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Education



Apart, asynchronous, but still connected

3 fundamentals to keep your learning community thriving

The transition to hybrid learning has required the consummate balancing act. With so many variables and options, teachers are constantly evaluating and adjusting their modalities to respond to changing school policies and schedules.

A relative newcomer to the discussion of remote vs. in-person, online vs. off, and individual vs. group is the balance of synchronous vs. asynchronous learning.

"Synchronous" is what most people think of when they think of a classroom: the whole class receiving instruction together in real time.

Asynchronous learning is self-directed. Teachers post materials for students to access online, working on their own schedule, at their own pace.

There's no perfect answer for how much of each is right. And since it's all so new, there are few proven guidelines. The best advice comes down to tailoring the mix to the particular grade level, subject matter, and student population.

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Teacher to student + student to student = community

But for many teachers, the bigger question is how to keep the strong connection with students that's built into the synchronous teaching model, they're used to. As one educator put it, "Right now, it's all about the mechanics of how to teach remotely. How are we going to hold our students' hearts?"

Building a classroom community is vital to student engagement and achievement. It's both more important and more difficult to maintain in a hybrid environment.

Here are three fundamentals to consider:

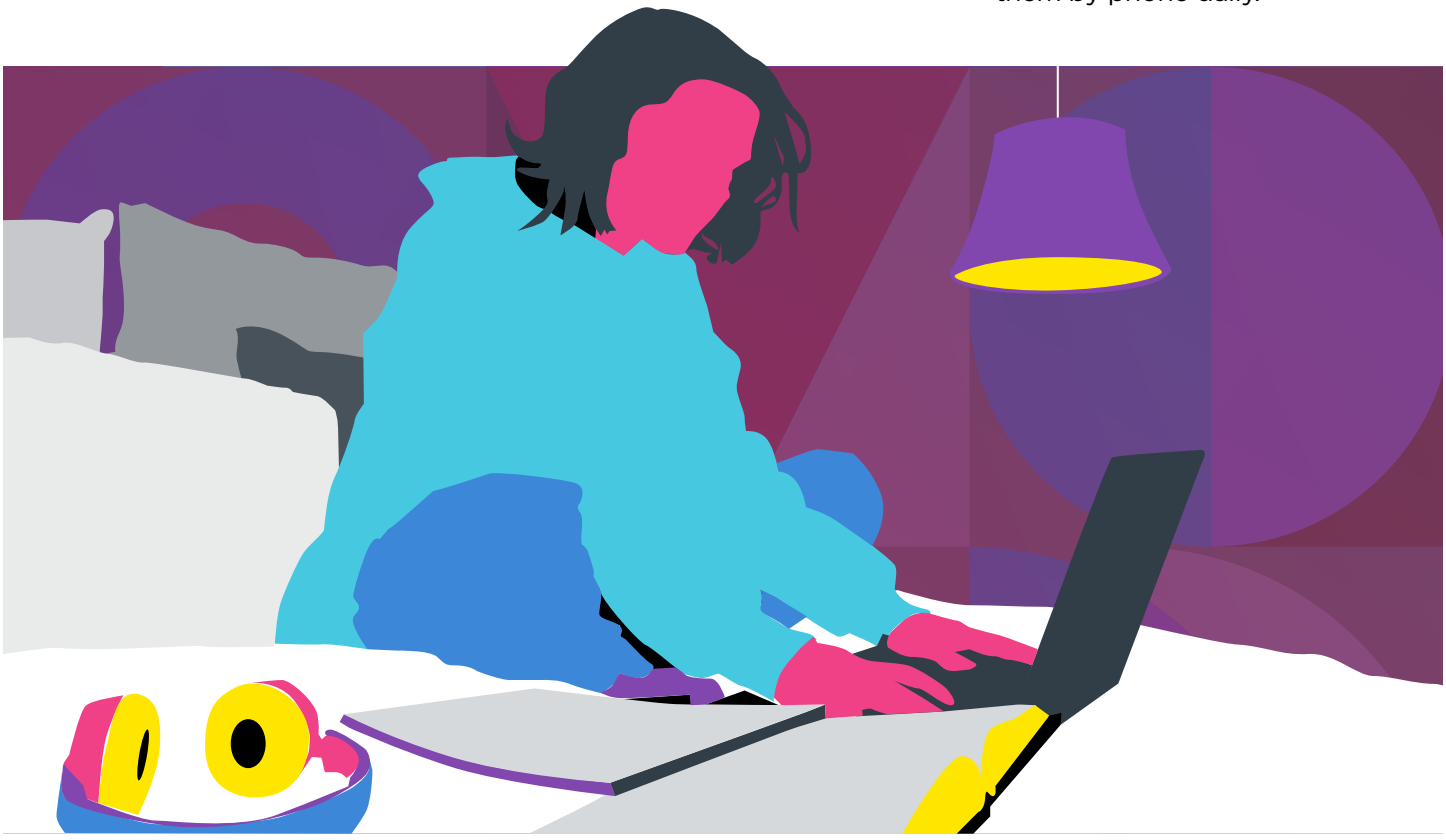
01. Daily check-ins

The younger the students, the more important it is to be reminded of their teacher's presence and concern for their well-being.

One first-grade teacher makes a short, fun video every morning, welcoming students and setting up the day.

Teachers who previously had a morning meeting find it valuable to continue this routine by videoconference. Modern device features can help save time on these tasks, like one-touch calling on the Lenovo ThinkPad® L14 laptop with Windows 10 and the Intel vPro® platform.

Some add a quick task to indicate how students are feeling — in one class, they take "finger selfies" of thumbs up, sideways, or down. For remote students without internet access, some teachers contact them by phone daily.



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02. 1:1 time

Going back and forth between whole-class synchronous instruction and individual asynchronous study can leave student-teacher collaboration in the dust. Students need to know they can reach out to teachers with questions or just to talk, and they need to know when and how to connect.

One third-grade teacher sets aside time following each video class to meet with one student individually while classmates gather in breakout rooms to talk about what they just learned. He finds having the student read aloud is a good way to just hang out and gauge the student's well-being. They can also use the time to clarify assignments.

03. Student-to-student connections

K-12 students miss their classmates. But time together in synchronous learning sessions or dedicated social time can be either welcome or awkward. Some find social connections and personal sharing during group time easy — others are uncomfortable speaking up. Teachers are finding creative ways to foster camaraderie and feelings of belonging. One great option that promotes inclusiveness, teamwork, and fun is the highly engaging competitive gaming known as esports.

Another way to help students connect is a buddy system for homework. Each is assigned a classmate to check in with, then asked to send an email or text to let the teacher know how that student is doing. Collaboration on assignments also brings students closer.

Technology is a key component of hybrid environments, asynchronous learning, and class collaboration. Lenovo and Microsoft deliver Windows 10 devices with Microsoft Teams, hybrid classroom solutions, and the Intel vPro® platform with business-class performance for the classroom.



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