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Teaching and technology: Advancing on the technologically mediated classroom in a post-COVID environment

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From the tablet hornbooks of the 1870s to iPads of today, technology has long been central to the classroom. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—and the requirement for learning to be moved online—brought with it an even greater reliance on technology for instructional purposes. However, as the global situation improves there are calls from parents, policy makers, psychologists, and others for a "return to normal" in the classroom. Some of these claims are accelerated by what was likely a haphazard, unplanned, and largely unfamiliar implementation of distance education, which resulted in students and teachers alike struggling this past year. That said, this return seems to be focused on "traditional" teaching models rooted in a fallacy that face-to-face communication is a gold standard for communication and instruction. In doing so, we risk losing many of the lessons gained in the last year about the functional role of online communication for learners of all ages and we ask: who might get left behind as a result? Based on the twin notions that (a) teaching is a relational enterprise and (b) online communication can foster meaningful relationships, this poster draws upon the history of computer-mediated and instructional communication to make recommendations about a "new normal" that recognizes the successes of face-to-face teaching while also recentering pedagogical practices on advances in theory and application of technologically-mediated interactions. We advocate less for a return to normalcy but instead highlight ways in which we can go beyond simply "being (physically) there" in the classroom.