

Hybrid learning?

How to balance your teaching & parent engagement



... and be ready to dial up or down as required



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Dealing with uncertainty

It's been uplifting to see what schools like yours have achieved during the recent school closures. However, there's still a long journey ahead of us. With a lot of uncertainty remaining, schools may need to reopen in successive phases.

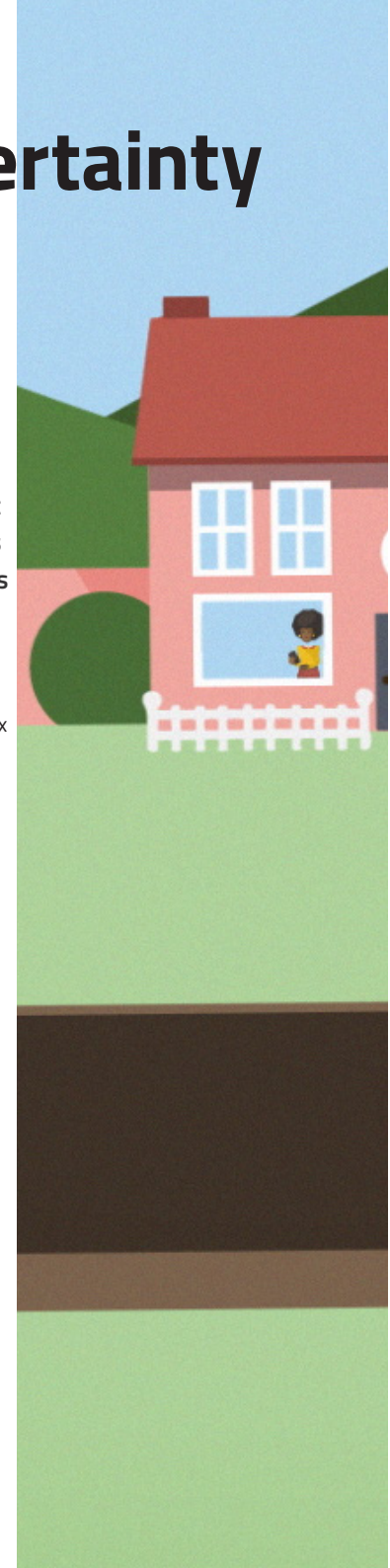
Hybrid learning is a combination of face to face contact with online, digital learning. More than ever, as schools contemplate welcoming students back, the possibilities that this model offers are increasingly attractive.

In this guide, we've identified some key fundamentals around teaching & parent engagement to keep in mind so you're ready to flex up or down as required. Think of them as your anchoring points that will hold true no matter what phase you're in: back in the classroom, hybrid learning or full virtual schooling.

We've also included practical tips and best practices from leading educational experts across 4 key areas:

- Rethinking teaching & learning
- Engaging parents in the learning conversation
- Celebrating school life
- Tracking & measuring engagement

Happy reading and [let us know what you think!](#) Our team of learning experts is there to help you and do check out our 2 other guides specifically addressing [back to the classroom](#) and [virtual schooling](#).



The fundamentals to remain agile

Getting started

Agree your essential digital tools for teaching and learning. This will help teachers know what to prioritise as they prepare. As the academic year begins, upload basic tasks and resources to ensure students have clear expectations for learning. Bonus: Create a space for teachers to curate and share best practice.

To support schools through the next few months we've suggested some key fundamentals to keep in mind for learning continuity. They can be easily scaled up or down to support whatever phase your school is in. By following these, you'll have the right support for the balancing act ahead of you.

Rethinking teaching & learning

1. Set home learning online
2. Prepare basic class resources online
3. Use software to record short lessons

Curriculum sequence, essential content, assessment methods — nearly all of it seems up for question as most of us prepare for some form of distance or blended learning. The role of digital tools is at the forefront. What tools and routines can you use that won't become obsolete or difficult to maintain as your context shifts?



Engaging parents in the learning conversation

1. Give parents a reason to go online
2. Provide online "office" support hours
3. Get started with continuous reporting

The role of parents in learning has fundamentally changed. Parent access to your school's digital platforms is more critical than ever as they meet an expanded set of duties. The key for schools is striking the right balance of on-demand resources and live interaction. How do schools make the necessary information available to parents while saving staff time for the interactions that count? We've got a few ideas in this guide!

Getting started

Record and share a series of short introduction videos to your essential digital platforms. Take a moment to explain how to log in, what parents should expect to find there and who to contact with questions. Parents can then access these videos as and when needed. Just be sure they are in an easily accessible location.



Getting started

Get a team together who will steer and manage the celebration this year! It will be easier to share the responsibility if you can get people from across the school community involved. A broader team will also enrich the ways in which you celebrate school life.

Celebrating school life

1. Curate digital evidence of school life regularly
2. Use eportfolios to share achievements with the whole school community
3. Encourage collaboration through forums

Learning is social. Children of all ages are also at various critical stages in their social development. With elements of distance learning behind and ahead of us, fostering a school community remains one of the trickiest to address. Some in-person community events may be possible during the school year, but we recommend a focus on building a digital community that will serve as a backbone no matter how you're working and learning in the coming months.



Tracking & measuring engagement

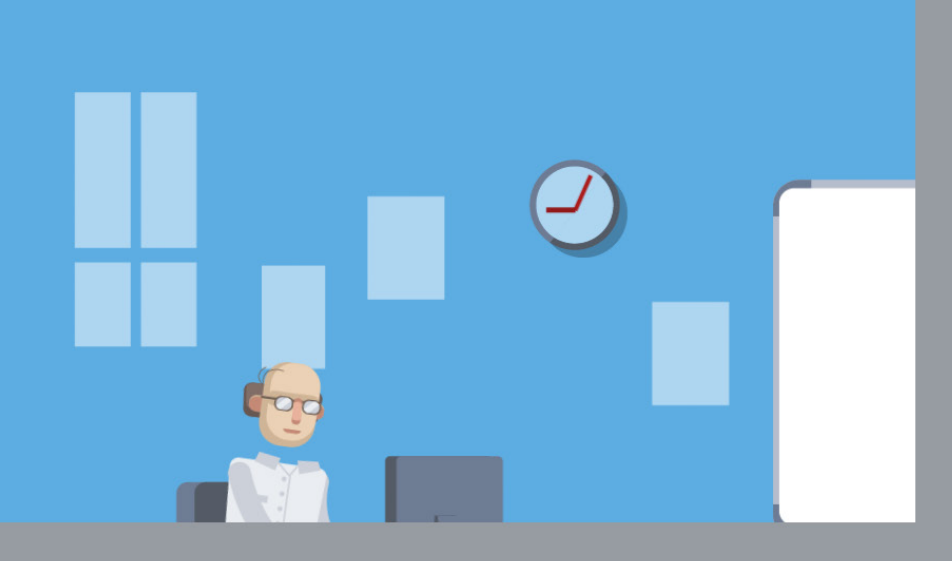
1. Use student interviews, surveys & engagement data to check what's working
2. Carry out online surveys with the whole school community
3. Keep an eye on engagement data to check what's working

How will you walk the halls of your school this year? Review marking practices? Monitor student wellbeing? Schools will need evidence gathering methods and metrics that can adapt to the range of in-class and distance learning we're facing in the coming school year. To start, the focus ought to be access to data. School's priorities will quickly shift to questions of engagement with learning resources and then quality in turn.

Getting started

Think about your goals for the coming year and what could be acceptable evidence of success. Then, consider how quantitative data (e.g. numbers of students completing homework on time) can be paired with qualitative data (e.g. a short student interview on homework) to give you a more robust picture.





Rethinking teaching & learning

In a hybrid learning environment, time with a teacher will be of premium value. Schools need to make sure that they are able to support students effectively when they are not physically in school so that face to face time can be used more productively. This will give teachers and students more time to focus on collaboration and discussion when they're working together.

Best practice: More creative home learning tasks

Teachers save time by setting home learning online. Whether students are in class or at home, access is equal. A key consideration is how to balance curriculum progression and the need for due dates with the flexibility of asynchronous learning.

Practical Tip

Flipped Learning offers teachers a way to support and direct their students' activities at a distance. Precious time spent together online can then be used more productively and students can continue to make good progress, with personalised feedback.

Best practice: Place all resources online

Again, access to class resources is equal. It will be important for SLT and teachers to determine how much of the resources need to be online in order to facilitate learning without creating unnecessary work for teachers.

Practical Tip

Don't reinvent the wheel! You will almost certainly have lots of resources ready to go - look at how you can share those effectively with students.

Practical Tip

Students are not expecting you to be a movie mogul, they are just happy to hear your voice. There are lots of tools out there that allow you to record material quickly and easily, in a variety of formats.

Best practice: Record all lessons

Similar to setting home learning tasks online, recorded lessons allow teachers to save time by recording what is done in class for access at home. These can easily complement live lessons via video conferencing. Essential parts of live lessons could be recorded as well. This will be key to allow for some synchronous progression through content for all students, especially in the case of reduced student numbers on site per day.

Educational experts view...



The digital submission of work has been a benefit for our students, and allowed staff to send more formative feedback remotely. The asynchronous approach to teaching and learning has also been a positive experience. Flipped learning, in particular, has enabled a more balanced partnership between students and teachers.

Georgina Bruce, Art Teacher at Balcarras School

Flipped learning has been effectively supported by Firefly. When not teaching a 'live' lesson, we record a short video to deliver ideas remotely in a way that the students can access it easily.

**Ronan McLaverty-Head, Head of Religion and Philosophy,
The King's School**



Take a closer look



We recently spoke to Open Sky's Head Teacher - Emmanuel Fayad. He shared how they reopened their school using the latest in technology to engage students based in-class and remotely.

[See how they transformed the classroom.](#)

Engaging parents in the learning conversation

Parents are likely to feel nervous about a hybrid model. They will want to know how best to support their children, as well as how they are progressing in school. Good communication will be key to ensure they understand what is required of them and their child as well as what their child is learning.



Best practice: Online resources for parents

In a hybrid model, usable and interactive online resources for parents will take on an added importance. It may be as simple as a half-termly homework schedule; however, parents will likely benefit from resources that help them help their children.

Practical Tip

When you're sharing assignments and resources with your students, make sure parents have access to them too. Remember, your audience will include parents who may not be experts in your subject so you will be teaching them as well!

Best practice: Hosting online parent evenings

In a hybrid model, schools will need to consider what is essential to be done in person with parents. Given the work of maintaining in person and distance learning, schools should focus on in person parent interaction on high benefit activities (IEP meetings or sessions to support parents with home learning).

Practical Tip

Take a step back to consider what can only be done in person and make sure that you focus on this when you are with your students. Anything that can be done remotely should be available for them to complete at home.

Take a closer look



Here is a great example of how GDST addressed student wellbeing by supporting parents with their ['managing minds' webinars](#).

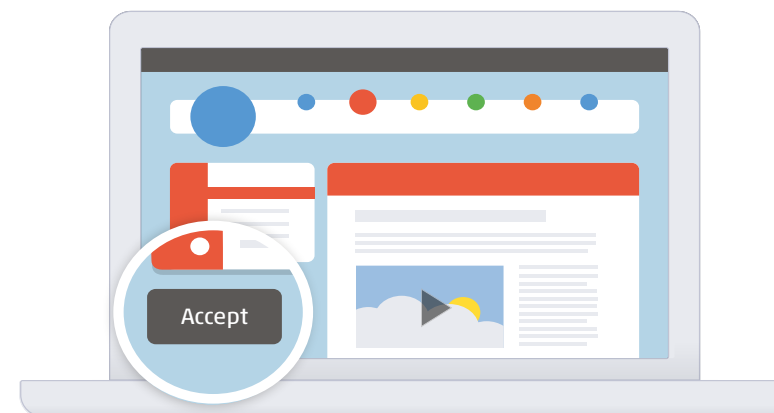
Educational experts view...



During our home learning experiences we used specific strategies to engage learners and keep parents informed of learning expectations and progress. Our Primary Years teachers created detailed pages and support resources each day for students and parents to access and students added their work to their Digital Portfolios in Firefly.

For Secondary students weekly tasks were created to outline synchronous and asynchronous learning and expectations and these were visible to parents and provided a space for collecting work and providing feedback.

Amanda Rablin, e-learning coordinator at St Peters Lutheran College



Celebrating school life

For many students, going to a hybrid phase of learning may result in them feeling more isolated from their friends and teachers. This is a great time to revisit some of the creative ideas your teachers came up with for community building during the school closures.



Best practice: Activities to bring children together

Find ways to make learning at home a part of the “normal” school day. Schools might consider ways to have an online lunch or games to bring students together during the school day.

Best practice: Facilitate community building

Facilitate community building by having students and their families participate in home-based activities and share their results - crafts, group sport challenges, etc. Hybrid learning allows schools to potentially distribute physical materials or directions to ensure equal access as well as have students bring the physical results into school.

Practical Tip

To help those not in school feel included, consider having school assemblies online. These provide a great opportunity for teachers and students to share their successes with the wider school community.

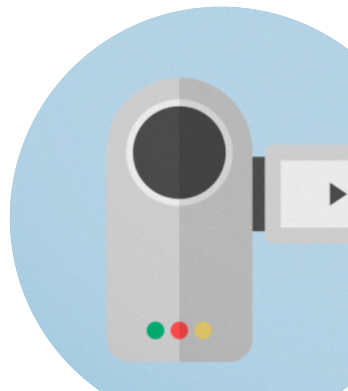
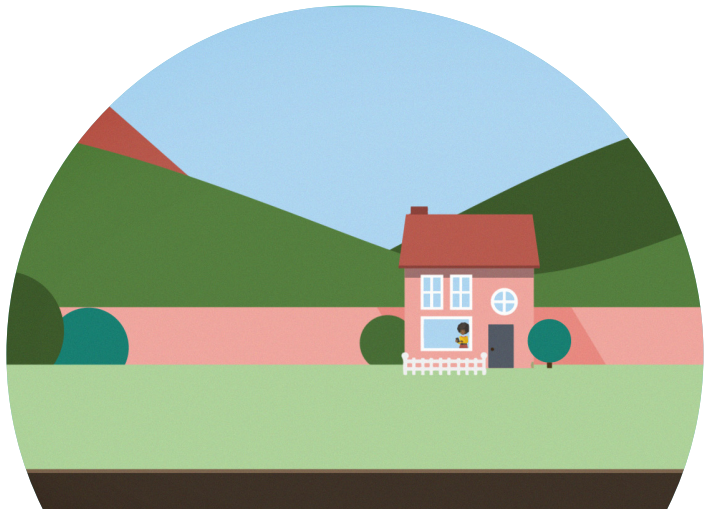
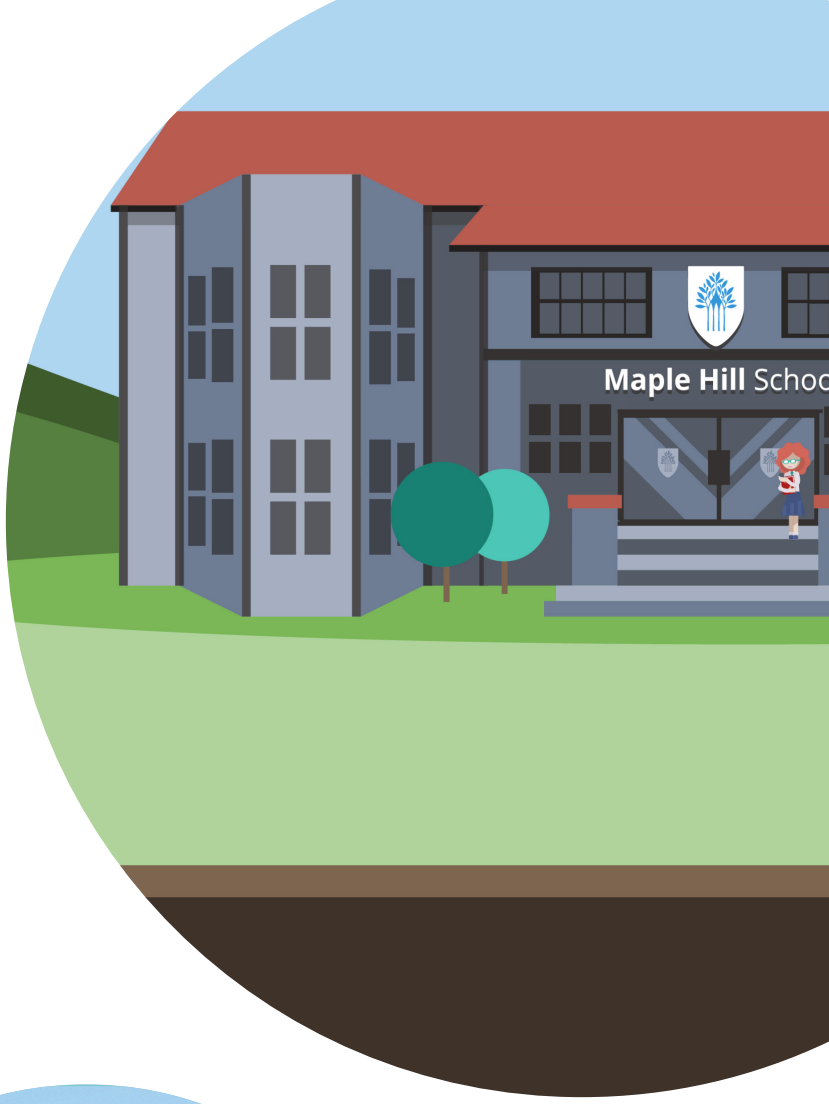
Practical Tip

Project activities are a great way of weaving cross-curricular learning. Online platforms provide a way to give everyone the tools they need for these projects whilst giving them the freedom to complete them at a pace that suits them.

Take a closer look



Campbell College created [a sense of community virtually](#) by encouraging students to perform acts of kindness and be an active part of their households and communities.



Tracking & measuring success

For some schools this will be the first time they have tried a hybrid approach. You may not get it right the first time, but you can always improve. Monitoring student engagement data and gathering feedback will be key.

Practical Tip

As well as using digital tools to track resource use, it can also be useful to survey your teachers, students and parents to understand their experience and how to support them going forward.

Best practice: Tracking the best learning materials & activities

In a hybrid model, as students move to a mixture of in-class instruction and independent learning, one area you may want to focus on is tracking which teachers are creating the most engaging learning materials and activities. These insights could then be shared with other departments to improve the overall learning experience.

Educational experts view...



When tracking student activity we realised sticking to the existing timetable didn't work as students were taking longer to get things done. We made some adjustments and then conducted student interviews to measure success of the strategy.

We were delighted to hear that 96% of respondents found that Firefly was a great way of conducting distance learning.

James Hoyle, Assistant Headteacher, Skipton Girls School



Parent engagement & Learning continuity platform

Find out more

fireflylearning.com

[@fireflyteam](https://twitter.com/fireflyteam)

Want a free demo of Firefly?

Head straight to fireflylearning.com/try-firefly