Abstract: Appropriate support is critical in online learning so that students and faculty have somewhere to turn for advice, complaints and comments about their online experiences. Without the support students can quickly become disengaged and faculty can become discouraged. Participants will be introduced to a student and faculty support system used successfully in an online program graduate program for charter school leaders. Professional development for faculty and students is an important factor in making courses appropriate for online learning and maintaining interest for all parties.

Student support is very important to maintain active participation and continuing motivation for online learning. Lagging along in courses for uninspired learners is an ongoing problem for everyone. Innovative, upbeat student support can turn around reluctant learners by disabusing them of the notion that they can wait until the last minute to cram the course requirements into the eleventh hour before the deadline. Professional development for faculty new to online learning is also critical to reinforce how important their active involvement is to motivating students. Faculty must have support in order to transfer traditional “lecture-driven” courses into online courses.

Using humor and prodding techniques have proven very effective in the online graduate program for charter school leaders at an urban university. The techniques to be discussed include ongoing messages to participants and faculty, online newsletters, techniques for staying on-task, and follow-up communication for recruitment into future courses. We will also describe professional development strategies to prepare new faculty and to renew veteran faculty.