



Indicator: All teachers receive initial and ongoing training and support in effective use of blended learning methods. (B1)

Explanation: Teachers are critical to both student learning outcomes and effective blended learning environments. Good blended learning arrangements result in enthusiastic and motivated teachers. Bad blended learning arrangements produce disgruntled and disengaged teachers. In order to have a good arrangement, training and support must be considered from the point of view of the teachers.

Questions: What is the teacher's role in Blended Learning? What kinds of training and support should be provided to teachers who use Blended Learning?

What is the teacher's role in Blended Learning?

In the blended learning approach, a student's day typically includes a combination of online learning and small group instruction time with teachers. This learning model shifts the classroom teacher's focus away from more traditional curricular and administrative tasks in the direction of working with data and providing more individualized support to students. (Ames, 2012). The focus of the Blended Learning model shifts from planning lessons and delivering content to facilitating, coaching and mentoring individual students in the classroom.

There is a good deal of evidence show the lasting influence that good teachers have on student outcomes (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2013). But as schools rely more on technology solutions to deliver high-quality instructional programs, there is a risk that on-site teachers will feel replaced and "check out." This is problematic because teachers are critical to the success of blended learning. In good blended-learning programs, although teacher roles do change, those teachers are still engaged and working with students even more actively in a variety of ways. The challenge is to train and support teachers for and in their new roles so that they are enthusiastic and motivated.

What kinds of training and support should be provided to teachers who use Blended Learning?

As Horn & Staker (2015) point out, "Blended learning entails more than layering technology on top of traditional classrooms; it involves a deeper redesign of the instructional model" (p. 169). And as such, the responsibility of administrators to integrate teachers successfully into the design is a large one. Horn & Staker (2015) offer these five ways to train and support teachers to maximize their motivators in their restructured roles with Blended Learning solutions:

- Extend the reach of great teachers – Digital technology opens up the possibility for great teachers to reach more students, garnering more recognition and achievement. Schools can construct environments within the district community where teachers can post flipped classroom lectures, lead online classes or lead professional development webinars. If teachers do not have the necessarily technical skills to participate, training should be provided so that no one is left out.

- Assign individual teachers specialized responsibilities – In blended learning models, students experience learning from multiple sources and the traditional teacher role, in which each individual teacher used to do every aspect of the job, is unbundled. This unbundling creates the opportunity for teachers to specialize in their own areas of interest. Some examples include: content experts who focus on developing curriculum; small group leaders who run stations or labs; project designers to supplement online learning with hands-on applications; data experts. These growth opportunities increase teacher motivation.
- Allow teachers to teach in teams – As odd as it may seem, recognition from their peers is very motivating to teachers. Literally tearing down walls and blending classrooms so that both teachers and kids can work as teams and in larger groups gives teachers the opportunity to recognize each other’s skills on a more frequent basis. In addition, working in teams opens up opportunities for advancement, such as creating master teacher roles within teams.
- Award teachers micro-credentials for the mastery of skills – The same logic behind moving to a competency-based system for students makes sense for teachers as well. The opportunity for training in new skill areas provides grown possibilities for teachers and the micro-credentialing and badging allows them to show what they know.
- Granting authority to blended-learning teams— Teach teachers the principles of blended learning and then allow them wide leeway to innovate. This independence reinforces the teachers’ feelings of being trusted professionals.

References and resources

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