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BLENDED LEARNING: INNOVATIVE IDEA FOR FUTURE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT:

*B*lended learning is actualized in an assortment of ways, ranging from models in which curriculum is completely online with face-to-face interaction to models in which face-to-face classroom instruction is integrated with online components that augment learning beyond the classroom or school day. The quick growth of blended learning has been an impetus for additional instructional transformation, including: i) advancing pedagogy in which teachers' roles incorporate facilitation, student mentoring and separating instruction for individual learners, increased adaptability and personalization of students' learning experiences, and ii) vital uses of technology as areas tap the capacities of the learning management systems to bolster a more extensive scope of instructional programs. Teachers support online learning due to its unique abilities to furnish students with improved learning experiences, to expand learning beyond the school day, and to bolster more successful separated learning strategies that personalize students' educational experiences. Also, as teachers acquire more experience with the ways to deal with and advantages of blended learning, they have found that this instructional model encourages them increase capacity without proportionate increases in budget or staff. This report reviews the working definitions of blended learning, investigates efficacy and predominance information, recaps innovative and practical implementation models and gives profiles of a few schools and areas that are experiencing accomplishment with their blended learning programs. The plan is to feature this instructional model's development and potential to start new discussions about how blended learning can address a scope of instructional needs in new and highly beneficial ways.

KEYWORDS: *Blended Learning , Innovative Idea , learning strategies .*

INTRODUCION

There are many definitions of blended learning yet no single accepted definition. We define blended learning as structured opportunities to learn, which use more than one learning or training method, inside or outside the classroom. This definition includes different learning or instructional methods (lecture, discussion, guided practice, reading, games, case study, simulation), different delivery methods (live classroom or computer mediated), different scheduling (synchronous or asynchronous) and different levels of guidance (individual, instructor or expert led, or group/social learning).Blended learning offers the potential to create effective training, to save time and money for the Institute, to make training more engaging and convenient for learners, and to offer learning professionals the chance to innovate.

Here individuals will see work as learning how to address unique situations, recognize where to turn for learning, support and advice; and formally or informally share that knowledge widely with others. The "course"

will be replaced with multiple opportunities to learn and grow on the path to successful, rewording careers. It will be known as an exceptional place to develop outstanding skills and abilities through a range of blended experiences.

What are the Decision Factors for Blending Methods?
Content & Learner Questions
1. What do you want people to know or do? How difficult is the desired performance?
2. What are the skills and knowledge required for success?
3. How experienced is your audience with this content? What other audience characteristics   might affect decisions about design or delivery?

Instructional Strategy Questions
1. What learning techniques would be most appropriate and effective for this audience, e.g., is hands-on practice necessary, social learning?
2. Which training delivery methods would be most effective for each portion of the content, e.g., classroom, computer-mediated?
3. What additional resources would help learners achieve success?

BLENDED LEARNING: A GROWING NEED
Take a snapshot of a day in the life of America's schools and the picture will show students and educators grappling with a host of challenges and presented with a kaleidoscope of remarkable new learning opportunities. From unprecedented budget pressures and over-burdened teachers to the need for more effective, more personalized learning to accommodate each student's individual learning style, schools are facing complex issues. The opportunities are enormous as well. Whether it is tapping the vast stores of digital information now available or using new technology tools to learn, teachers and students alike have the opportunity to move the learning experience forward in new ways.

Today's digital native students expect their learning condition will include technology since it is an inborn piece of their lives. The publication Learning in the 21st Century: 2009 Trends Update offers these important data points:
• Students want control of their own learning. At the point when inquired as to why learning through an online class may make school more interesting, 47% of students in grades 9-12, 39% of students in grade 6-8 and 25% of students in grades 3-5 reacted that they needed to learn online to control their own learning experience. Students do not anticipate that online courses will be less demanding. They do however, expect the online learning environment to encourage their prosperity since they can review materials when they need and comfortable with approaching teachers for help.
• Online teachers see incredible advantages to student online learning. 76% of educators believe that online learning benefits students by placing them responsible for their own learning.

Blended learning, which typically extends classroom instruction online, is giving schools new approaches and strategies for addressing the challenges they face and for taking advantage of the exciting new learning opportunities that are now available. More and more schools and districts of all sizes are bringing blended learning into their instructional programs and they are finding that this model is effective, moderate, and responds to students' and teachers' developing interest in technology-based learning experiences.

BLENDED LEARNING DEFINED
Like many advances in educational practice, blended learning is defined and implemented in multiple ways. As more and more schools use this model, many different meanings have evolved. For clarity and deeper understanding of this approach to teaching and learning, this paper includes several of these evolving definitions and provides a working definition that encompasses the most commonly accepted blended learning models.

iNACOL, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, defines blended learning as "combining

online delivery of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction to personalize learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student-to-student across a diverse group of learners."In a similar vein, the Sloan Consortium, an institutional and professional leadership organization dedicated to integrating online education into mainstream education, describes blended learning as part online and part traditional face-to-face instruction.

San Diego State University also offers an interesting perspective on blended learning. In the university's online Encyclopedia of Educational Technology, the article Blended Learning Solutions notes, "...blended learning combines the engaging benefits of traditional instructor-led training with the advantages brought by a variety of technologies to create an optimum program." The article also underscores that many "ingredients" can comprise a blended learning model, including instructor-delivered content, e-learning, webinars, conference calls, live or online sessions with instructors, and other media and events.

For the purposes of this paper, blended learning is broadly defined as an instructional practice that combines teaching methods from both face-to-face instruction and online learning.

PEDAGOGY EVOLVING

With the growth of blended learning and the many ways this model is being adapted, pedagogy is evolving as well. Teachers' roles are changing as they evolve from "lecturer" to instructional guide. Independent student work and mentoring are becoming more common instructional strategies as teachers assess student progress and then use a variety of tools and resources, including digital content, to differentiate instruction in order to address students' needs.

A search of available research literature confirms this trend. A combination of flexibility, autonomy, and experience with online tools has been related with enhanced critical thinking, research, and computer skills. As virtual school opportunities keep on expanding to a more extensive scope of K-12 students, it will be essential that courses are direct and consistent in their design, give clear instructions and expectations, and make utilization of appropriate media.

The blended learning models are also flexible and adaptable so teachers can create instructional activities and assignments that give students the opportunity to work collaboratively, tapping their interest and abilities in social learning. In addition, project-based and experiential learning can also be facilitated through blended models, giving students the opportunity to conduct research online, participate in group work, and then develop multimedia projects that showcase their learning processes and outcomes.

BLENDED LEARNING IN ACTION

As this paper highlights, blended learning models are in use in many ways throughout America's schools. The research team for this paper conducted in-depth interviews with district and school leaders in locations throughout the United States, including:
• St.Tammany Parish, Louisiana;
• Albuquerque Public School District, New Mexico;
• Digital Harbor High School, Baltimore, Maryland; and
• Henrico County Public Schools, Virginia.

In St.Tammany Parish, Louisiana, core curriculum courses in English and World Geography have been redesigned to incorporate digital instruction as a daily component of learning. Albuquerque Public Schools has identified that blended learning offers important benefits for the district's ESL students and their teachers. In Henrico County, blended learning is helping students fulfill physical education, math, and English requirements and helping teachers meet professional development requirements. And at Digital Harbor High School in the Baltimore City School District, blended learning includes online course documentation, digitally based activities, discussion boards for students and teachers and more.

To be successful, these districts considered their professional development, technology infrastructure and funding needs. In all cases, educators were strategic about their blended learning implementation which positively influenced their teaching and learning initiatives.

Professional Development

The educators interviewed noted that professional development was a key element to the success of their blended learning initiatives. In all instances, professional development helped teachers end up noticeably adroit technology users and skilled at technology combination in a blended environment.

Technology Infrastructure

The districts solidified their technology infrastructure and learning management platforms early in their blended learning initiative. This enabled them to roll out their blended learning programs smoothly and efficiently, tapping the capabilities of the systems in place in their districts. In many instances, course management, content management, portals, and communications systems were already in place so introducing a blended learning program did not present a major technology challenge.

Addressing Unique Challenges

Blended learning is also helping schools to address significant challenges. For example, many schools are offering credit recovery through blended learning, giving students anywhere, anytime access to remedial resources and providing additional instruction and practice in online formats. Schools are also using the blended learning model to deliver core curriculum, provide enrichment, support remediation and intervention programs, and to provide accelerated learning opportunities to students who want to take Advanced Placement courses or who will benefit from Talented and Gifted instructional support.

Educators are discovering that blended learning offers an important set of benefits. These include:

• The ability for schools to maintain their central role in managing a student's educational process and personalizing instruction;
• Providing curriculum developers and teachers the flexibility to address standards and maintain curriculum fidelity while integrating digital content and learning experiences that better engage 21st century learners; and
• Giving teachers valuable experiences in using technology effectively in their professional development courses, preparing them to use blended models creatively and strategically as this approach becomes more and more prevalent in the classroom.

As educators experiment with blended learning models, they are finding new solutions to challenges and leveraging opportunities to improve and transform traditional instructional models.

Efficacy: The Real Measure of Success
Student Success

Education's stakeholders demand and deserve proof that instructional models support and improve student outcomes. Here the data is clear. Blended learning performs as well or better than face-to-face instruction. According to a 2009 report from the U.S. Department of Education, "In recent experimental and quasi-experimental studies contrasting blends of online and face-to-face instruction with conventional face-to-face classes, blended instruction has been more effective, providing a rationale for the effort required to design and implement blended approaches."

The study's main findings are noteworthy:

• Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the similar course through conventional face-to-face instruction.
• Instruction consolidating online and face-to-face elements had a bigger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did simply online instruction.
• The effectiveness of online learning approaches appears quite broad across different content and learner types.
• Online learning can be upgraded by giving learners control of their interactions with media and inciting learning reflection.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

A study by Susan Lowes, Ph.D., at Columbia University describes another dimension to the efficacy of blended learning. This research found that teachers' instructional practices are transformed by learning how to teach online, because they develop new skills and build pedagogical strategies using technology. The research also reported that online teaching improves practices in both virtual and face-to-face settings. Further, 75% of the teachers in this study said that teaching online had a positive impact on their face-to-face teaching. Lastly, the study pointed out that teachers who gain experience delivering instruction online can serve as change agents in the schools where they also teach face-to-face courses.

Research on blended learning's efficacy supports the work of educators as of now utilizing these models and those now considering extra chances to put the power of blended learning to work for students and teachers.

Benefits of Blended Learning for Students

1. Provides an extensive selection of quality courses beyond what many school districts can offer.
2. Creates flexibility in scheduling and length of course.
3. Supplies access to student-centered, engaged faculty trained in e-learning practices.
4. Extends learning to the digital world, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
5. Provides access to dual credit and advanced placement courses for college credit.
6. Creates an opportunity to graduate early or recover credits.

In addition to the impact of blended learning on these characteristics, teachers with first-hand experience in classroom implementation provided effective practice suggestions for those beginning the use of blended learning themselves.

1. To improve performance, a learning experience should allow the learner to learn for, in, and from action: learning new knowledge, applying it, and reflecting on this application.
2. "Blended learning," the combination of a variety of learning media (face-to-face, online, print, social media) and learning environments (instructor-led, teamwork, peer-to-peer interaction, self-study and individual work), enables more opportunities for application of new knowledge and on-going support for learners.
3. To effectively design blended learning approaches that accelerate the application of course knowledge, you must analyze the needs, technology, and resources of your target audience; develop SMART learning objectives; design with evaluation in mind; and consider how to support learning for, in, and from action in your design.

CONCLUSION

Blended learning is often defined as a mix of classroom and virtual training events. Blended learning, the teaching practice that combines teaching methods from both face-to-face and online learning, is a set up, quickly developing instructional model that is demonstrating exceedingly successful in helping schools and districts address the difficulties of student achievement, limited resources, and the expectations of 21st century learners. Whether it is expanding classroom instruction beyond the school day, supporting credit recuperation programs, upgrading teacher professional development or conveying enhanced learning opportunities for quickened students, blended learning models are progressively regular practice over the curriculum for students and teachers alike.

In general teachers experienced in blended learning found it to be a great benefit in allowing self-paced learning, providing resources to students who missed class or are struggling, obtaining and using student achievement data, providing feedback to parents, and differentiating instruction. This instructional technique also was shown to be particularly beneficial in facilitating teacher-student communication, fostering students taking responsibility for their own learning and locating resources themselves, improving student behavior issues, the time students are on task, and student motivation. Finally, teachers indicated that the use of blended learning improved their ability to be innovative, assisted them in monitoring student learning, and allowed greater opportunity to provide 1-on-1 instruction. Strong correlations were found between allowing student self-paced learning, a teacher's ability to be innovative, providing resources to those who miss class and/or who

struggle, and students' ability to locate resources on their own and important educational outcomes such as student interest level, perseverance, motivation, time on task, excitement, attendance and a teacher's overall enjoyment of teaching.

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