

Here's how our K-5 school is approaching the hybrid educational style during COVID.

[illegible]

I'm beginning to feel like a first-year school principal all over again and it's somewhat unnerving. I'm always up for a good challenge, but the quick pivots that our K-5 school needed to make in 2020 have really been above and beyond what any of us expected (or, were prepared for). Of course, coming into 2020 no one predicted a global pandemic would literally upend life as we know it—let alone completely change our educational approach. With just over 500 students, our school was fortunate enough to have strong digital literacy tools when COVID hit. Because the platform is accessible from any device, we continued with our established instructional, intervention,

and data-review structure. With about 25% of our students electing to stay remote (even after we opened our doors back up this fall), we've now found ourselves managing concurrent classrooms.

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Here's how it works: Our teachers maintain a 'homeroom' of students that were assigned to them, with those instructors using a blended and flipped model to instruct both their remote classrooms and live classrooms. This is a bit outside of the box, but because we've spent several years setting up our personalized learning model, which we call our All-Access instructional model, we're confident that our teachers and students will do well in this 'new normal' arrangement.

To ensure a smooth transition to our concurrent classrooms, we took these steps:

- **Establish a predictable morning schedule.** All students that are in the classroom are there for their morning meeting, and [remote students](#) Zoom into the classroom. That way, the entire class can have its morning meeting together. From there, we move into English language arts, reading, or writing.
- **Use pre-recorded mini-lessons in workshop teaching style.** Students can watch the lessons and then work on a list of related activities that illustrates their understanding of the material. A math teacher can develop a [5-minute video](#) on the basics of adding fractions, for example. The teacher then meets with small groups in the classroom for direct, tailored instruction and remotely to support the day's learning activities.
- **Make time for breaks.** We have lunch and recess time in school and students have their one-hour break at home. In the afternoon we shift

over to math and use a structure similar to the one we use with English and reading (e.g., a mini-lesson and practice).

- **Adopt an online platform.** We have ‘must dos’ and ‘may dos,’ and using [Lexia Core5 Reading](#) falls into the ‘must do’ category. Using this adaptive blended learning platform, teachers can have a quick conference with students on the spot whenever personalized intervention is needed. We also use our reading platform to get a bigger picture of which aspects of our instructional delivery are (and aren’t) working, and to drill down to individual students to see who might be struggling.
- **Ensure student equity.** We have to be able to provide all students with equitable access to learning materials and instruction. To achieve that goal, we sent devices home with every single child. We also partnered with a local nonprofit that was able to get our students Wi-Fi hotspots.
- **Offer academic coaching.** Our paraprofessionals formerly were assigned to classrooms to do certain tasks, but then once we went remote, that became a lot harder to do. We wound up reinventing their roles into [academic coaches](#). We assigned these academic coaches to those students that needed explicit instruction the most (yet another way to ensure equity). They serve as personal coaches who check in frequently both with parents and students to make sure everyone is progressing and offering help as needed to advance their literacy skills.

As educators and administrators continue to work through the challenges brought on by the pandemic, I see this as a real opportunity to reinvent education as we know it. I don’t foresee a day when we’ll be going back to the “old way” that we used to educate, even though it was just a year ago. We have to be nimble and open enough to understand the need for change, find

ways to create equity, and adapt our structure and instruction in a way that benefits even more students.

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