

Hybrid school is likely to stick around post-COVID - Axios

[Erica Pandey](#) 7 hours ago - [Politics & Policy](#)

America's public schools are ready for a return to classrooms this fall, but virtual learning still isn't going away.

What's happening: Whether to accommodate some families or cover for teacher shortages, many schools are holding onto remote classes for the fall. But much more than remote work, remote learning has been littered with problems and [inequities](#).

By the numbers: At the end of the 2020–21 school year, only about 2% of K–12 students in the U.S. were attending virtual-only schools, and 70% were in traditional, in-person schools, [according to the Burbio School Opening Tracker](#).

- A sizable chunk — 28% — were in hybrid schools, which has typically meant some days in the classroom and some days at home.

Hybrid in a post-pandemic world will mean in-person school for most students with an all-remote option for those who want it.

- "Districts have got to do it," says Larry Ferlazzo, a high school teacher in Sacramento. "If they don't, parents will just find a charter school to send the students, and we'll lose the students."
- Vaccination rates for teens are [far lower than those for adults](#), and young kids aren't eligible yet, so families with high-risk members remain wary of sending their kids back, though [scientists say](#) schools can safely reopen this fall.

- There are also many [Asian](#) and [Black](#) families who are saying they want to keep their kids at home so they don't encounter racism at school.

And hybrid has perks worth carrying into the post-pandemic world.

- Remote learning has helped address accessibility issues for [students with disabilities](#).
- The flexibility afforded by hybrid learning has become an essential part of life for many students. They've gotten jobs to supplement their family's income or have been helping out with child care at home and want to continue doing so after the pandemic.
- And virtual instruction could eventually allow teachers in specialty subjects, like foreign languages or coding, to reach scores of students in rural, under-resourced schools, says Jon Hale, a professor of education at the University of Illinois.

But, but, but: "Before we can think of this as the future, we have to fix all the places where the technology still isn't working," says Kevin Kumashiro, former dean of the school of education at the University of San Francisco.

- Fears about learning loss during remote schooling have led many districts to go door to door to encourage parents to send their kids back, [according to the Washington Post](#).
- Pandemic-era virtual learning exacerbated a slew of existing inequities in the education system. Richer schools and students were able to harness technology to maintain relatively high-quality instruction, while poorer students fell behind with stripped-down curriculums or without reliable internet access.

And while new technologies could enrich public education, experts fear districts will use virtual school to cut costs through bigger class sizes and fewer teachers.

- "The major problem is that online instruction will be used to cut down on the cost of human labor," Hale says. "It looks as though that's how many districts are using it."