

July 26, 2020

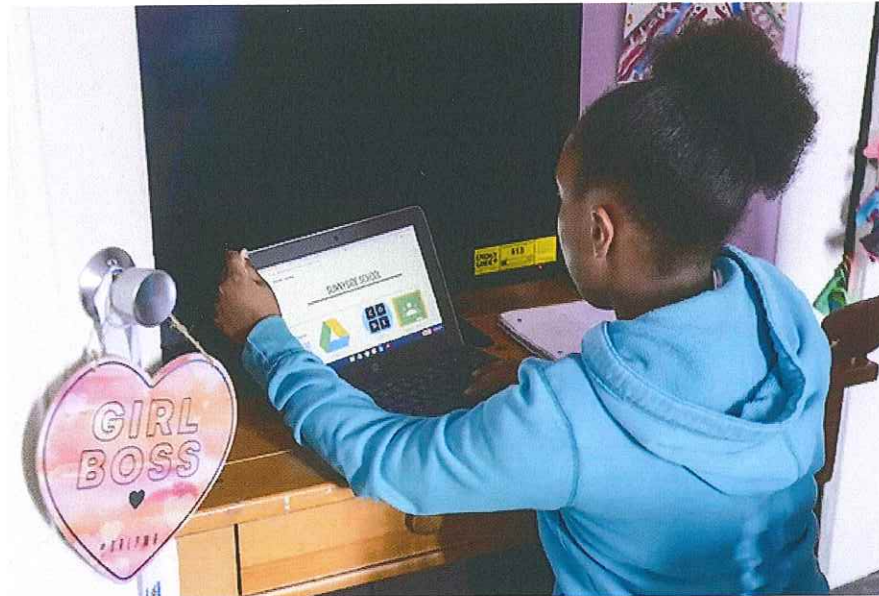
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How to Balance In-Person and Remote Instruction



Sunnyside Elementary School 4th grader Miriam Amacker tackles a school assignment at her home in San Francisco last spring. Experts say many students will likely be transitioning back and forth between remote and in-person instruction this school year. —Jeff Chiu/AP

By **Mark Lieberman**

July 22, 2020

The Nashville, Tenn., schools made the decision this month to stick to full-time remote learning when the 2020-21 school year begins. In Bennington, Neb., the school district is planning to open schools for all students five days a week. And the New York City public school district is designing a hybrid model in which students would be in school a few days a week and learning remotely the other days.

Deciding among those three options can be an excruciating decision for school officials. They all have their benefits and drawbacks, and supporters and opponents. And they represent a much different look for the coming school year than what we saw this spring, when virtually all schools were operating remotely.

But the choice many schools appear to be leaning toward is the hybrid model, at least for now. Some will welcome students only four days a week. Others will split students into groups who attend for only part of the day, or on certain days of the week, or on certain weeks of the month. When they are not in school buildings, they will be learning remotely.

Some school and district leaders are leaning toward the hybrid model because they are concerned about the health of students and staff members if buildings reopen, and about the learning loss that can happen in fully remote environments. Many students will arrive

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carrying traumatic experiences from the spring and summer, whether dealing with the virus firsthand or feeling the effects of long-term social isolation and academic loss. The cancellation of summative tests and the disruption to the last quarter of the school year has also set back many students from meeting learning objectives and acquiring the knowledge and skills they'll need to advance in their new classes.

These are the conditions that schools will face this fall as they reconfigure operations to meet the new reality and choose the models they think will work best for students and educators.

Here's what experts and educators say an effective hybrid model should emphasize:

6 Essentials for In-Person Instruction

1. Identify the students who would benefit most from in-person instruction

- Students in elementary school
- Students who need to work one-on-one with a tutor, assistant, or aide
- Students who lack at-home internet access or suitable digital devices
- Students whose at-home situation or whose family responsibilities for work and child care don't lend themselves to consistent remote learning
- Students learning English as a second language

2. Devote face-to-face time to technical training for students and teachers

During the first week or two of in-person instruction, teachers should walk students through the learning management system, class pages, videoconference platforms, and any other tools they might be using when they are learning remotely. Ask students to check whether the digital devices they used at home this spring are still working. Deploy IT teams where needed for troubleshooting and equipment repair.

3. Partner with local businesses and community organizations

"Learning can happen anywhere," said Susan Patrick, CEO of the Aurora Institute, a research and advocacy organization for online and blended learning. Tutors working with students at local churches or libraries can provide supplemental instruction that accounts for limited capacity in school buildings and gives students a sense that learning doesn't stop when they're not physically at school. Local organizations and businesses that are open safely can also provide internet connections for students and teachers who don't have them at home.

4. Focus on curriculum components that are most difficult to teach remotely.

Remember that in-person instruction may stop being an option at some point during the school year due to a resurgence of COVID-19. Identify material ahead of time that's a priority for in-person instruction.

Reorient the structure of the course to focus on those in-person priorities.

5. Provide students with learning tools and supplies to take home

- "Manipulative" bags for elementary schoolers
 - colored chips for counting
 - base ten blocks

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HOW WE GO BACK TO SCHOOL



District and school leaders are confronting difficult, high-stakes decisions as they plan for how to reopen schools amid a global pandemic. Through eight installments, Education Week journalists explore the big challenges education leaders must address, including running a socially distanced school, rethinking how to get students to and from school, and making up for learning losses. We present a broad spectrum of options endorsed by public health officials, explain strategies that some districts will adopt, and provide estimated costs.

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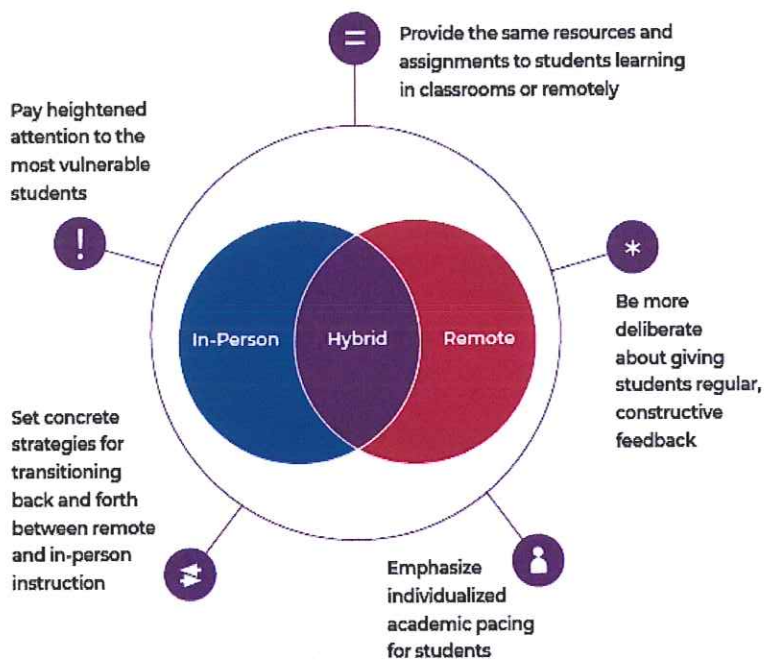
[Full Report: How We Go Back to School](#)

- dice
- rulers
- readers
- School supplies
 - Crayons
 - Mini-whiteboards
 - Graph paper

6. Do not spend too much time lecturing

Particularly for teachers who aren't trained in delivering individualized instruction remotely, classroom time should be devoted to interacting with students, asking them questions, and constructing active experiences. This will give teachers an opportunity to get to know the students better and the kids opportunities to get to know each other better, so they can be a source of support for each other when they are learning remotely.

The Essentials for Hybrid Learning



SOURCE: Education Week reporting

10 Essentials for Remote Learning

1. Play to teachers' strengths

When possible, teachers with expertise in online/remote teaching should be designated to work closely with students who have chosen or been selected to remain at home for the school year. Teachers who are more comfortable with in-person teaching can work with students who are able to come in. Teachers with online expertise can pair up with teachers who need help to provide guidance and mentorship.

Some schools will send teachers to the school building regardless of whether students are attending. Those teachers will be able to use the tools and Wi-fi in their classrooms, and, in many cases, spread out more than they would at home.

2. Create a landing page in the learning management system for each course.

That page should include:

- Contact information for teacher and school

- Calendar with office hours, semester schedule, and assignment due dates
- Links to virtual meetings for synchronous instruction and office hours

These pages should look the same across all courses in a school, and ideally in a district.

This summer, the Opelika school district in Alabama pulled in 60 K-12 teachers and asked them to design a virtual fourth week of the courses they regularly teach. The school's tech team gave participants parameters for which LMS and software programs to use. When the participants shared their finished work, the tech team identified which virtual classes had the cleanest layout and required the fewest clicks. Those courses will serve as a model for the visual presentation of courses throughout the district.

3. Balance high- and low-tech offerings

A 45-minute phone call with each student on a regular weekly schedule may be as effective, if not more so, than regular videoconference calls with large groups of students. Students may be using mobile devices rather than laptops or tablets while working at home, which means learning materials should be presented in digestible chunks whenever possible.

Many online tools can be accessed offline easily by downloading webpages as PDFs and loading files onto hard drives, as laid out in this [resource guide](#).

4. Offer students a variety of pathways to learn

The biggest mistake newcomers to teaching remotely make, experts say, is assuming that students need to be engaged in live instruction 100 percent of the time. What students really need is variety and options, to account for their wide range of preferences and behaviors while learning. To illustrate a concept, educators should think about providing some combination of the following:

- Readings
- Videos
- Diagrams
- Images
- Animations
- Games
- Interactives

Here are some resources to consider for creating those options:

- [OER Commons](#)
- [CK-12](#)
- [Merlot](#)
- [MIT Open Courseware](#)
- [Open Course Library](#)
- [Open Learning Initiative](#)
- [CNX](#)
- [Florida Virtual Course](#)
- [eDynamics](#)

5. Encourage interaction among students

Use videoconference meetings to give students an opportunity to see and interact with each other. Emphasize the value of teamwork by encouraging students to collaborate or share ideas. Consider videoconferencing with small groups of students at a time rather than an entire class.

6. Prioritize helping students develop healthy habits

- Learning how to learn: Find out from students early on what kinds of synchronous and asynchronous supports they prefer. Advise them to be honest about what worked and didn't work remotely in the spring.

- Self-regulation: Clearly communicate assignments to students and be explicit about when and how they're due. Emphasize activities that encourage students to develop questions or explore areas of curiosity.
- Goal-setting: Encourage students at the start of each week to establish clear, measurable, and attainable goals. Check in with them periodically to ensure they're making progress, and offer help to students who are struggling.

7. Ask teachers what they need, such as:

- Microphones and headsets for effective videoconferencing
- Internet access (at home or in an alternative location)
- Camera for video recording
- Access to the school building/classroom (if safe and legally permitted)
- Mini-whiteboard and markers

8. Take things slow, master the technologies first

Don't rush into teaching the curriculum before students are fully acquainted with the technology they'll need to use. Focus on introducing one tool to them at a time, making sure they understand it and then moving on to the next one.

And consider chunking lesson planning into weeks rather than days. It will be difficult to ensure daily that every student is progressing through the learning material at the same pace, but setting weekly goals will help account for different approaches students will take to completing assignments and gaining knowledge.

9. Ensure contracts with education and technology companies protect students' data

Some schools entered into rapid agreements with tech companies this spring, bypassing some of the more elongated contract negotiations they'd typically do. That opened the door for some major **data privacy concerns**.

Designate a privacy expert for your school or district if you don't have one already. A few questions that person should help schools ask about technologies that will be used by teachers and students this fall:

- What was the goal for using it this spring and is it really needed for the coming school year?
- Did the technology meet that goal, and will that goal be the same in 2020-21?
- Does the tool meet the school's privacy and security standards under normal circumstances?

10. Strengthen cybersecurity protections

Cyberattacks against schools have been on the rise for years prior to the pandemic, and widespread remote learning only **heightens the risk**. Teachers and students are accessing the school network from a wider variety of devices than ever before, offering hackers more opportunities to infiltrate the system. When teachers use tech tools that haven't been officially sanctioned by the district, they risk the possibility of their account information, or students' information, getting stolen.

"Cybersecurity is a big concern for me because of the increase in remote access into our systems and users possibly logging into accounts and systems from personal devices rather than district owned devices," said Teresa Rehman, director of technology for the Roxbury district in New Jersey.

Cybersecurity priorities should include:

- Installing:
 - Intrusion prevention/detection
 - Malware scanning
 - Secure access control
- Implementing two-factor authentication for logins