Deconstructing Hybrid Education: Learning from the Past, Innovating for the Future.

Presented at *APTA CSM*, Feb 2025 by Mary Blackinton, PT, EdD; Priscilla Weaver, PT, DPT, PhD; Tricia Catalino, PT, DSc; Kendra Gagnon, PT, PhD; and Kimberly Varnado, PT, DPT, DHSc

Summary:

At the APTA CSM 2025 conference, leading educators from across the country came together to explore the evolution and growing impact of hybrid DPT education, challenging misconceptions, and highlighting how thoughtful design, strong pedagogy, and strategic innovation are shaping the future of physical therapy education.
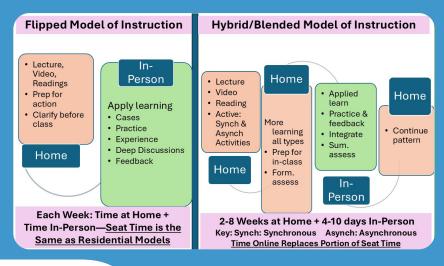
Key Topics Covered:

- **Hybrid Defined Thoughtfully:** Intentional integration of synchronous/asynchronous online learning with immersive in-person experiences to enhance engagement, flexibility, and outcomes.

- **Hybrid ≠ Emergency Remote:** True hybrid models require 6–9 months of planning and are grounded in instructional design—not pandemic-era quick fixes.

- **Pedagogy First:** Built on constructivist learning principles using the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework—supporting teaching, social, and cognitive/psychomotor presence.

- **Historical Evolution:** Charts 20+ years of hybrid development in PT education, from early digital tools to advanced, scalable models.

- **Diversity & Access:** Expands reach to underrepresented, geographically dispersed, and working adult students. Program Design Considerations: Covers curriculum mapping, delivery patterns, support models, and third-party collaboration.

- **Myth-Busting:** Debunks common misconceptions about rigor, clinical readiness, and faculty engagement with real-world data and examples.

- **Trends & Data:** Presents national growth, enrollment patterns, NPTE pass rates, and tuition comparisons in hybrid DPT programs.

- **Future Outlook:** Emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and data-informed planning to ensure quality and sustainability.

enTandemDPT

Hybrid Defined Thoughtfully

Hybrid education uses intentional integration of synchronous/ asynchronous online learning with immersive in-person experiences to enhance engagement, flexibility, and outcomes. Flipped classrooms also support applied learning by shifting content delivery outside the classroom.

Flipped Model of Instruction

- Lecture, Video, Readings
- Prep for action
- Clarify before class

Home

In-Person

Apply learning
- Cases
- Practice
- Experience
- Deep Discussions
- Feedback

Each Week: Time at Home + Time In-Person—Seat Time is the Same as Residential Models

Hybrid/Blended Model of Instruction

- Lecture
- Video
- Reading
- Active: Synch & Asynch Activities

Home

More learning all types
- Prep for in-class
- Form. assess

Home

Applied learn
- Practice & feedback
- Integrate
- Sum. assess

In-Person

Home

- Continue pattern

2-8 Weeks at Home + 4-10 days In-Person
Key: Synch: Synchronous   Asynch: Asynchronous
Time Online Replaces Portion of Seat Time

Curriculum **Delivery** Methods: DPT Education

WEB-ENHANCED: Residential (In-Person) Learning with OL Support

HYBRID: Thoughtful planning and integration of online instruction (60-80%) with in-person experiences (intensives) focusing on integration and application in context (experiences, cases, practice, simulation, complexity). Online:

FLIPPED: Residential Learning with a Twist: What is done at home vs. at school changes/flips: Lectures/Information at home, in-person activities focuses on application in context (experiences, cases, simulations, added complexity)

ONLINE: 100% Online (synchronous + asynchronous) – individual courses

EMERGENCY REMOTE INSTRUCTION: Sudden shift from residential to online or hybrid teaching **without requisite time** for planning, decision-making, and implementation. Such instruction **lacks purposeful design** of a learning community and is not a best practice.

Hybrid ≠ Emergency Remote

Emergency remote instruction differs significantly from true hybrid models. Hybrid delivery requires intentional design, planning, and feedback integration—ensuring quality and consistency in the student experience

Pedagogy First

Hybrid education is built on constructivist learning principles using the Community of Inquiry (COI) framework—supporting teaching, social, and cognitive/psychomotor presence. This approach ensures learning is intentional, connected, and outcomes-driven.

Applying the COI Framework

Teaching Presence: Direct Learning
Monday Morning Memo's, Weekly Summary, Feedback OL & F2F, Clear Expectations, Agenda's

Social Presence: Connections
Async & Synch: Weekly, Prep for F2F, Small Group Discussion Board (not discussion 'bored')

Cognitive and Psychomotor* Presence:
-Foster metacognition & practice OL & F2F
-Emphasis on Asynch practice prior to F2F
-F2F: Intense practice, feedback, apply to practice

Looking Back to Move Forward

Well Done

- **Pedagogy First – Educational Philosophy MORE important than delivery**
- **Attracted/Retained DIVERSE student body: Age, race, working, geographic location**
- **True Community of Learners**
- **4 Year Calendar: Strong Organization**
- **Deep Connections with Community**
- **Value-centered: Focused on student development, Core Values Portfolio**
- **Strong Outcomes: Retention, Clinical Performance, NPTE scores**

Challenges

- **Time: Plan, record, lab videos, edit videos**
- **Lack of Acceptance: Hard to be a Unicorn**
- **Frequent Changes in LMS: 3 in 9 years**
- **Keeping up with Tech**
- **Finding Nationwide Clinical Sites: Students seen as "out of state" were "in state"**
- **Overcompensation to Ensure Learning: 36 assignments in 15-weeks (#Lance)**
- **Less-Resourced than our Residential Counterparts; No onsite clinic**

Historical Evolution

Hybrid education in PT has evolved over more than 20 years—from early digital tools to advanced, scalable models. It's not a trend, but the result of decades of innovation, intentional design, and growing demand for flexibility, access, and academic rigor.