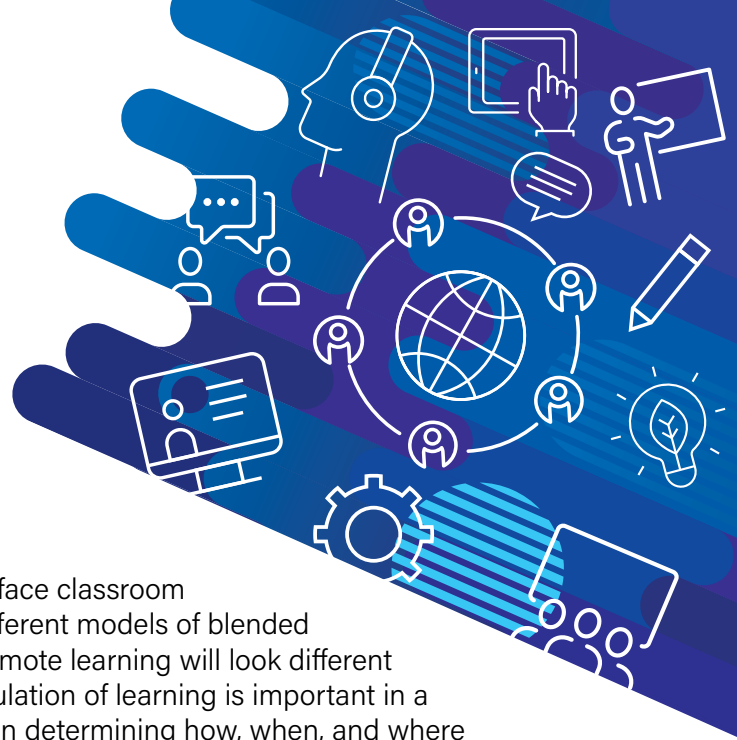# INTRODUCTION TO
Blended
LEARNING

Overview

Blended learning is a combination of traditional face-to-face classroom learning and online/remote learning. There are many different models of blended learning, and the exact combination of traditional and remote learning will look different for each teacher and for their students. Student self-regulation of learning is important in a blended learning environment and students participate in determining how, when, and where they complete some of their learning. Blended learning can improve students' independence and self-agency. Nevertheless, a strong teacher presence is important to help guide learning and to support students in their growth as reflective, engaged, active learners.

Advantages of Blended Learning

- Blended learning builds competencies such as self-regulation, agency, and problem solving.
- It allows for learning to continue when schedules change.
- Students can have a choice in how, when, and where they learn.
- It enables students to engage in the learning process and to develop lifelong competencies as active learners, co-constructing knowledge.

Tips for the Best Use of Time

Before you start with blended learning:

- Directly teach students how to use the technology and the new processes.
- Develop and communicate the expectations of students, teachers, and parents.
- Recognize that blended learning is different than your traditional face-to-face class, but the fundamentals of good teaching still apply and there are advantages to both synchronous and asynchronous learning.
- Take time to develop a plan and model for the structure of your class, and consider the following:
    - What is the intention of the learning experience and how will in-class and at-home work be integrated?
    - Are there opportunities for multimodal learning and for using triangulation of data for assessment (conversations, observations, and products)?
    - Is the volume and difficulty of work given to students appropriate to ensure they will be able to complete the work outside of class?
    - What will activation, acquisition, application, and assessment look like for students when they are working at home and in class?

When Students are in Class

- Focus on high-engagement, active-learning techniques that allow you to observe and talk to students about their learning and comprehension.
- Allow students to demonstrate their learning with assignments, projects, and other activities that allow collaboration and creative problem solving.

When Students are Working Remotely

- Provide easy-to-read, interactive content in the form of text, video, images, and independent research.
- Break up content and assignments into small consumable sections to promote mastery of content knowledge.
- Have regular check-ins with students to gauge student understanding and to provide feedback and support.
- Provide assignments that encourage student creativity, and focus on creating a product rather than on completing a worksheet.
- Allow students to communicate their learning in a variety of formats that are appropriate to their audience and purpose.
- Provide safe spaces for students to communicate with teachers and each other.

Examples of What Blended Learning MAY Look Like

In both of the following examples, the teacher provides ongoing interaction, feedback, and guidance, and observes student participation and collects evidence of learning.

Grade 6 Math: Shape and Space (Measurement) – Learning About Angles

Working remotely:

> The teacher provides a playlist of multimodal content (readings, websites, videos, etc.) that engages students in learning about angles.
>
> - The content provides examples of angles in nature that show different types of angles with classifications (e.g., acute, right, obtuse, etc.), opportunities for individual research, as well as videos that demonstrate how to measure angles and how to add angles.
>
> Students participate in learning activities to establish connections that further develop their conceptual understanding of angles.
>
> - Students complete a nature walk and find their own examples of angles in nature or in their environment, create a sketch, capture pictures or video of the angles, estimate what the measurement of the angle is, and provide an explanation of their thinking in text, video, or audio.

Working in class:

Students collaborate in small groups to compare strategies, share models, present findings of their investigations, receive peer feedback for improved communication or reasoning, create questions they can use to challenge other small groups, and reflect on their learning.

- Using the examples they collected in their nature walk, groups share, discuss, and estimate the angles in the example and calculate the total. Students work together to investigate topics like calculating interior angles of different shapes.

Grade 10 Geography: Geographic Literacy (Cluster 1) – 1.2: Physical and Human Geography

Working remotely:

Students interact with a playlist of multimodal content (websites, videos, online maps, etc.) suggested by the teacher and are encouraged to find and share their own resources.

- The content provides information and examples explaining elements and interrelationships of physical and human geography (e.g., *Canadian Geographic* magazine features an article on why aquaponics gardens are useful and how to create one; *The Birch Bark Canoe: Navigating a New World* discusses the sustainable design and use of the birch bark canoe to navigate Canada's physical geography, pre- and post-European contact).

- The content includes images and explanations of the importance of major physical features of North America, such as the Oak Hammock Marsh program *Caring for Our Watersheds*.

Students observe patterns in the examples provided and make reflections on the relationships between physical and human geography and the connections to environmental stewardship and sustainability. Students share their reflections with the class and/or authentic audience (e.g., slideshow, video reflection, blog post, etc.) and have an online discussion (threaded or synchronous) to deepen their understanding.

Students complete an activity using digital maps where they choose two locations in Canada and record what physical and human geography elements, features, and/or influences they may encounter, including connections to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Working in class:

Students explore maps in the classroom using both physical and digital resources. This is an opportunity for students to acquire the required skills for interpreting information from a variety of forms, and lay the foundations for larger themes, such as stewardship and sustainability, that will be addressed throughout the course.

Students participate in activities where they share their research, and receive and provide feedback. They then work on making changes based upon critical feedback.

Useful Tools for Blended Learning

- A platform to deliver content (*Brightspace, Office 365, G-Suite,* etc.)
- Apps that enable creative production and critical documentation of thinking and learning (*Flipgrid*, *ThingLink*, etc.)
- Tools to communicate with students and parents/guardians (email, phone, etc.)

Low/No Tech Options

- Send print packages home for asynchronous learning.
- Ensure there is frequent communication with students and parents.
- Develop and share learning and communication plans; include an overview of blended and remote learning, projected timelines and expectations, and support guides for students and parents.

Resources

12 of the Most Common Types of Blended Learning
This article, written by TeachThought staff, provides a useful overview of 12 of the most common types of blended learning.
www.teachthought.com/learning/12-types-of-blended-learning/

9 Ways Online Teaching Should be Different from Face-to-Face
An illustration of nine ways that online learning differs from face-to-face teaching.
www.cultofpedagogy.com/9-ways-online-teaching/

Making Cooperative Learning Work Better
Strategies for making cooperative learning work better.
www.cultofpedagogy.com/making-cooperative-learning-work-better/

What is Active Learning?
A summary of active learning, including why it is used, the challenges of using it, and its successful implementation.
https://cei.umn.edu/active-learning

Self-Regulated Learning
Self-regulated learning is a cyclical process, wherein the student plans for a task, monitors their performance, and then reflects on the outcome.
https://serc.carleton.edu/sage2yc/self_regulated/what.html

Documenting Learning
A Guide to Documenting Learning: Making Thinking Visible, Meaningful, Shareable, and Amplified.
How do we look for, capture, reflect on, and share learning in-class & remotely to foster meaningful and active engagement?
https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/a-guide-to-documenting-learning/book257764

*Note: This document is a basic introduction to help teachers transition to a blended model; it is not intended to provide an in-depth explanation of blended learning environments and the different models.