessing Teaching Presence in a Computer Conferencing Context (researchgate.net)
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7. Teaching presence promotes learner affective engagement: The roles of cognitive load and need for cognition – ScienceDirect
8. Survey: Top five barriers to student success (insidehighered.com)
9. Survey: How college students say they learn best (insidehighered.com)
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