The "New Norm" of Distance and Hybrid Learning

Essential elements to ensure equal opportunity for all students no matter where teaching and learning are taking place

May, 2021

averusa.com/education/distance-learning

Since the pandemic took hold in early 2020 and schools were initially forced to shut down, schools and districts have gone through a variety of transitions in the ways teachers delivered curriculum and the way students received it. Despite this paradigm shift in teaching and learning, the basic pedagogy of keeping every student engaged remains the same. The challenges faced during the pandemic not only included maintaining direct connection with students, but also effectively adjusting to changes as the climate evolved. Any investments made to keep education flowing should be designed with long-term sustainability in mind, rather than temporary "Band-Aids." With school budgets quickly realigned and additional funding made available to build the infrastructure to support the "new norm" of education, the main aspect of keeping students engaged is creating the ability to maintain that connection between both teacher and student through video.

According to Tech & Learning Magazine: *"One of the ways to make screen time more meaningful is to use available technology to create as dynamic an environment as possible. Video streaming is the best way to do this. Blending a mix of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (pre-recorded) lessons will help mix learning modalities so that students remain engaged."* *1

Even as the Pandemic begins to level out with many students and teachers returning to the classroom, the future is still uncertain as to whether there might be a need for future shut-downs. Furthermore, one thing that has become apparent is that a hybrid option should be available for those students who will not be able to return to the classroom full-time.

This guide serves as a resource to understanding what types of solutions can provide the foundation for effective distance- and hybrid-learning concepts, as well as those that are sustainable over the long term no matter how the climate might change.

Hybrid Learning as the New Norm

From what we have learned over the past year, and regardless of how the Pandemic evolves, many schools and districts will maintain a hybrid model where some students are able to continue learning from home either over short or long term, while in-class instruction occurs simultaneously.

According to CNBC "*Some schools have already committed to adopting a 'hybrid' model to education in and outside the classroom in the years ahead. For starters, students will likely see smaller classes and staggered scheduling, which could include alternating days of the week or times of the day, to help limit the number of people physically present in a building at any time, according to guidelines set by the American Federation of Teachers.*" *2

One of the most important elements for schools and districts to prepare for is to allow for a quick and seamless direction change regardless of the climate so teaching and learning continuity is maintained without speedbumps.

Keeping Remote Students Engaged Amidst Distractions

Keeping remote learners on-task and engaged in your curriculum can be a constant challenge regardless of which Distance Learning scenario is being used at the time. Distractions for students at home can be overwhelming, whether it be a pet that needs attention, a sibling throwing a tantrum, a new release from Fortnight, or a BFF's latest post on Instagram.

According to eSchool News "*While effective educators have always weaved some degree of entertainment into their teaching, it's even more critical now as we compete with other distractions in a remote environment. When thinking about making online lessons more engaging, it can be helpful to start by translating some of the effective strategies used during in-person lessons. Create fun and entertaining presentations such as virtual pajama week, virtual creative-character week, or even TikTok week.*" *3

One of the keys to achieving continuous engagement is to help remote students feel like they are part of the in-class experience. Having the capabilities for live interactions, where they can see their teacher as well as their in-school classmates, keeps remote learners from other distractions, while giving them a sense of inclusion within what they are used to in a "normal" school setting. Some essential yet simple video technologies can help retain the attention of remote learners, while keeping every student and teacher engaged on the same level. These are where the true benefits of Auto Tracking Cameras, as well as even existing Document Cameras, can help create that simple bridge between the teachers, remote learners and in-class students. And for those students who are in-class and are undoubtedly passing and sharing devices, ways to effectively sanitize those devices are more essential than ever.

Auto Tracking Distance Learning Cameras

While Video Collaboration and Conferencing have been around for decades, solutions are typically designed for the corporate boardroom and to a limited capacity, higher education. However, the past year has revealed the need for a camera solution for the very unique and specific K-12 environment, and there are some key elements to look for when applying a camera system to the New Norm of K-12 Distance and Hybrid Learning.

1. **Auto Tracking:** Not all Auto Tracking is the same. While there are many different solutions, Auto Tracking in a K-12 environment is very different from typical use cases. Advanced AI Auto Tracking that is hands-free and automatically tracks the full or half body of a teacher eliminates the variables of wearing PPE gear with face tracking, or classroom noise with voice tracking. The addition of Zone Tracking also allows an educator to pre-set areas of the classroom such as the dry erase board, IFP, in-class students and more.

2. **Optical Zoom:** Optical zoom offers real-life clarity when zooming to particular locations or presenters without distortion. Focusing on a dry erase board, IFP, or science project clearly so remote learners feel like they are still in the front of the class enhances the lesson content and keeps students engaged.

3. **Seamless Compatibility with Distance Learning Vehicles:** Instantly compatible with popular distance learning services such as Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and others without configuration or additional programming.

4. **Privacy Modes:** Automatically shutting down and turning the actual camera head into its cradle when not in use ensures the privacy of both teachers and students when the camera is not live during curriculum.

5. **Free Software and Support:** With no additional service or maintenance fees, free software is important to update, maintain, and control school and district wide camera systems from one location. Furthermore, lesson recording, streaming, uploading, and even annotation can be combined with one solution without extra cost.

– Jose Tagle, Technology Director for the Buckley School:

*"After looking at other tracking camera equipment, the AVer Auto Tracking did not rely on audio, so if I moved over 'here' the other camera waited until I spoke before it found me. The AVer camera also did not rely on face recognition because that will become a problem with everyone wearing a mask. We decided that the camera with the best AI tracking module would give us the most flexibility we needed for various and unforeseen scenarios." *4*

Document Cameras

Document cameras are time-tested classroom tools. Whether students are learning from home or in-class, document cameras have emerged as multi-faceted solutions to add real-life curriculum examples no matter where teaching is happening by clearly displaying your physical lesson material to both your in-class and remote students simultaneously. Document Cameras can be used as a traditional document camera or a high-definition web cam, and can easily be taken between home or school so your document camera can be the bridge for all of your learners without missing a beat. Key elements for using document cameras in this new environment include:

1. **Image Clarity and Frame Rate:** Whether in the classroom or learning remotely, experiencing physical demonstrations such as science experiments, handwriting, text and pictures from a book, or other real-life elements of a lesson is extremely important. Losing attention due to choppy or inconsistent video can quickly decrease engagement.

2. **Portability, Reliability, Durability:** Equipment should be portable enough to be able to move easily about the classroom to different stations or student groups. It should be reliable and durable to be able to take home to continue curriculum remotely if necessary. It should be built to survive accidents, with a solid warranty where a new document camera can be shipped within 24 hours regardless of the reason.

3. **Multi-purpose:** Higher quality and higher resolution document cameras can offer high-definition video, whether to demonstrate physical curriculum or as a high-clarity web cam. It shouldn't be an issue to use the camera and broadcast to remote students from the classroom, or to teach from home.

4. **Compatible with distance-learning vehicles:** Portable and UVC/UAC compliant, document cameras can also be used as your distance-learning camera, and can easily be taken home if the situation calls for it. Seamless integration with Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and others allows the right document camera to become the heartbeat of the new teaching and learning model.

5. **Free Software and Support:** Free interactive software allows for annotation and highlighting on live presentations, video and audio recording with instant upload, free two way RMA shipping, and free Advanced Replacement.

– 5th Grade Science Teacher Stefanie Lump:

"No matter what happens in the future, and the two things that are most important to me to take home or use in the classroom are my laptop and my AVer Document Camera." *5

Student Device Charge and Storage Carts

With students returning to classrooms, device charge and storage solutions are still necessary to maintain these technologies. With unknown variables such as number of students in a classroom and part time in-class students, charge and storage carts need to be available for charging and security as students are in-class. With some students using these devices both at home and in the class, additional safety and cleaning measures should be in place to keep devices clean. Also, flexibility with the number and sizes of devices is important, since student attendance can fluctuate on any given day. Key elements for choosing cart solutions include:

1. **UV Sanitization:** Hands-free, automatic, and lab tested sanitization of student devices ensures student devices such as Chromebooks, laptops, tablets, STEM kits and other shared devices will be clear from outside exposure prior to use in under 5 minutes.

2. **Adaptive Intelligent Charging:** Regardless of the number of devices, make or model, adaptive intelligent charging ensures all devices are charged based upon their individual needs. It safeguards against overcharging and undercharging, to keep devices usable while protecting battery life.

3. **Configurable and Customizable:** The ability to configure and adjust the size and number of slots allows educators to modify the storage capacity as numbers of devices change or if different size devices are used. Teachers can even adjust the cart to charge and sanitize other devices such as headphones, STEM kits, and other commonly shared devices.

4. **Individual AC Adaptor Compartments:** Individual AC adaptor compartments allow for easy cabling, cable replacement and using multiple adaptor models.

5. **Service and Support:** Ensure your devices are protected over the long term with at least 10-year mechanical and 5-year electrical cart warranty. Carts should safely charge and secure multiple generations of devices over the long term.

For over 20 years, AVer has been dedicated to developing and providing innovative classroom technology to foster student engagement, effective curriculum delivery, and student / teacher interaction. With time-tested solutions focusing on video collaboration and distance learning, AVer is your partner in navigating future of teaching and learning.

> *"Over the years, I have worked with EdTech organizations such as AVer Information in order to help ensure their solutions are relevant, up to date and effective. Because of this, companies such as AVer are best positioned to address the current climate, as well as plan for future scenarios and possibilities. Their distance learning solutions are not only a natural fit into the present environment, but will continue to be effective as conditions change."* *6
>
> *– Eric Sheninger, Associate Partner at International Center for Leadership in Education*

To keep current on the latest AVer happenings, industry information and resources, visit **averusa.com/education** or follow us **@averinformation**

*1 Tech & Learning Magazine: How to Encourage Communication and Collaboration in Distance Learning, September 29, 2020.

*2 CNBC.com: Post-Pandemic, Remote Learning Could be Here to Stay, May 20, 2020

*3 eSchool News: Ways to Engage Students in Remote Learning, January 4, 2021

*4 Jose Tagle, Technology Director with the Buckley School: Buckley School Navigating Through the Pandemic with AVer Distance Learning Solutions, March 19, 2021.

*5 Stefanie Lump, 5th Grade Science Teacher: Teaching Through the Pandemic, March 9, 2021

*6 Eric Sheninger, Associate Partner at International Center for Leadership in Education: Lessons Learned from 2020, January 2021

AVer Information Inc. Americas 668 Mission Court, Fremont, CA 94539 Toll free 1.877.528.7824 T 408.263.3828 F 408.263.8132
©2021 AVer Information Inc. All rights reserved. All brands and logos are trademarks of their respective companies.

averusa.com/education ■