STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL BLENDED LEARNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

AN OVERVIEW OF BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is an innovative teaching model that integrates face-to-face instruction with online learning opportunities. [1] Teachers leverage multiple media forms, adaptive technology, and strategic instructional strategies supported by data-rich feedback loops to provide a differentiated learning experience for students. [2] Relatedly, students' ability to control the time, place, pace, and/or sequence of blending learning also influences the logistics and effectiveness of the practice.[3]

Learn More

Watch the following videos to learn more about blended learning

- "Blended Learning, Real Teaching" – Education Week
- "The 'Why' of Blended Learning" – The Learning Accelerator
- "Story of Change at Lovett" – The Learning Accelerator

Successful blended learning creates a highly engaging and equitable environment.[4] When skillfully integrated, the face-to-face and online elements of blended learning allow teachers to differentiate instruction, accommodate diverse learning styles, and better utilize their own and students' time.[5] Research further indicates that when properly implemented, blended learning correlates with increased student achievement, attributable to integration of technology that allows students to learn at their own pace using preferred learning modalities and with more frequent performance feedback.[6]

Likewise, the blended learning model allows for a learning environment in which each student can attain the "skills and mindset needed to succeed in college and life," regardless of their background, learning differences, or socioeconomic status.[7] Blended learning broadens access to education and personalizes learning in a way where students can progress through content at a flexible pace, giving them time to fully master new knowledge and skills.[8]

The Blended Learning Framework

Blended learning enables…

Real-Time Data Use	Personalization	Mastery-Based Progression
Establishing classrooms with…		
▪ Shared understanding of progress and goals ▪ Action linked to strengths and gaps	▪ Student choice and autonomy ▪ Differentiation to needs (e.g., content, time, modality)	▪ Common rigorous standards ▪ Acceleration and remediation ▪ Focus on mastery
And creating…		
▪ Deeper knowledge and mutual accountability for achievement ▪ Highly effective instructional actions	▪ Student engagement and agency ▪ Targeted instruction for every student with professional efficacy	▪ College and career readiness for all ▪ Efficient use of time ▪ Cultivation of a growth mindset

All of which ensure that each student attains the skills and mindset needed to succeed in college and that educators are highly effective and professionally engaged.

Source: The Learning Accelerator[9]

BEST PRACTICES FOR BLENDED LEARNING

In an effective blended learning model, **technology is not the primary driving force to success.**[10] Instead, students actively learn when they seamlessly shift between self-paced online instruction and face-to-face instruction led by a teacher.[11] Key to this coherent balance is the teacher's ability to serve as a coach or mentor to the learning process, rather than as a provider of knowledge.[12]

This means that teachers must provide content and instruction that incorporate student choice.[13] By doing so, students are afforded the space to become active learners, who gain knowledge by taking control and developing self-reliance. As more students begin to work independently, teachers are then able to provide more frequent face-to-face support and differentiated instruction.[14] The **Five Domains of Blended Learning Practices Checklist** below identifies these and other elements that teachers should emphasize to maximize the effects of the blended learning model.[15]

Five Domains of Blended Learning Practices Checklist

BLENDED LEARNING CULTURE

- ☐ Invest stakeholders (e.g., students) in the value of using a blended learning environment to achieve personalized goals
- ☐ Develop students' digital ethics and respect for digital property
- ☐ Provide students opportunities to develop and master their personalized academic goals

LEARNING MANAGEMENT

- ☐ Develop routines for efficiently guiding students through digital and non-digital work time
- ☐ Empower students to efficiently address technology related challenges
- ☐ Train students to effectively navigate digital tools and use digital tools purposefully

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND DELIVERY

- ☐ Use digital content to support the delivery of differentiated learning paths (e.g., grade, remediation, enrichment)
- ☐ Incorporate all learning modalities and opportunities for higher order thinking across digital and non-digital content
- ☐ Implement targeted and flexible learning environments based on individual and small group

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

- ☐ Administer teacher-created and third-party assessments to accurately measure student proficiency
- ☐ Utilize digital tools as an integral part of student assessment to streamline data collection and deepen analysis
- ☐ Analyze data from multiple sources, both online and offline, to identify students' individual needs

BLENDED LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

- ☐ Acquire the technical knowledge and skills required to successfully adopt and implement technology solutions
- ☐ Continuously learn about, reflect on, and evaluate the effectiveness of current education technology solutions

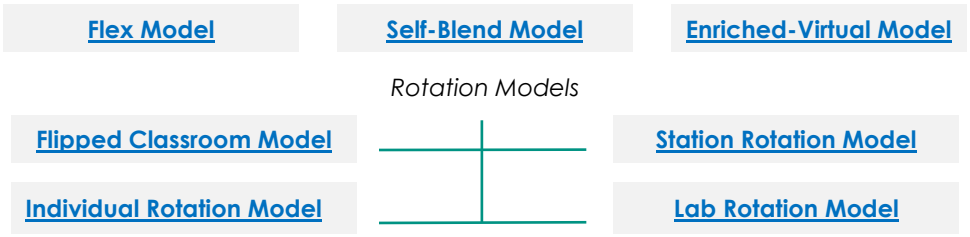
Source: Education Elements[16]

Likewise, teachers must employ practices that cultivate a coherent learning experience for students. In addition to schedules, timing, use of space, and opportunity for extended learning, teachers must consider instructional models that enable the integration of the in-person and online elements. The figure on the following page explores emerging instructional models for blended learning.[17] Each of the models seeks to "engage students in learning, provide teachers with actionable data for more targeted, personalized instruction, and allow schools to extend learning beyond the traditional classroom."[18] To determine the appropriate instructional model, teachers must consider the location, type of instruction, student independence, and level of socialization that students might be engaging in.[19]

In conjunction with selecting an appropriate instructional model, teachers should design a classroom environment that effectively facilitates learning. Teachers should establish well-defined classroom routines

and procedures, where expectations are visible, practiced, and referred to throughout the lesson, as needed. For example, teachers might include and/or post in items such as: rotation schedules with group assignments; blended learning and classroom norms; clear expectations at each station; and clear technology management systems.[20]

Blended Learning Instructional Models Reference Chart



Note: Click on each model to learn more about how it works.
Source: Multiple[21]

ENDNOTES

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