



**Indicator:** All teachers use online, hybrid, or blended learning as a part of a larger pedagogical approach that combines the effective socialization opportunities within the classroom with the enhanced learning opportunities available in online instruction. (A9)

**Explanation:** Combining digital learning communities with socialization opportunities has been shown to produce positive outcomes, learning and otherwise, for individuals and their communities. In addition to producing positive incomes, increased opportunities for socialization with digital learning also produces student self-reports of better learning outcomes and satisfaction.

**Questions:** Why are socialization opportunities important? How are socialization opportunities combined with on-line, hybrid and blended learning approaches?

*Why are socialization opportunities important?*

The importance of creating community through socialization is backed by research that shows positive outcomes for individuals and the learning communities to which they belong. Interpersonal connections of community members increases their willingness to share information and resources, which sets the stage for collaborative learning (Haythornthwaite, 2002). It has been widely demonstrated that strong community ties increase the exchange of information among all members, the availability of support and cooperation among members, and satisfaction with group efforts (Argyle, 1991; Bruffee, 1993; Dede, 1996; Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, & Turoff, 1995; Wellman, 1999). Members' trust in the social community fosters contribution and support in times of need (Haines, Hurlbert & Beggs, 1996). Finally, individuals benefit from community membership by experiencing a greater sense of well being and happiness, and having a larger and more willing set of others to call on for support in times of need (Haines, Hurlbert & Beggs, 1996; Walker, Wasserman & Wellman, 1994).

*Why should socialization opportunities be combined with online, hybrid and blended learning approaches?*

Blended learning is a pedagogical approach that combines "the effectiveness and socialization of the classroom with the technologically enhanced active learning possibility of the online environment" (Dziuban, Harman & Moskal, 2004). Completion of activities, readings and assessments happens in the online environment, while face-to-face time is preserved for discussion and collaboration between teachers and students and between students and their peers. Not only does this "blended" arrangement produce positive student learning outcomes, but students report appreciation for the "more effective use of face-to-face class time" and "flexibility for learning" (Riley, Gardner, Cosgrove, Olitsky, O'Neil & Du, 2014) that blended learning offers.

Studies have shown that higher levels of social interaction in learning communities improve performance (e.g., Imm & Stylianou, 2012). The U.S. Department of Education (2010) reported that "Instruction combining online and face-to-face elements had a larger advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction" (p.xv) for performance improvement. Liu, Gomez & Yen (2009) found that social presence is "a significant predictor

of course retention and final grades in the community college online environment” (p.165). Further, Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff (2014) demonstrated that social interactions (online and in person) improved language-learning outcomes.

For learners who have access only to online communities, without a face-to-face component, studies have shown that sustainable, strong ties can be made in fully online communities (e.g., Baym 1995, 1997; Reid, 1995; Rheingold, 1993). As Wellman (1999) points out, these studies show that when we view community as what activities learners do together, rather than where or through what means they do them, we see communities that exist ‘liberated’ from geography, physical neighborhoods and campuses. Learners can still maintain close ties with others, through email, online chat rooms and text messaging. Moreover, learners can maintain ties with those who they might not otherwise have encountered, were it not for a shared interest in learning about a topic or subject (Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova, Garton, Gulia & Haythornthwaite, 1996).

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