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How hybrid classes give learning access to some and

log others out

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New Delhi: As Delhi's air quality hits seasonal lows, forcing schools to adopt hybrid learning, students across the city find themselves battling both—the polluted air and the persistent digital divide. While private institutions have swiftly toggled between offline and online classes, many govt schoolchildren have been left behind—disconnected from learning altogether, with no access to either a physical classroom or a digital one.

Private institutions, equipped with digital infrastructure and trained teachers, have managed a relatively smooth transition to hybrid format. However, in most govt schools, the picture is far bleaker—many students lack smartphones, stable internet or even a quiet space to study. Teachers try to bridge the gap through WhatsApp messages and shared notes, but responses are sporadic, for children whose parents take their phones to work, even that access is denied.

According to educationists, the limitations of hybrid education have become evident. "Online classes are very difficult—you can't expect a Class III student to stay in front of a screen for hours," said Roopa Pathak, principal of MM Public School, Pitampura. "Students often log in and disappear. Teachers end up repeating the same topics when they return to physical classes," she said.

Parents, too, are feeling the strain. One parent recounted how their child had to attend an online class from a hospital because there was no alternative, stressing on how impractical the setup is. In govt schools, challenges are bigger. Sunita, principal of Ravi Shankar SKV in Bawana, said teachers are trying to adapt. "We're better prepared this year with WhatsApp groups and digital content for hybrid mode. But

In many homes, one phone is shared among siblings or taken to work by parents. Younger children lose out completely, and the learning gap keeps widening."

The unpredictability of schedules has also left parents anxious. "Hybrid models sound ideal, but in practice, teachers can't always manage both sides," said a parent from a junior school of DPS RK Puram. "During online sessions, many children simply lose focus. If this continues, schools must find a more seamless way," the parent added.

For working families, hybrid learning disrupts daily routines. Amrita, a parent with children studying at Amity International School, described the chaos: "My daughter, in primary school, attends online classes, while my son, in Class VII, goes to school. Our entire schedule has got disrupted. We have to share laptops, which affects our work, and teachers struggle to split attention between the two groups."

Corroborating this, educators said that balancing between students present in the classroom and those attending virtually can be quite exhausting. "It's impossible to give equal attention to both sets of students simultaneously," said Tanita Joshi, principal of The Indian School.