



5 Tips for Making Blended Learning Successful

More and more, schools that are looking for flexible targeted instruction that will help them meet the needs of their students and prepare for high-stakes testing are turning to Blended Learning. Blended Learning is a classroom model where students learn both individually with technology and onsite via traditional instruction. All of these activities are integrated into one learning experience.

Blended Learning can extend the reach of a teacher by using a mix of online programs and one-on-one or small group time. When done well, Blended Learning can help individualize a student's education and save a teacher's time for when they can be the most help. Occasionally, Blended Learning also can use a flipped classroom model. Teachers in a flipped classroom deliver their lectures electronically for students to watch after school, and class time is spent doing homework and working collaboratively.

What do your students need?

All students are unique individuals, so it makes sense that a one-size-fits-all educational plan doesn't work for everyone. With Blended Learning, a student can learn at his or her own pace. If the student doesn't understand something, he or she can repeat a test or review the material without fear of holding anyone else back.

Individualized instruction can be both effective and powerful. When instruction is delivered 100% online, some students who don't understand the material will get lost. But if a teacher tries to do 100% of the instruction themselves, they run the risk of leaving struggling students behind or having advanced students tune out. **Blended Learning uses a combination of online and in-person instruction to reach a diverse group of learners.**

Plan ahead for success

Adding technology to the classroom isn't enough. You have to have a plan for what to do with it!

The most common model for blended instruction is a rotational model. In this model, teachers provide a mix of digital and traditional instruction, using clear benchmarks to track student performance and analyzing the data to deliver customized instruction. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and practices. Students collaborate using small groups, and each student receives an individualized learning experience.

To use the rotational model in the classroom, teachers should probably set up at least three stations: a direct instruction station where the teacher can work with students, an independent digital station with headphones, and a collaborative group station with enough chairs for a small group.

Students then rotate through the three stations during the school day, ensuring that they receive the practice, experience and review that they need to understand each topic.

Get the right technology

Before your school purchases expensive tablets or laptops, or refurbishes a computer lab, think about what you want to do with the devices in your classroom. Tablets and iPads are great for some purposes, and have many wonderful educational apps. But laptops might be a better choice if students are going to do a lot of writing.

Check out our article on [Choosing Technology](#) for tips on picking the right technology for your students.

Use effective individualized programs

Some programs are more suited to individual instruction than others. **To make sure your students are receiving the best experience, invest in resources that give them a strong foundation and help them gain a deeper understanding of the material.**

When you're looking for a way to get your students fluent with their math facts, ExploreLearning Reflex is an effective online program that doesn't require much teacher time. Since Reflex is game-based, students will have fun while they learn math facts. The program is also individualized, and gives students encouragement as they make progress. The program also provides teachers with the data they need on student progress.

ExploreLearning Gizmos is the largest library of math and science simulations, and is aligned to the new state standards. With Gizmos, students can work individually, in small groups or in whole-group instruction, and go deeper into the material. Each Gizmo comes with assessment questions so teachers can evaluate whether students have understood the subject matter.

Be patient

Trying something new is always stressful and the process will be a learning experience for both teachers and students. Assume that not everything will go off smoothly the first year of implementation. Parents might complain, students might not be ready to study on their own, and your principal may not always have faith in what you're attempting to do. Persevere!

Don't give up. Think about what success means to you before you begin. Study examples and learn from other teachers. Ask for professional development for you and your team. Carefully choose the technology and programs you plan to use, set realistic goals—and you'll soon be on your way to having a successful Blended Learning Classroom.

ExploreLearning® develops online solutions to improve student learning in math and science. ExploreLearning currently has two products: Gizmos®, the world's largest library of interactive, online simulations for math and science in grades 3-12; and Reflex®, the most powerful solution available for math fact fluency development. Gizmos and Reflex bring research-proven instructional strategies to classrooms around the world. For more information about Gizmos, please visit www.explorelearning.com. For more information about Reflex, please visit www.reflexmath.com.