



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Parallel Hybrid Instruction
Program Category: Information Technology

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Program Overview

During the 2020-21 academic year, Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) embarked on a new teaching method to instruct all students remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the school year progressed, it was clear that to meet the needs of all families, HCPS would need to provide an in-person option for students.

To do this successfully after the school year had already begun, the division researched and selected an approach known as Parallel Hybrid Learning (PHL). PHL occurs when a teacher simultaneously instructs some students in person and some of them remotely. Before the fall of 2020, no Henrico classroom had used this approach. The HCPS Department of Professional Learning and Leadership, in collaboration with a diverse group of educators in the division, created the Parallel Hybrid Professional Learning Program by establishing a work committee to address three goals.

Each of these goals was met by January 2021, by (1) creating a dynamic parallel hybrid field guide and website, (2) a full pilot program testing parallel hybrid strategies encompassing seven schools and 200+ students, and (3) a robust professional learning suite of synchronous and asynchronous training sessions, that have been accessed by more than 1,100 educators, with use increasing daily.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, HCPS engaged in almost exclusively remote learning from March of 2020 to January of 2021. During the fall of the 2020-21 school year, the Henrico team began to prepare plans for students to return to in-person learning when possible. As plans developed, it became clear that many students would be learning in what is known as a parallel hybrid learning (PHL) environment. PHL occurs when an instructor simultaneously facilitates in-

person and remote learners at once (also known as concurrent teaching or parallel teaching). In other words, teachers and school leaders would need to find ways to shift classroom instruction from a fully virtual setting to a place where some students would be in the physical classroom while others would remain learning from home or remote locations, while still all being part of the same class. Through work with school leaders, HCPS leaders concluded that in many cases, PHL would be necessary to meet the needs of stakeholders and to ensure the least disruption to the learners' school year, while affording teachers the flexibility to adapt to the continually increasing number of students transitioning to in-person learning.

While the PHL model allows this flexibility and helps keep students with originally assigned teachers and classmates during the school year, it places a great deal of pressure on the teachers themselves. This is because PHL as an instructional model is very rarely if ever, used in schools with students in pre-K through grade 12. The challenge for HCPS leaders was how to train more than 4,000 educators to effectively meet the needs of their students in a PHL environment while also navigating the still new world of remote instruction. There was a serious and immediate need for high quality, division-specific professional learning. In addition, because the PHL model of instruction was so rare before COVID-19 related school closures (only seen in large university classrooms with a high number of remote learners in addition to in-person students), the HCPS team responded to the need to conduct research that would provide effective strategies and recommendations to support professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

To say the COVID-19 pandemic put a great deal of stress and new challenges on employees in Henrico County Schools would be a massive understatement. 2020-21 was an exceedingly difficult school year. In the middle of this, educators not only had to learn how to teach in a fully remote setting over the summer, but they also then had to prepare for a possible partial return to

school by some students while others would remain at home. To accomplish this, the Parallel Hybrid Learning model was chosen out of necessity and its ability to provide a flexible option for all families — allowing them to spare their students and teacher(s) a massive schedule change — and ensuring that if needed, students attending remotely would be able to come to school when ready (or vice versa). As of September 2020, no educator in Henrico had ever formally studied or provided PHL training — it simply was not done in pre-K through grade 12 schools. An innovative approach was needed that could be adapted to individual needs of students, teachers, and the ever-changing dynamics of a pandemic situation.

Through cross-division collaboration, a passion for professional learning, a focus on equitable outcomes, and a general belief that a strong team of educators can accomplish great things, HCPS created valuable and original professional learning resources and programs. These helped an entire school division of 72 schools meet the needs of students. It was done without much, if any, cost to taxpayers and in a manner that guided educators to concrete positive outcomes of being able to not only survive but thrive in a unique teaching environment. Finally, this program included expert voices and tested new methods on the ground level using employee voices to amplify and strengthen eventual training resources and methods through the pilot program. With the innovation, collaboration and overall success of this effort, Henrico County Public Schools believes this program is worthy of acknowledgement. Recognition will enable us to better share our success with other school and government workers as an example of what can happen with thoughtful and inclusive planning in relation to employee training.

How Program Was Carried Out

To address the need for high-quality and novel division-wide support for PHL, Henrico schools created the Parallel Hybrid Professional Learning plan (PHPL).

The goals of the PHPL were to:

- Empower a diverse group of Henrico educators to design high-quality training material for PHL.
- Create pilot PHL strategies for Henrico students and teachers.
- Provide choice-based professional learning options (both synchronous and asynchronous) for 4,000+ employees before a portion of students return for classroom instruction.

This work was led and conducted by a diverse collection of 25 educators within the division consisting of (1) classroom teachers representing different grade levels, years of experience, and race/ethnicity, (2) instructional coaches, (3) school administrators, and (4) division level support staff. The work was coordinated and facilitated by the school division's Professional Learning and Leadership department but focused on maximizing teacher voice and expanding teacher leadership opportunities during the PHPL plan. The committee began meeting and working toward the PHPL on Oct. 8, 2020, and has observed weekly committee meetings each Thursday since, with on-demand small group work sessions occurring as needed.

Because of the relative novelty of PHL in pre-K through grade 12 schools, the committee's first task was to review the research/literature and look for examples of PHL in neighboring school divisions. The committee quickly formed work groups — one of which collaborated with other school divisions in Virginia who were doing PHL at some scale. Though no school division was hosting as many PHL classrooms as Henrico anticipated, the committee was able to conduct five site visits of other schools — both in person and remotely. From these observations and researching online journals and professional organization publications, the committee was able to put together the "Parallel Hybrid Field Guide."

The Parallel Hybrid Field Guide served as the backbone for all professional learning in the 2020-21 school year related to PHL. Designed specifically for Henrico teachers, this guide outlined specific strategies to deeply engage learners even in a challenging PHL setting. It not only focused on instructional approaches for the teacher but also provided a list of technology considerations, room setups and possible variations to help meet the needs of all teachers across 70+ schools, where often the exact type of classroom resources and logistics can vary greatly from one school to another. In addition, the field guide included multiple short video clips to guide teachers through relevant technology support necessary in PHL — including how to set up multiple screens, facilitate online lessons using a mobile device and helping eliminate audio feedback when both in-person and remote learners are using laptops.

Knowledge alone was not enough to design these strategies — the committee also wanted to test the Field Guide in a real-world scenario. To do this, it collaborated with leaders in the Department of School Leadership and our COVID-19 response task force to bring to school eight classrooms of students from across our division to participate in PHL. The committee contacted parents, worked with the Department of Pupil Transportation and our county safety team to ensure that all safe conduct requirements were met. The eight teachers received two weeks of training and coaching from the committee using the Field Guide, and from Dec. 7-11, the pilot program took place. The pilot classrooms represented an intentionally diverse group of teachers and students from different grade levels, courses and student populations. During the pilot program, both teachers and students consistently gave feedback on the training materials created by the committee and HCPS' Department of Communications and Public Relations team assisted with taking high-quality audio and video of the lessons to be used in later training.

After the pilot program, the Field Guide was honed and uploaded to a custom website along with supporting materials and video examples of all the strategies in action, along with accompanying commentary from the pilot teachers themselves. All of these resources were then packaged at a single site to be used by Henrico teachers in preparation for PHL.

After developing the Field Guide and piloting it in real situations, beginning in January 2021, the committee offered a wide array of professional learning options. Every Monday in January and February, the committee hosted live synchronous training via Microsoft Teams. So far, more than 500 teachers have attended the synchronous training sessions. In addition, an asynchronous course was developed to guide teachers through the training materials, and the division anticipates that at least 800 teachers will go through this course. Finally, specific training for instructional coaches, administrators and division support personnel was given in December and January to make sure that all employees were aware of the challenges and opportunities related to PHL, to best meet the needs of students and teachers.

While the committee faced many challenges and changes during the 2020-21 school year, the committee leading the PHPL work consistently provided useful and meaningful professional learning in the middle of a pandemic for a type of instruction that was virtually unknown in the field before 2020. The collaborative and diligent culture of this committee and the support from multiple departments in the division, brought great success in supporting teachers who needed to adopt PHL. It also resulted in our ability to have more classrooms adopting the PHL model than any other division our size in the state.

The committee recognized upfront that there would be a significant difference in what PHL would look like in schools that served majority-minority populations and families with a lower socioeconomic status. The committee gathered data from families in collaboration with our

Division Leadership Team to track how different communities within the division felt about sending students back to learn in person when the option became available. As a result of this search, the committee learned that there would likely be widely varied PHL needs, reflective of the diversity of communities that HCPS serves across the county. In order to meet the needs of all learners and educators, regardless of the situation, the committee chose a diverse pilot group. This allowed teachers working with a diverse range of students to receive narrowly tailored professional learning that would help their students specifically.

The committee also paired with our Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity to review and edit the Parallel Hybrid Field Guide. The members of the Equity, Diversity and Opportunity team were included in all committee meetings. They suggested edits and additions to the Field Guide to support culturally responsive education practices in our parallel hybrid strategies. This was immensely helpful, and upon implementation, the committee met with the diverse pilot group to further review these considerations through the lens of supporting equity and advancing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Financing and Staffing

The Parallel Hybrid Instructional Program was essentially built from the ground up. This process required strong collaboration among specialists, coaches and teachers to design the resources needed to adequately prepare teachers for the successful implementation of this instructional methodology.

A majority of the cost for this program went to the time spent off-contract by our educators to develop the resources. As previously stated, copious amounts of time and energy were spent meeting with teachers to collaborate on the creation of the Parallel Hybrid website, Field Guides,

technology support documents, videos, synchronous and asynchronous professional learning opportunities, and the ideation of best practices for this unfamiliar instructional style.

In an effort to compensate teachers for their time, the Professional Learning and Leadership team partnered with the Henrico Education Foundation to secure a grant for these funds. The work and meetings completed during off-contract hours by our team of 28 dedicated educators totaled approximately \$8,000. Without the support of the Henrico Education Foundation, our teachers may not have received this compensation due to budgetary constraints, and we are grateful for the strong community partnership and support provided from the foundation.

Program Results

Upon reviewing feedback and data points, the committee considered all goals of this program met and the overall work a resounding success, especially in a year with frequent and regular changes in schedules, logistics, and community attitudes and needs. As a reminder, the initial goals of this program were to:

- Empower a diverse group of Henrico educators to design high-quality training materials for PHL.
- Create pilot PHL strategies for Henrico students and teachers.
- Provide choice-based professional learning options (both synchronous and asynchronous) for 4,000+ employees before a portion of students return for classroom instruction

The first goal of creating high quality materials via a diverse group of educators was met. The committee consisted of 25 educators (no more than two were from the same department, school or even grade level or subject area), representing a diversity of career experience, age, gender

and ethnicity. The committee (n=25) was frequently surveyed and strongly agreed with the statement that “The meetings are a good use of my time.” (mean = 4.4) and “We are creating high quality professional learning materials for teachers.” (mean = 4.2) on a scale of 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree. Teachers (n- 287) who reviewed and first used the field guides overwhelmingly agreed that “The Parallel Hybrid Field guides are high quality resources that will help my students learn in this environment.” (mean = 4.4). In addition, they strongly agreed that “The technology support videos are useful to me.” (mean = 4.6) and “The example videos and commentary are useful to me.” (mean = 4.3). All data was collected via Google forms during committee meetings or after synchronous or asynchronous training.

Completing the pilot program was the second goal and was another objective successfully met. In the rapidly changing dynamics of working onsite during the pandemic, it was a great deal of work even to make a pilot happen. However, the committee was able to work with school leaders, parents, students, and teachers. Seven classrooms participated in the pilot study, with more than 65 students attending in person and about 100 attending remotely. In addition, pilot teachers were interviewed before, during and after the pilot program. Each of them indicated they were very glad they participated in the pilot (7/7) and their responses indicated overall success in meeting the objective, responding to the statement that “This pilot program I think is critical because we have been able to test out and edit the field guides before our colleagues use them. I also personally feel more prepared to have my students come back to the building in some fashion.”

The final goal was to offer a wide variety of PHPL options. To date (January 2020), 425 teachers have attended parallel hybrid professional learning sessions conducted at the division level. More than 900 additional teachers have participated in building-level professional development using the field guides and videos. Every instructional coach in the division (n = 145) and every

administrator (more than 400) has also attended at least two hours of professional learning on Parallel Hybrid Instruction delivered by the PHPL committee. Overall, teachers participating in synchronous division-led professional learning agree that “The training sessions are effective and a good use of my time.” (mean = 3.84, n=425)

By analyzing each goal with specific corresponding data from attendance, participation, and survey/interview feedback, the committee feels confident in saying all outcomes were met.

Brief Summary

During the fall of the 2020-21 school year, the Henrico team began to prepare plans for students to return to in-person learning when possible. As plans developed, it became clear that many students would be learning in what is known as a parallel hybrid learning (PHL) environment. PHL occurs when an instructor simultaneously facilitates in-person and remote learners at once (also known as concurrent teaching or parallel teaching). PHL would provide a model for both remote and in-person instruction and to ensure the least disruption to the learners’ school year, while affording teachers the flexibility to adapt to the continually increasing number of students transitioning to in-person learning.

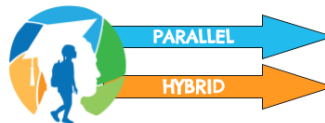
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The HCPS Department of Professional Learning and Leadership, in collaboration with a diverse group of educators in the division, created the Parallel Hybrid Professional Learning Program by establishing a work committee to address three goals. The goals were to:

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Each of these goals was met by January 2021, with the creation of a dynamic parallel hybrid field guide and website, a successful pilot program testing parallel hybrid strategies encompassing seven schools and 200+ students, and development of a robust professional learning suite of synchronous and asynchronous training sessions, that have been accessed by more than 1,100 educators, with use increasing daily.

Parallel Hybrid Instruction Supplemental Material



In order to provide rich detail and a clear picture of the resources created to support our teachers for the Parallel Hybrid instructional process, several links are provided below:

- HCPS U - <https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support>
- Parallel Hybrid Field Guides (Elementary and Secondary) - <https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support/field-guides>
- Technology Support Document with Videos - <https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support/technology-support>
- Synchronous Professional Learning Sign-Ups and Agendas - <https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support/pl-sign-up>
- Video examples with commentary of actual implementation of Parallel Hybrid Instruction in the classroom - <https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support/examples>
- Loom Video for school administrators to help explain the Parallel Hybrid Instructional resources - <https://www.loom.com/share/b519f66e4659485e8cfeefb56688c6e8>

Sample schedule for the Parallel Hybrid elementary school class -

<https://sites.google.com/henrico.k12.va.us/hcpsuniversity/parallel-hybrid-support/sample-schedule>