7.6 Transitioning from a HyFlex Pilot to Larger Implementation

Garden Grove Adult Education

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Description of program and learners

Garden Grove Adult Education is a school-based adult education provider in southern California that offers a wide variety of services to more than 2,000 adult learners annually. As of June 2022, Garden Grove Adult Education served approximately 1,500 learners in 39 HyFlex classes. Twenty-nine instructors each taught at least one HyFlex class. Although HyFlex implementation is now available in most classes, it started in April 2021 with all ESL and ASE (Adult Secondary Education) teachers implementing the model.

Recruitment and Orientation

Learners were provided with information about the HyFlex classes when they enrolled in the program. HyFlex learners were asked to commit to one format (online or in-person) as their primary means of participation. However, learners could switch when needed by communicating with their teacher. This method was chosen because the HyFlex pilot began when the school district required limits on the number of in-person students because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff found that when they first started HyFlex in 2021, most of the students attended online. However, that changed and, as of the interview period, more learners participated in person.

When the pilot began, ESL teacher Alisa Takeuchi provided online and in-class orientation to learners. As the program grew and HyFlex orientation content became established, orientation responsibilities were transferred to the school support staff who normally provided orientation for learners.

HyFlex in Action: Course and Instruction

Garden Grove Adult Education offers the following HyFlex classes: Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, English as a Second Language, and Adults with Disabilities. HyFlex classes meet four times a week for 2.5 hours a day and are available in the morning, afternoon, and evening.

Planning

The program provided learners with two primary modes of HyFlex participation: in-person and synchronous online. Teachers also used Google Classroom to post class materials that could be accessed by learners who missed the synchronous class, in addition to posting the online curriculum that learners could use for homework and optional extra practice.

Delivering Instruction

Alisa taught two HyFlex classes for English language learners whose skills were at NRS Levels 2 and 3 on CASAS. She projected the Zoom screen onto the whiteboard and encouraged in-person and online students to greet each other as they joined the class. She then shared a Google Doc with the class agenda. She used both online tools and printed books for her class. At the end of the session, she took a photo of the class (with their permission) and emailed it to the students to build a learning community.

Technologies

The program used an OWL 360 Camera/microphone to capture in-person learners' video and audio and an interactive overhead projector to show in-person learners the online students who join via Zoom and shared screen content on whiteboards. In-person learners had access to Google Chromebooks, which were used in class at least once a week. Learners in the Adults with Disabilities class were given iPads for their class. Teachers used their laptops and external monitors to join Zoom.

Google Classroom served as the program's learning management system, with all online and in-person learners having access. In addition, the program used Google Docs, Google Forms, and Google Slides, which easily integrated with Google Classroom. Teachers also used a variety of publishers' curricula and free educational websites, such as USA Learns.

Technical Support and Training for Teachers and Learners

Tech Support

Learners could call a district-wide tech support person as well as receive tech support from teachers and the part-time adult education IT staff person. Teachers created a lot of technology "How To" guides, which were then translated into different languages. Learners also helped each other during class.

The part-time adult education school IT staff person provided ongoing tech support for teachers and serviced the Chromebooks that were provided by the program.

Teacher Training

A district-wide IT person initially provided training on the OWL 360 Camera. A custodian helped with installing the hardware and connections. Garden Grove also had a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA), who helped to set up the HyFlex classrooms.

Teachers shared HyFlex experiences and provided informational presentations to all staff as the new model of instruction was being implemented. As more teachers chose to use the OWL 360 camera in their HyFlex class, pilot teachers provided additional training and coaching. They also participated in professional development (PD) offerings provided by the school district and the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network. Teachers observed peers with more HyFlex experience. Administrator M'Liss Patterson encouraged other programs to test out the HyFlex technology. Staff meetings and professional development time were designed for teachers to experience the HyFlex model as students. Over time, the classroom design became more sophisticated, with the addition of a second screen, a standing table, and other hardware that allowed staff to support both in-person and online students. She also advocated for PD to include opportunities for teachers piloting this method to meet, share, and learn together.

Implementation: Lessons Learned

The administrator encouraged an educational and data-driven approach used to build buy-in. As some teachers were piloting using the OWL 360 Camera in their HyFlex class, they would share their experiences at staff meetings to help other staff understand what a HyFlex class was and share teacher and learner experiences. The program administrator shared data from learner surveys which showed that learners had an interest and need for online learning opportunities.

Additional data was shared from the pilot which showed there was an increased persistence for learners participating in HyFlex.

Data Collected for Program Improvement

M'Liss shared data from more than 400 learner surveys, which showed that learners had an interest in and need for online learning opportunities. She also used learner participation hours as one data source. Although the number of learners participating in HyFlex was smaller than pre-COVID class sizes, persistence rates were higher. Teachers were encouraged to share qualitative and quantitative data, such as digital skills increases, learner engagement, and class attendance. Staff also used a rubric they developed in an IDEAL 102: Resource Evaluation course to evaluate the technology they had purchased.

Benefits

The benefits of HyFlex implementation included increased digital literacy skills for both learners and teachers, increased learner persistence, more flexibility to help overcome learners' barriers to participation, and additional learner choice and empowerment.

Challenges

Serving learners who had emerging digital literacy skills and/or English language levels was a challenge. It was addressed by using a lot of images to demonstrate steps and modeling. Teachers also found it challenging to troubleshoot when learners joined online activities using different types of devices. The program was working on building its tech support options and making the format smoother and easier for teachers and learners since using HyFlex was a heavier lift than using only one modality.