

## Flex Model

In the flex model, students still attend a brick-and-mortar school every day. But every class is divided into online instruction and face-to-face time with teachers rather than just one or two courses, as in the rotation model. These schools are often set up like offices, with students in their own workspaces and a number of teachers circulating to provide support while students complete online coursework.

Lewis and Clark High School, part of Vancouver Public Schools in Washington, is a former alternative school that reopened as a flex academy in September. The school of about 150 students has two large “flex” areas where students do online instruction at permanently assigned workstations that are similar to office cubicles. There are five classrooms of different sizes that teachers can use when needed for group lessons, and smaller spaces for projects or tutoring.

Students are in the building from 9:30 a.m. to 4:10 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and on Friday mornings. The typical day varies from student to student and week to week, but often about half the time is spent on the computer with Edgenuity courses in every subject. The other half is spent working with teachers in individual tutoring or small group instruction, or with other students on group projects.

One consistent element of each student’s day is meeting in a small advisory class. The advisory teacher acts as a mentor, and closely monitors student progress while teaching skills important to online learning, such as creating a schedule for class work.

“It’s one of the benefits we see of having a brick-and-mortar setting—if they need that assistance, they can get it right away,” says Kathy Everidge, executive director of Lewis and Clark High School.

Students have had to learn to prioritize their work, says Principal Rob Duncan. “Most students are used to having a very scheduled school day, but they are moving to a school where they have the freedom to make some decisions about what they are doing each day. It’s very much like what we do in our adult lives.”

Teachers work daily with students on time management, and the school recently incorporated mail accounts where students can set reminders for appointments and assignments. “We’re finding that throughout our 1-to-1 implementation, we give a lot of credit to young people for being digital natives, but that does not necessarily translate to their understanding of how to work and be productive in a digital environment,” says Mark Ray, director of instructional technology and library services at Vancouver Public Schools. “They may know how to use the devices, but need to develop work habits and organizational skills.”