

Your digital classroom. Wherever you are.

White paper

# Hybrid learning strategies for educators

Empower students with  
hybrid learning in 4 steps



# How will you remember 2020?



Will 2020 go down in the history of education as a year of crisis or a year of progress? Coronavirus flare-ups and fluctuating lockdown measures have posed a clear incentive for schools to innovate their educational programs. Now is the time to turn past months' trial and error into lasting progress. How? By reflecting, evaluating and consolidating key learnings and developing sustainable hybrid learning strategies to meet current and future challenges.

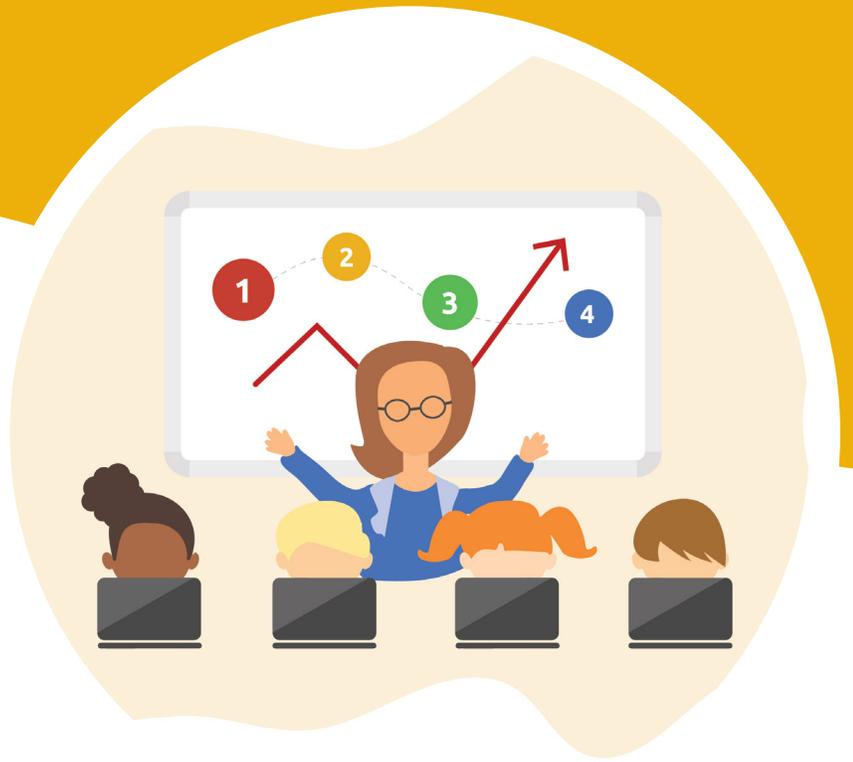
***Now is the time to set up sustainable, student-centered methods for successful hybrid learning in the classroom.***

A successful hybrid learning environment requires a different strategy compared to purely on-site or remote education. Teachers face new challenges when it comes to instruction, organization and student contact. At the same time, hybrid learning can promote engagement, learning successes and 21st century skills. This white paper shows how and offers concrete strategies for teachers to set up their classrooms for hybrid learning success.

Drawing on recent studies, our own partner cases and global hybrid learning practices we provide hands-on tips and guidelines for building an empowering and sustainable hybrid model, broken down into 4 steps. We will primarily focus on blended (online and offline) and student-centered learning methods. We hope this will inspire your daily teaching practice and encourage you to look at the bright side of the crisis: the side where opportunities await.

Enjoy reading!

**Team COOL**



# Executive Summary

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**From teacher-centered to student-directed education**

**Step 1: Focus on what your students need**

**Step 2: Find sustainable ways to meet students' needs**

**Step 3: Check in with the team**

**Step 4: Harness new skills and keep learning**

# From teacher-centered to student-centered education

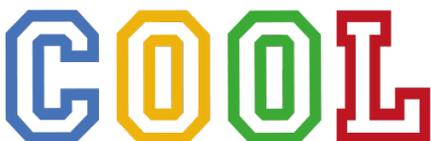
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**Lessons designed for the classroom can't be simply transferred into a hybrid environment. But if a traditional educational setup doesn't fit a hybrid learning model, then how should schools (re)organize their education in a sustainable way?**

This question has already catalyzed innovations and professional development in the past months. Educators are increasingly moving from *teacher-centered knowledge transfer* to *student-centered knowledge construction*, from static sending to active coaching.<sup>1</sup> This means teachers no longer act as transmitters of information, but rather become a guide of learning opportunities.

*"The hybrid model combines the best of in-school and remote learning, with digital engagement. It is more than a quick fix. It is a way to enhance and accelerate learning by providing student centered approaches to meet diverse learners needs."*<sup>2</sup>

Students are increasingly encouraged to explore topics themselves and support peers in project-based classwork, while teachers hone their technical, organizational, pedagogical and social skills.<sup>3</sup> Central to these developments is the prioritization of students' needs. It is this attention for the learner's perspective that supports a successful transition to a holistic hybrid learning context.<sup>4</sup> One where social-emotional wellbeing, meaningful education and evaluation and reflection make up equal parts.



# 1. Focus on what your students need

An allround successful hybrid learning strategy asks for a thorough understanding of what students need while being there for them and fostering meaningful contact.

## Listen actively

Paying attention to the needs of your students neither begins nor stops with adapting your pedagogy. It begins with listening – what is it they need right now? Don't make assumptions or ask yourself or colleagues what you can do. Ask your students how they are doing first. Survey what kind of difficulties as well as successes they are or have been experiencing. Take it from there.

### I. Discern your students' needs and document them for long term improvements

- **Ask questions**

Create a questionnaire or interview students to find out how they experience distance or hybrid learning. What do they like, what do they find frustrating? How easy or difficult is it for them to work more independently? Which apps or resources are helpful? What do they still miss or need? What would they keep or change in the future?

- **Document answers**

Collect quotes to make the answers as concrete as possible for other teachers, parents and the school board.

- **Reflect together**

Make reflection part of your lessons. Paying structural attention to the learning process and new ways of working helps create an understanding of the 'why' instead of merely the 'how' of new educational models and fosters student ownership. Let students evaluate and reflect with each other (peer-feedback) as well.



## Stay present

Students' social-emotional wellbeing should be a priority in any powerful learning atmosphere. Therefore, establishing teacher and peer presence through different forms of dialogue with remote students is central to effective hybrid learning.<sup>5</sup> Give your students the feeling that you're there for them by investing in meaningful contact, especially when physically apart.

### II. Establish a strong sense of presence and approachability in your day to day teaching:

- **Daily online meetups.**

Have a group check-in every morning to start the day together and a check-out at the end of the day, where you ask students about their experience: what went well today, what not so much?

- **Check-ins with remote students.**

Use Google Forms or Microsoft Forms as a check-in for students attending classes from home. With check-ins you can gauge the mood and gain insight into the well-being of your students.

- **Individual support.**

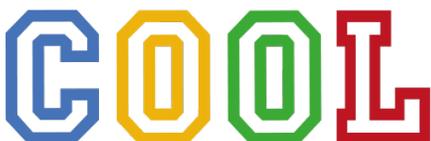
Map out which students are in need of extra contact. Use Google Meet or Microsoft Teams to help these students 1-on-1 at a fixed time of day. Ask two simple, effective questions: how are you doing and what do you need?

- **Peer support.**

Use a buddy system, for example linking students who are attending school with students staying home. How you design this is best determined together with your group.

- **Positive exchange.**

Organize a group Meet or Teams meeting that is purely about connection, not content. For example, let students at school think up fun questions for those at home. Focus on positive topics like: who is your greatest example and why?



## 2. Find sustainable ways to meet students' needs

Now that you have concrete indications of your students' needs, you can start to think of ways to meet those needs. Be prepared to consider a range of solutions rather than just one. And more importantly, be willing to change your take on the things you've been doing in a certain way forever. Innovation is not within your comfort zone.

### Think outside the box

Teachers worldwide, each with their own particular resources, have embraced new, creative educational solutions and strategies in the past months. It is exactly this flexibility and willingness to think outside the box that students need right now. Switching to hybrid learning, especially combining online and offline education, offers “virtually limitless design possibilities.”<sup>6</sup> But if there are no limits, where do you start?



*What if your school lacks adequate digital tools for online education? Focus on what is available and take it from there; there is never just one solution. 'Low-tech' and community-based solutions such as providing lessons via radio or television and 'no-tech' approaches such as printed resource distribution are viable alternatives.*

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Offer meaningful content that has personal added value for your students and is based on their specific needs and wishes. Include hands-on activities and give students the opportunity to actively reflect on the subject matter. This way you increase the intrinsic motivation that students need to learn more independently. For example:

- **Facilitate connection and conversation.**

If students are learning from home, have them video-meet or call each other up to discuss a question and give each other feedback.

- **Promote off-screen time.**

Let students post a video of themselves performing a hobby or outside activity, or start a letter writing project.

- **Boost self-efficacy.**

Ask students to keep a learning diary or portfolio, where they can collect work and log achievements and newly acquired skills.

## Embrace new ways of teaching

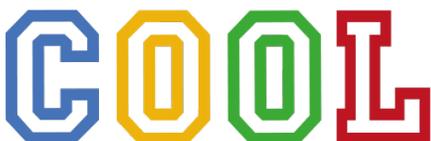
A clear benefit of hybrid learning is that teaching and learning can be flexible rather than fixed. It means less dependency on a classroom space, school hours and fixed schedules, so there's a lot of room to expand or switch up teaching methods. Rethink the way you give instructions or the type of resources and learning activities and enable your students to make choices in their own learning process.

- **Online.**

If you're teaching online, combine central instruction at the beginning with monitored self-study and use [Google Classroom](#) or [Microsoft Teams](#) to create assignments. Include a Meet-link and a collaboration Doc as well, so students can discuss and work together from home.

- **Adaptive.**

Introducing digital classroom tools like Classroom and the [COOL Platform](#), but also educational apps like [Kahoot!](#) enable a much more interactive and adaptive teaching style. In addition to having a positive impact on the learning process, online tools help students stay connected and bond in new ways.



- **Project-based.**

G Suite for Education and Microsoft 365 offer excellent tools to organize project-based activities. Let students collaborate in Google Docs or Microsoft Word Online. Let them brainstorm digitally in [Google Jamboard](#) or tell personal stories in [Microsoft Sway](#).

- **Immersive.**

Immerse your students in a digital experience. For example, use Google Earth to put your students on top of [Mount Everest](#), let them walk through the Dutch [Rijksmuseum](#) with Google Arts and Culture or dream away in the [world of Dali](#) in a 360-degree video experience.

- **Flipped.**

With flipped learning the learning process begins prior to the lesson. Students watch your (video) instruction in their own time, while class time is used for active problem-based learning, reflection and practice activities.

- **Remixed.**

Remix is a participatory learning model where students make, share, and collectively remake creative expressions – like a video or poem – relating to the content of your lesson.<sup>7</sup>

- **Unique.**

There is no ready-made solution when it comes to hybrid learning. Experiment, mix and match until you have found a hybrid strategy that meets both your students' needs and your educational vision.



## 3. Check in with the team

**For many schools, there was no time to reflect, improve and try again. Remote learning became the quick fix. Now it is time to reflect, share good practice, voice challenges and consider what you and other teachers at your school need to move forward.**

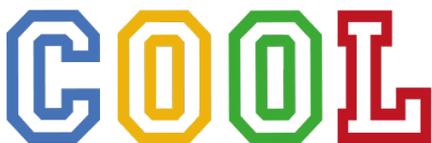
### Evaluate

It is important that, just like the students, school staff can make their voices heard as well. To gain insight into the opinions and general mood, create an online survey with specific open questions:

- How are you doing? How do you feel about the new ways of working?
- What is your experience with more project-based and student-centered education?
- How do you view the use of IT in the classroom?
- What communications worked best?
- What (individual) innovations and developments have taken place in the past period?
- What skills most enabled students during this time? What skills most enabled teachers?
- Which positive developments do you want to continue with?

### Discuss

Organize a (digital) meeting to brainstorm on a unified hybrid model. Think about ways to embed 21st century skills in the curriculum and compare experiences of teacher-centered and student-centered learning. Discuss statements that came up during the evaluation and reflect education from a learner's perspective. Quotes from students (step 1) can be a useful reference point. Identify strengths, needs and system gaps and bundle key learnings and objectives.



## Create support

The evaluation and discussion outcomes will offer insight into what your team needs. What can be done differently from now on and how will you approach this? How can you best support each other? Make a plan. This will help your school to develop a robust, long-term strategy that addresses student and staff wellbeing and ensures effective education.<sup>8</sup>

- **Build a community of support.**

Make collaborative sharing of pedagogical knowledge easy. For example, create a digital bulletin board on [Google currents](#) where you can share files and openly discuss ideas, good practice and in-the-moment challenges or needs with other teachers.

- **Appoint mentors.**

Ask one or more team members whose hybrid pedagogy is thriving to act as mentors. Mentors could, for example, offer email support and one-on-one consultations via Meet or Teams, or perhaps even host a webinar or virtual workshop.

- **Make IT policy a team effort.**

Previously, school admins were mostly dealing with IT on their own. With their newly gained digital skills, teachers can now complement the admin's technical expertise with their educational perspective.

- **Focus on positive communication.**

Choose a relaxed and supportive approach that promotes ideas and mutual inspiration, while also offering social-emotional support and community. Keeping spirits high will help the team stay flexible and resilient.



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## 4. Harness new skills and keep learning

If you are moving forward, you ought to be clear about the direction. Now is the time to make the leap from *schooling* to *learning*, integrate digital tools you've used to teach remotely in the classroom and empower students with a futureproof hybrid learning strategy.

### Focus on sustainable strategies, not quick fixes

Some schools gained significant insights about their systems, students and teachers. Others went into survival mode and are still struggling to recover. To keep or start moving forward:

- **Let IT work for you.**

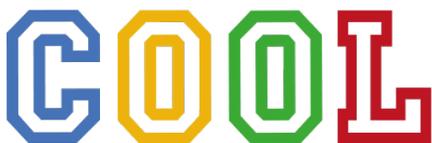
If technology has enabled your students to keep learning during lockdown, it should also play a crucial role in moving towards quality learning in a hybrid model.<sup>9</sup> Embed it into your daily teaching practice, not as a vehicle for content delivery, but as a tool for collaboration, connectedness, creativity and personalized learning.

- **Stay in it together.**

Focus on cooperation and work together on sustainable change. Draw from the best of traditional approaches, innovative practices, and insights from remote learning and use OneNote, Google Currents or Forms to continuously gather experiences and ideas. Let everyone give personal input to create maximum support for innovations.

### Teach, sleep, practice, repeat

As a teacher, you know like no other that learning something new requires practice, repetition, and the right input. Or else progress might be lost. So actively focus on preserving acquired knowledge, skills and experience. Meanwhile, continue to develop further. Perhaps you already have plenty of ideas to restructure your curriculum, but don't know where to start? Join a Google course on the [ways digital tools inspire creativity](#). Or get personal advice during an [on-topic call](#) with one of our experts.



# Conclusion

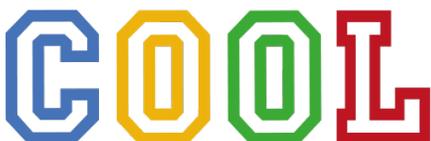
*“Never let a good crisis to go waste”*

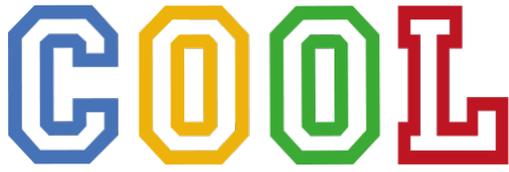
As 2020 draws to a close, let us not focus on loss or bad consequences, but on the way change inevitably brings forth new insights. This year’s disruption of life and learning as we knew it gave the educational landscape a positive impulse. We now have more IT tools, shared knowledge and new skills at our disposal than ever before and there is more support for and experience to lastingly innovate.

Transforming lessons learned into long-term action will ensure a robust framework for futureproof hybrid learning. So keep listening to your students’ needs. Invest time in building meaningful, human connections and support structures at both classroom and team level. Fully embrace new teaching methods and (digital) resources and work together to preserve acquired knowledge and experiences. This way you can ensure good education. Whatever comes your way.



**We hope you feel inspired and prepared to take your hybrid teaching to the next level. To stay on top of the latest tips and technologies for successful hybrid learning, please visit our website [www.cloudwise.cool](http://www.cloudwise.cool). Keep that learning curve steep!**





# About Cloudwise & COOL

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Cloudwise is Europe's leading Google for Education Partner. With a team of over 80 professionals, we provide schools with IT solutions for modern and personalized blended education every day. Our [COOL Platform](#) is all about giving students, teachers and IT staff the tools to work and learn easily and safely.

From a user-friendly dashboard with educational apps to monitoring student devices, easy access with Picture and QR login, a Portfolio app to boost 21st century skills, powerful exam tools and fast plagiarism checking: COOL unites the best of IT for education.

**Do you want to know how COOL can help your school with hybrid learning?**

[Visit website](#)

COOL is a  
product of  **cloudwise**

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