CTSI Whitepaper

HyFlex Classroom: The Future of Engaging Hybrid Education

Take advantage of a critical opportunity for tech-driven, future-proof learning spaces.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the journey of education around the globe toward technology-driven, interactive and hybrid models.

While the wheels were already in motion, being forced to adapt to remote learning essentially overnight meant that advancements that could have represented years of progress occurred just as quickly.

Now, in the wake of reopening, K-12 school districts and higher education institutions are turning to a model that likely represents the future of learning beyond COVID-19 – HyFlex.

However, they need the technology solutions to make this exciting, future-proof model a reality, and that likely means taking advantage of a massive influx of funding targeted at helping education recover from one of the most difficult years in recent memory.

Whitepaper Highlights

- Education practices already trending toward interactive hybrid models have been accelerated.
- Hybrid learning was popular for its simplicity, now HyFlex classrooms represent future of education.
- HyFlex allows remote & in-person students to have the same learning experience.
- Grant & Stimulus funding will finance the technology schools need to adopt HyFlex on a wider scale.

What Is the HyFlex Model?

The HyFlex model isn’t to be confused with hybrid education, which was a popular avenue for educational institutions in the wake of the pandemic.

Essentially, hybrid learning refers to a model where a class of students is guided through the same pattern of online and in-person learning as one. If a lecture is presented virtually, all of the students receive that lecture virtually, and the same goes for in-person activities.

This model was effective in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, as educators could tightly control when and where students learned and gathered. It is also relatively easy to set up, as virtual sessions have largely been conducted via videoconferencing platforms and commonly available online tools.

HyFlex is an evolution of hybrid learning that offers students more agency in their learning path. In a HyFlex model, students have a choice regarding their method of participation, and they can change from session to session to fit their individual needs.

This empowerment can work well in both K-12 and higher education settings, as younger students without adequate internet access can attend in person, as can higher education students with jobs during class time, etc.
How Are HyFlex Classrooms Enabled?

HyFlex classrooms offer students the choice of three key learning styles – face-to-face, synchronous classroom sessions (in classroom as the lesson is being taught live), face-to-face, synchronous learning via videoconference (with the same experience as in-class learners), and fully asynchronously (online only, yet with the same experience as “live” learners).

Alongside the power of choice and the flexibility to learn asynchronously when necessary, that shared experience is the cornerstone of a HyFlex model. Regardless of whether a student is in class or tuning in virtually, the HyFlex model promises a single learning experience – and that goal is accomplished via technology solutions.

In a HyFlex classroom setup, cameras are placed at the front and back of the room. In addition, there is a display placed at the rear of the room, near the camera in the back of the space, and one at the front of the room, which can be used to display remote students, documents needing to be shared, and more.

With this setup, students learning virtually can look through the lens of either camera, seeing either their fellow students or the educator just as if they were present in the physical space. Likewise, because remote students are displayed on the screen in the rear of the room, in-person students are “joined” by their remote classmates.

With the assistance of microphones and other tools, clear, audible sound comes from both the educator and all students, and two-way communication is possible in real time. Then, when a lesson is over, it’s stored online for asynchronous students to be a part of it after the fact, empowering flexible learning.

This model can be expanded on with the addition of more microphones, ways to share content interactively, powerful displays and whiteboards, and more, but this is the foundation of the HyFlex model – rooms that engage all students the same way and make them feel as if there is no line between virtual and in-person learning.

Using COVID-19-Related Funding to Build a Foundation for the Future

If that sounds like quite an investment in technology, it’s because it may be for many districts and higher education campuses – but now is the perfect time to make such an investment.

With the federal government doling out billions of dollars intended to be spent to stabilize educational budgets and empower schools to invest in the technology they need to deliver upon the expectations of students in this new age of learning, the HyFlex model is poised to be a popular use for those funds.

The numbers are staggering – in the latest round of stimulus money, alone, K-12 institutions were allotted nearly $170 billion, while higher education institutions saw another $40 billion sent their way.

However, the window to make optimal use of those funds is closing. With the end of one of the most tumultuous school years in history behind us, it’s time to turn our attention to the 2021-22 school year – which means there are mere months to enable HyFlex models from day No. 1 of the next academic year.

Turning to an experienced integrator will help educational institutions ensure they select the right HyFlex solution for their needs.

To succeed, such a solution must:

- Be easy to use and easy to teach for superusers teaching new hires.
- Be future-proof and scalable beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19.
- Be “pandemic funding-proof” in that they can be maintained for years without requiring the kind of outsized spending enabled by pandemic relief.
- Be completed alongside an experienced integrator from start to finish so systems can be designed for longevity and staff can be appropriately trained to ensure optimal outcomes from systems purchased.
What Does the HyFlex Rollout Differ in K-12 and Higher Education?

K-12 school districts are unique in that they may need to think about the best solution for their unique environment that also doesn't overextend budgets or rely on robust student access.

This could mean beginning with a more foundational setup, but that doesn't mean putting in a less-than-optimal system. It simply means that working alongside an integrator is even more crucial, as it can empower K-12 districts to find the right combination of cost-effectiveness and powerful tools to deliver a meaningful and engaging HyFlex experience.

In contrast, many high education institutions can afford to cut a wider swath, outfitting rooms with more advanced technology solutions and counting on what's likely to be more stable internet access across the student population.

In short, though both K-12 and higher education institutions need to implement HyFlex solutions, their approaches could be vastly different.

Consider the difference this way – for higher education, it's not a matter of “how,” but a matter of “how soon and how big.” These institutions are largely looking to move quickly and implement robust solutions that empower greater student flexibility. For K-12 districts, it's more a matter of “how” in that these districts need to consider how best to balance cost-effectiveness, access and scalability.

Choosing CTSI to Empower HyFlex Classrooms for Your Learners

A world-class integrator like CTSI can help both K-12 and higher education entities find the perfect solution for their unique needs – and ensure it's in place prior to school beginning anew this fall.

CTSI also offers robust subscription services that can allow districts and institutions to supplement federal funding and get the HyFlex solutions they need without overextending their capital budget or taking on unnecessary risk. These subscription services come with the same industry-leading support and expertise, as well as the ability to expand and grow as HyFlex continues to take shape.

HyFlex classrooms are an exciting glimpse into the future of education, and CTSI is ready to help you make the most of the model's potential.

For further information on Grant & Stimulus Funding, listen to the CTSI ClearTalk Podcast. Available now on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and CTSI-USA.COM.

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To learn more about how we can help you achieve hands-free collaboration and optimize your touchless, frictionless solutions, contact your Account Manager to schedule a CTSI ClearInnovation Workshop.

Sales@ctsi-usa.com

Contact CTSI now by calling:
Washington, DC: 703.631.3377
Richmond, VA: 804.559.4274
Baltimore, MD: 410.583.8900