Teaching Methodologies After the Pandemic: Which One is Right for You?

By David E. Balch, PhD

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, education began transitioning from traditional learning to virtual learning. The pandemic accelerated this transition, and a recent report in Quality Matters, an online journal, overwhelmingly predicted that by 2025, programs and courses mixing on-campus and online learning experiences would become the norm.

In general, faculty seemed to be appreciative that online learning platforms enabled education to continue during the pandemic, in compliance with required safety protocols. A few even enjoyed the challenge of transitioning from face-to-face to virtual. Many agreed that the transition:

- reduced commute time
- increased time with family
- increased time management skills
- allowed for better networking
- increased the awareness of online resources.

While faculty generally felt positive about a virtual classroom, some educators became concerned that the quality of education may suffer. Faculty have found that:

- students need to be self-motivated to succeed
- they miss the interaction and dynamics that a face-to-face environment provides
- non-verbal clues go unnoticed

One commonality among all teaching methods is that each is successful only to the extent to which students are able to fully grasp the lesson. With the integration of modern developments, these methods are no longer cut and dried.

DELIVERY METHODS

Traditional or Face-to-Face

The face-to-face modality creates a more dynamic classroom environment allowing active debates and better participation. The learning is more direct and helps students develop vital interpersonal skills. A traditional classroom allows for real-time sharing and discourse with the teacher and other students. Both student and instructor have the ability to see, hear, and pick up on physical cues and body language in real time. This can result in getting their questions answered immediately.

Online or Virtual

Online learning is made possible through technological advancements, including Zoom. With the availability of personal computers and smartphones, online instruction is an alternative to traditional learning. The only limitations are access to a computer or smartphone, an internet connection, and willingness to learn.

Hybrid or Blended

A hybrid class incorporates elements of both online and in-person learning. Some models offer in-person courses with online components. Others have a mix of students who attend in person or through Zoom or other online platforms. A hybrid class adapts better to student learning styles than an exclusively online or in-person class by integrating technology with instructor-led classroom activities.

HyFlex (Hybrid-Flexible)

Like the hybrid model, the HyFlex class incorporates elements of face-to-face and virtual instruction. Typically, students choose whether to attend in a synchronous setting in which they are face-to-face and may receive immediate feedback, or to attend in an asynchronous setting, in which they will learn at their own pace through online software. Students are typically given the ability to switch back and forth throughout the semester.

Student Preferences

According to a recent student technology report published by Educause, 820 undergraduate students showed an increased preference for courses that are mostly or completely online. The preference increased 220%, from 9% in 2020 to 29% in 2022. While a number of students still prefer the face-to-face learning environment, that share has dropped from 65% in 2020 to 41% this year.
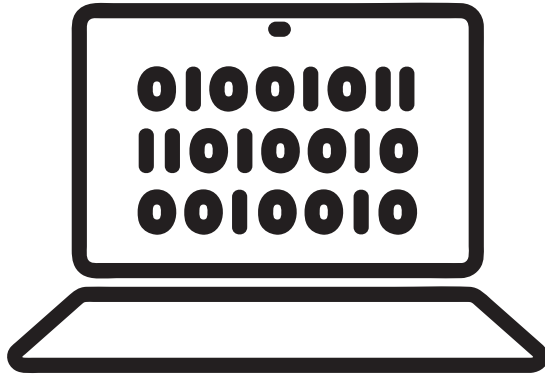
Some respondents indicated that they prefer face-to-face instruction for the social connections, while others prefer virtual learning because it accommodates personal needs, such as disability accommodation, family responsibilities, or work schedules.

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the Enabling Services college relationship manager, who discussed the newly introduced monthly fraud collection survey, and Jane Linder, the Student Success Suite product manager, who addressed the "spam filter utility and its significance in reducing fraudulent applications." This utility is one of many anti-bot filters, software applications, and programs that the state Technology Center planned on rolling out in 2022 and after.

In her *FACCCTS* interview, Kim Rich emphasized the sheer magnitude of online bots in monetary terms. If "a given student received $3,000 in financial aid," and 40,000 bots have infiltrated a given district, that's $120 million in financial aid misdistribution for an academic year. "It doesn't take a genius," Rich mused, "to see how quickly that adds up, especially if you consider the 73 districts and 116 community colleges that comprise the state system. And what about nationwide? They're making bucket loads of money—billions, billions, and billions." ∎

WHICH SYSTEM?

In a report by Barnes & Noble Education titled, "Noble Education's Annual College 2030 Report," nearly 2,600 students, faculty, and administrators at colleges and universities nationwide were surveyed to gain a better understanding of how they've adapted and developed solutions to conquer higher education after the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the respondents, 49% of students said they prefer a hybrid class format. In contrast, only 35% of faculty members favor a hybrid format, and 54% prefer fully in-person instruction. Only 18% of students and 11% of faculty favor fully remote classes.

In summary, a majority of older students and faculty members apparently appreciate the convenience of online learning but still struggle with digital literacy and the lack of student "presence." Younger students and faculty find themselves familiar with technology due to the ever-evolving presence of it in their lives. Technology means flexibility; from cloud-based platforms to videoconferencing, they've embraced the freedom of remote learning. Both younger and older faculty members and students appear to prefer the hybrid model incorporating face-to-face and virtual learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic that forced educational institutions to make decisions about face-to-face, hybrid, and virtual instruction may ultimately answer the question, "Which style is best for my class?" This author predicts the answer will be, "It depends." ∎