

HYBRID TEACHING AND LEARNING TIPS FOR Teachers

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Abstract. Hybrid learning is particularly challenging when students can join a live class either in person or remotely, a common form of hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic..

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At an unprecedented moment in education, teachers are on the front lines, adapting their work to online and hybrid formats without the benefit of time and resources to prepare. How do we design a great class when our students don't share the same location? In normal times, most of us think of a bricks-and-mortar classroom as "headquarters": students know it's the place where they can get instruction and help; teachers think of class as the time and place for content delivery and assessment; and it's the place where class communities are built. In hybrid learning, however, remote students might never physically be in the classroom. So, we have to move our headquarters online.

1. Have an asynchronous "backup plan." Posting content, instructions, and activities online (in your learning management system (LMS), class website, or other platform) ensures students know what to do even if the conferencing tools remote learners use to join class fail.

2. Use asynchronous learning to maximize synchronous learning. Time together in hybrid learning is precious, so students should be using asynchronous learning to absorb content and complete activities that will prepare them for a highly interactive synchronous class like a debate, presentation, or design sprint.

3. Design clear, detailed instructions. For asynchronous tasks, make sure you've posted detailed guidance for what students should do. This might be written or recorded using a screen-casting tool like Loom. Teachers have faced a wave of options when it comes to classroom technology that supports online and hybrid learning. We can't possibly master everything out there, but teachers emphasized that some basic skills should be in place.

4. Make sure students can see and hear. Position devices and microphones in the classroom so remote students can be engaged. Make the effort to know these devices well so you can troubleshoot in the moment if needed. Teacher Jim Mahoney advised that audio matters more than video. Check in with your remote students regularly to ensure technology is working for them. Collect feedback from both remote and in-

person students about how hybrid learning is working for them (Stephen Valentine is using a simple protocol to collect feedback).

5. *Learn how to project and share your screen.* Teachers identified two core skills for using your device(s) well: learn how to project remote students on a screen in the classroom and learn how to share your screen with both remote and in-person learners. If you are fortunate enough to have multiple devices in your classroom, dedicate one to “broadcast” the class and the other for your own teaching purposes.

Connect In-Person and Remote Students. This can be the most challenging element of hybrid learning, but many teachers said it was worth the effort. We know relationships and collaboration matter to students for both wellness and learning, and helping students, especially those who are remote, feel like participants and not just an audience is a way to create class community in hybrid learning.

6. *Have every student log onto a video call.* If you’re using a tool like Zoom to bring remote students into class, have all students log on. This allows remote and in-person students to collaborate in small groups.

7. *Use chat tools for real-time collaboration.* Sometimes, getting all students on the same video call isn’t practical. But, tools like Slack, Google Chat, Microsoft Teams and others allow for real-time conversation and collaboration without requiring a video/audio set up.

8. *Set up your classroom for connection.* Your remote students should be able to see and hear your in-person students. Your in-person students should have access to the same backchannel as remote students (via a chat tool, for example). If possible, project your remote students onto a screen so they are visible to in-person students. Check out how teacher Kevin Hurley set up his classroom to involve his remote students.

9. *Make thinking structured and visible.* Teachers have leaned into structured interactions like fishbowl discussions and pre-set “pods” or “cohorts” of students (mixing in-person and remote) that stay together over time. Small groups should use technology to document and share their work, making their thinking visible to all students. *Make Clear, Intentional Plans and Share Them.* Sharing lesson plans or agendas with students in advance came up again and again. This transparency can help ease students’ minds and help them acclimate to the complicated arrangement of hybrid learning.

10. *Share a daily plan as class begins.* By using a chat tool or sharing your screen, make sure to begin class with an explicit overview of the plan, ensuring that both remote and in-person learners can see it and ask questions. Consider how Mary Block uses simple visuals to clarify tasks to her students. She drops the relevant image into the chat as different activities take place.

Conclusion

All in all, we may say that many teachers are facing as they confront the reality of a hybrid model where students attend school in person two or three days a week and spend the rest of their time learning online. It can be a challenge to engage all students in the same classroom activity when half are present virtually.

References

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