

Section 4

Implementing and Scaling Up Flex Models

Although the HyFlex model is new for adult education, several programs have already scaled up and offer HyFlex in some or all of their classes. Other programs might draw on the lessons learned when they moved from piloting to scaling up their distance education programs; insights from those transitions can help scaling up HyFlex instruction. Much of this section draws from interviews with adult education administrators and teachers implementing HyFlex and the https://edtechbooks.org/ideal_dl_handbook (Vanek et al., 2020). It will continue to be updated as HyFlex becomes more widespread and we collectively gain more knowledge on implementation best practices.

Piloting and Refining the Model

Create an Environment that Encourages Implementation

As with distance education implementation, first attempts at HyFlex implementation should be done as a pilot activity — rather than a wholesale program-wide transition. This encourages an experimental approach that includes trial and error, with a focus on finding both what does and doesn't work.

Spend Time Planning the Components of Your HyFlex Program

As you work through this guide, you'll note that piloting HyFlex requires planning for many program elements, including learner recruitment and orientation, instructional planning, technology purchasing and training, and teacher selection and preparation. Each of these areas requires careful planning and preparation to ensure learners, teachers, and staff are best prepared to pilot this model. Guidance for this setup can mirror the activities described for setting up distance education programs and will be found in the *IDEAL Handbook* (Vanek et al., 2020). Beatty (2019) also offers a series of planning templates in the chapter https://edtechbooks.org/hyflex/hyflex_design.

Expect Uncertainty and Changes throughout the Pilot

While piloting a HyFlex program, there is bound to be some uncertainty for both teachers and learners. Administrators can support teachers by acknowledging that uncertainty exists when trying something new and understanding if first attempts do not match expectations (Vanek et al., 2020). Several adult education HyFlex teachers noted that having a supportive administrator — one who listens and is open to ideas, anticipates and responds to needs, and creates opportunities for sharing ideas with a team — has been essential for navigating the HyFlex model and better serving learners.

Determine Your Measures of Success

Before your pilot begins, it's helpful to determine what success will look like for learners and teachers. While positive student outcomes, such as learning gains and National Reporting System (NRS) goal attainment, are important for adult education, you may want to look at other measures of success during the pilot (Vanek et al., 2020). These may include digital literacy skills growth, digital resiliency, learner persistence, course completion, confidence in using the

technology, and additional classroom management skills demonstrated. Administrators should work with staff to determine what outcomes beyond NRS goals will be used to measure success and how to track them.

Identify What Does and Doesn't Work

Several HyFlex adult education program staff interviewed shared that they really needed to spend time to identify what works and what doesn't work, especially related to technology for in-person and online synchronous instruction. Gather feedback from learners, teachers, and staff to determine what promising practices you want to continue as you scale up your program.

Set a Vision and Develop a Plan

Building Buy-In

While adult educators have always been called on to juggle many duties to best serve learners, the ongoing shifts in instruction because of the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic have created even more demands (Belzer et al., 2022; Vanek, 2022b). Building buy-in for the HyFlex model is a critical first step before piloting to ensure that staff don't feel overwhelmed with an additional change.

Most HyFlex program administrators interviewed for this guide offered HyFlex teaching as an option, but, to build buy-in, did not require it. They spent time teaching staff about what HyFlex is, talking through the benefits and considerations for learners and teachers, and worked as a team to plan implementation. Learners provided important feedback about their interest in the flexibility that HyFlex offers and about their access to digital technology.

A team approach to planning that includes learners, teachers, administrators, and technology support staff can ensure that all aspects of programming are discussed and attended to in the pilot.

Determining HyFlex Model, Curriculum, and Digital Technology

This guide offers several different approaches for best implementing a HyFlex model for adult learners. Your program team will need to determine how to structure the three modes for your needs. It may match one of the examples in this guide or you may find you need to implement something different.

As with traditional in-person instruction, you'll want to consider how often and for how long the synchronous online class will meet. Determine the class size limits for each mode. Consider whether learners will have the flexibility to choose their participation mode daily, weekly, or by session/semester. Some agencies found that they needed to focus first on the online and in-person modes and build the asynchronous mode once those two modes were more established.

You'll want to determine what curriculum and digital technology to use for each of the three modes. Look at what education digital technology your program already has access to in addition to what other digital technology might support your HyFlex pilot.

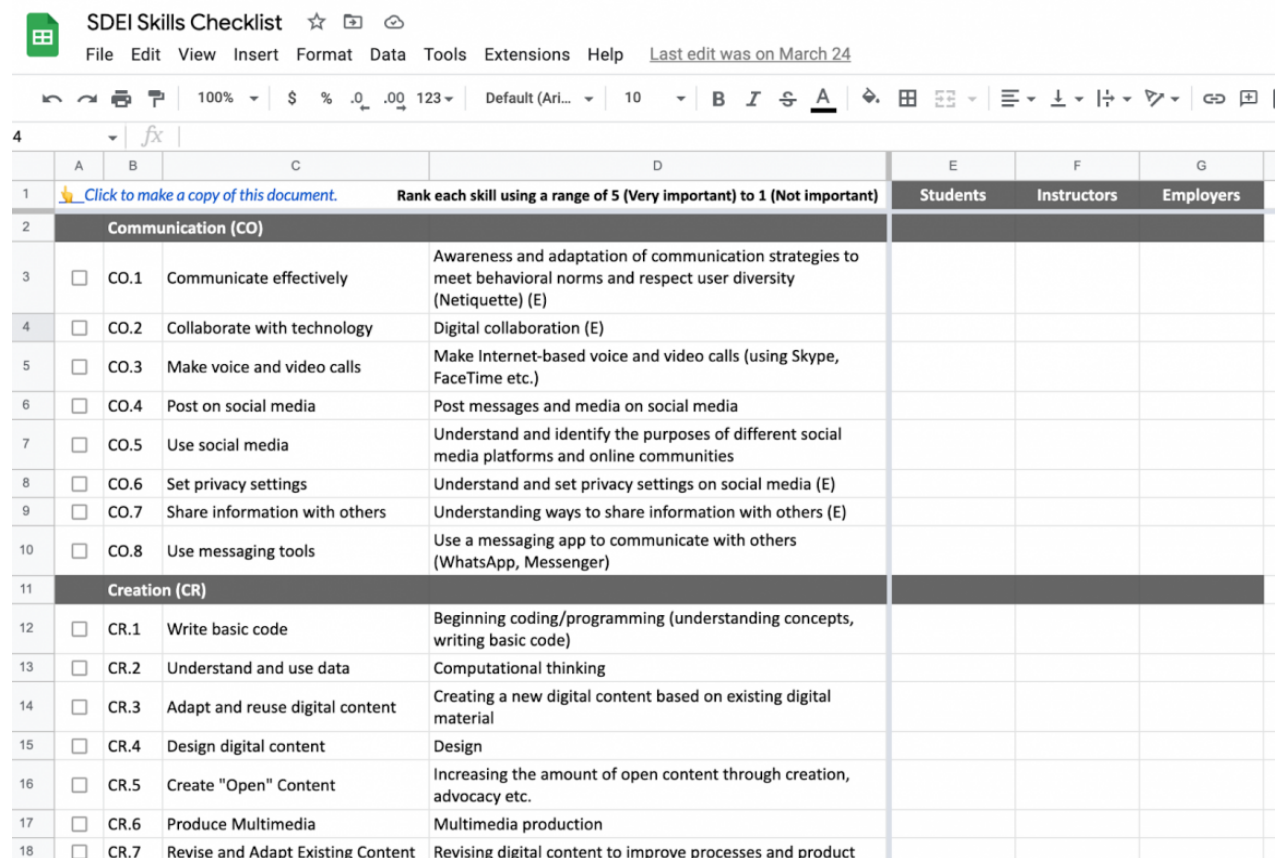
Technology Support

All the HyFlex adult education staff interviewed expressed the importance of technology support to both teachers and learners in this model, especially in the preliminary stages of piloting and implementation. Think about what resources you have available, what additional tech support could be leveraged — from the curriculum or technology vendor, and how that technology support will be available to learners and teachers throughout the pilot.

Digital Literacy, Access, and Equity

All adult education learners should be gaining digital literacy skills, regardless of which HyFlex mode(s) they choose. These skills are critical not only for success in the HyFlex class, but also for career and postsecondary success. You'll

want to consider what digital literacy skills are needed to participate in the HyFlex program and how to build those skills and digital resilience with learners. Consulting a digital skills framework lends structure to this task (Vanek, 2022a). The <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/Tech/DigitalEquity/digital%20skills%20for%20diverse%20users.pdf> (Wedlake et al., 2019) is one option. World Education created a checklist that teachers can use to survey the skills students need. That checklist, shown in Figure 8, could also be modified and used as a self-assessment tool, so learners can gauge their strengths and gaps.



SDEI Skills Checklist

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Rank each skill using a range of 5 (Very important) to 1 (Not important)				Students	Instructors	Employers
2	Communication (CO)						
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.1	Communicate effectively	Awareness and adaptation of communication strategies to meet behavioral norms and respect user diversity (Netiquette) (E)			
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.2	Collaborate with technology	Digital collaboration (E)			
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.3	Make voice and video calls	Make Internet-based voice and video calls (using Skype, FaceTime etc.)			
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.4	Post on social media	Post messages and media on social media			
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.5	Use social media	Understand and identify the purposes of different social media platforms and online communities			
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.6	Set privacy settings	Understand and set privacy settings on social media (E)			
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.7	Share information with others	Understanding ways to share information with others (E)			
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	CO.8	Use messaging tools	Use a messaging app to communicate with others (WhatsApp, Messenger)			
11	Creation (CR)						
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.1	Write basic code	Beginning coding/programming (understanding concepts, writing basic code)			
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.2	Understand and use data	Computational thinking			
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.3	Adapt and reuse digital content	Creating a new digital content based on existing digital material			
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.4	Design digital content	Design			
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.5	Create "Open" Content	Increasing the amount of open content through creation, advocacy etc.			
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.6	Produce Multimedia	Multimedia production			
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	CR.7	Revise and Adapt Existing Content	Revising digital content to improve processes and product			

Figure 9. SDEI checklist (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1L3vL_yR56MC-xswOqaEnVmZG5ntqk3DIRyX9Q6y7OrQ/edit#gid=0)

You'll also want to consider what digital devices learners will have access to in class and remotely. The Pew Research Center (2021) reports that most Americans own a cell phone, with 85 percent owning a smartphone. However, for Americans who earn less than \$30,000, smartphone ownership dips to 76 percent (Pew Research Center, 2021). Additionally, U.S. adults with less than a high school diploma are most likely, out of all educational attainment levels, to indicate that they own a smartphone but that they don't have access to a high-speed internet connection at home (Anderson, 2019). Due to the pandemic, many adult education programs have experience with device and Wi-Fi hotspot loan programs or partner with other community organizations to provide access to digital devices and the internet.

<https://digitalus.org/digital-navigators/> are one way that adult education programs have found to ensure that learners have access to devices, the internet, and digital literacy skills. In addition, the new Digital Equity Act that is part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will provide grants to states, as well as direct grants to some programs, which can be used to provide funding and resources to support access to digital devices, the internet, and digital literacy supports (National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 2022).

When looking at digital literacy, access, and equity, some questions to consider are:

- How can we ensure that learners in all three modes are gaining digital literacy skills?
- What devices are going to be required for learners participating in the HyFlex program?
- How can we support learners with gaining access to devices, the internet, and digital literacy skill-building resources?

Budgeting

Administrators adding a HyFlex model need to consider costs related to this instructional approach: instructional materials, hardware and software digital technology needed for synchronous instruction, teacher and learner technology support, and staffing. It is also important to allow teachers enough time for planning, professional development, teaching, and evaluating the pilot activities (Vanek et al., 2020).

Staff will need additional time to:

- Learn to use the technology needed for synchronous online instruction
- Choose or develop a curriculum and develop lesson plans and instructional materials for the three modes
- Post instructional materials to the learning management system
- Set up the technology before each class and shut it down at the end of class
- Participate in professional development and reflection activities
- Meet with the HyFlex teaching team to plan and reflect

Planning and professional development time provided for HyFlex teachers varied across programs. Some examples are:

- One hour of planning per three hours of synchronous class
- Thirty minutes of planning for each day of teaching
- Twenty additional hours for becoming adept with the learning management system

Some strategies to support that planning time included:

- Having synchronous classes be 30 minutes shorter and giving that time to teachers for planning
- Providing paid time for staff to come together for professional development and planning
- Hiring an instructional designer, for example, to assist with creating templates for the LMS so that teachers could adapt those rather than starting from scratch

Identifying and Supporting Teachers

Identifying Teachers

One of the keys to a successful pilot is having the right teacher(s) pilot the HyFlex model. Adult education program teachers, professional developers, and administrators who we interviewed shared that teachers needed a specific set of skills which included, but are not limited to:

- Comfort teaching online
- Willingness to try a different teaching model and technology
- Patience, resilience, and flexibility
- Ability and willingness to troubleshoot hardware and software technology

Some programs found that they needed to adapt what skills they were looking for when hiring new teachers and ensure that teachers already felt comfortable with teaching online or were willing to learn.

Just as distance learning is not for every learner, HyFlex teaching is not for every teacher. Whenever possible, teachers should be asked to volunteer, or be allowed to self-select, to try HyFlex teaching. One agency shared that they started with two highly motivated teachers who piloted HyFlex in order to learn more and identify promising practices. These

two teachers then shared their experiences during staff meetings and trainings to help other teachers learn more about the HyFlex model and see how it was working at their agency. This encouraged other teachers to consider HyFlex teaching.

Supporting Teachers

Administrators need to understand and be prepared to support the additional responsibilities that teachers will assume in piloting a HyFlex model. Professional development and opportunities to network with other HyFlex teachers before and during piloting and implementation are crucial.

Programs reported the following professional development needs and ways to provide that support:

Table 4. Examples of HyFlex Professional Development Topics and Formats

HyFlex Professional Development Topics	Professional Development Formats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using technology for the synchronous online class • Building a class in a learning management system • Using educational technology that engages learners in all three modes • Teaching strategies for managing both in-person and online synchronous learners • Becoming more familiar with the online curriculum (for example, if using a publisher's curriculum) • Assessing learner progress in all modes • Planning lessons for HyFlex classes • Learning common technology (e.g., apps, LMSs, video conferencing) • Troubleshooting and strategies for supporting learners when issues arise during a synchronous class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly meetings • Special workshops focused on a certain topic • Experienced HyFlex or online teacher training and mentoring other teachers • Statewide communities of practice • Professional learning communities • Teacher HyFlex learning circles • HyFlex showcases where teachers share what they are doing in their HyFlex class • Observing another HyFlex teacher in person or via live or recorded video

The EdTech Center @ World Education has created a <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIMfSiUPpWPEIO1WXA3tTebNEz31ztrUB> that can be used to show what HyFlex looks like in an adult education class, with plans to expand this library of videos in the future. The EdTech Center has also developed a blog series and has <https://edtech.worlded.org/strategy-session-resources/> that took place in December 2021 featuring two HyFlex teachers.

Scaling Up

As your agency learns from piloting or implementing a HyFlex pilot, you'll begin to identify ways to build your HyFlex program. You may find that as you add additional HyFlex classes, student recruitment and class orientation become more integrated with how you onboard classroom learners. As you expand HyFlex beyond your pilot group, it's important to promote organization-wide awareness of the HyFlex program so that all staff have a basic understanding of what it is and how it can benefit learners.

Conclusion

Creating a new instructional model for learners is typically neither easy nor swift. Since HyFlex is a new model for the adult education field, it's important to remember that this will require time and effort. However, early adopters to this method have found success for both teachers and learners with this model.

Questions to Consider

1. **If you are exploring HyFlex, but have not yet implemented it:** Describe at least two areas in the guide that you want to focus on as you begin to plan and implement a HyFlex class. How will you incorporate those two areas in your planning and implementation process?

If you have already started a HyFlex class at your program: Name at least one area from this chapter in the guide that you feel like your program did well in implementing HyFlex? Name at least one area you feel like you want to focus on now as you refine your HyFlex class?

2. Share at least two ways you currently do or will do to support teachers with the additional responsibilities that come with HyFlex teaching?

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