



Indicator: School leaders and peer mentors regularly observe and measure instances of online, hybrid, or blended teaching to ensure instruction is implemented fully and with fidelity. (5304)

Explanation: Classrooms that provide online and blended learning require educators that possess the capacity for continual improvement and reflective practice as well as the ability to implement instructional strategies that promote personal learning pathways for students. School leaders and peer mentors observing blended classrooms should focus on identifying appropriate classroom cultures and teachers' ability to manage, plan and deliver blended learning, as well as their capacity to use assessment and their proficiency with digital tools. School leaders may also want to consider assessing "off-stage" teaching practices related to blended learning.

Questions: What are characteristics of fully implemented online and blended teaching practices? What are other considerations for observing and measuring online and blended teaching?

Learner-centered, or personalized learning refers to "tailoring learning for each student's strengths, needs and interests—including enabling student voice and choice in what, how, when and where they learn—to provide flexibility and supports to ensure mastery of the highest standards possible" (Patrick, Kennedy, & Powell, 2013, p. 4). The student is actively involved with the teacher in co-constructing their individualized learning pathway, and the location, time and pace of learning may vary from student to student (Redding, 2016). Technology makes personalized learning approaches possible at scale and can assist in all areas of teaching and learning, including student data and assessment, curriculum selection and alignment to standards, and instruction and learning (Wolf, 2010; Redding, 2014). A good deal of research evidence has supported the use of technologies and online instruction to increase student achievement (e.g., Tamin, Bernard, Borokhovski, Abrami, & Schmid, 2011); research has also demonstrated that students with access to blended learning models, which combine online and face-to-face instruction, outperform those experiencing only one type of instruction (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010; Means, Toyama, Murphy & Baki, 2013; Pane, Steiner, Baird, & Hamilton, 2015). School leaders must be capable of creating a vision shared by all community members in order for technology to truly transform learning (ISTE, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2016), and they must work with experienced peer mentors to assess and guide online or blended teaching practices (or hybrid approaches combining both elements along with traditional, direct instruction) in order to successfully implement personalized learning practices within their schools (Horn, 2015).

What Are Characteristics of Fully Implemented Online and Blended Teaching Practices?

Blended and online learning approaches require many of the same teaching skills and beliefs that constitute excellent instruction (e.g., high expectations for all students); however, the rapid pace of technological change requires teachers using these approaches in particular to continually learn and innovate within their work with students (Powell, Rabbitt, & Kennedy, 2014). Additionally, teachers implementing online or blended approaches may shift from primarily being conveyors of knowledge to coaches or mentors that encourage student ownership of their learning. Digital learning can also allow teachers to focus on encouraging critical thinking and application of knowledge, since digital content can successfully address the foundational levels of Bloom's taxonomy, such as memorization (Powell,

et al., 2014). Therefore, in order to assess the classroom implementation of these approaches, school leaders and experienced peer mentors must utilize tools and techniques that appropriately capture key teacher behaviors that are reflective of sound instructional blended or online teaching. Powell and colleagues (2014) describe teacher competencies associated with effective blended learning approaches, and offer a framework of these competencies to give school leaders indicators of effective blended learning instruction. The competencies are organized within four domains:

- **Mindsets:** Blended educators must demonstrate a new vision for teaching and learning as well as orientation towards continual change and improvement.
- **Qualities:** Blended teachers should be effective collaborators and possess grit and transparency, or willingness to share successes, failures and challenges.
- **Adaptive skills:** Blended teachers should demonstrate reflective practice, continuously focus on improvement and innovation, and be effective communicators.
- **Technical skills:** Blended teachers must effectively use data and demonstrate effective blended instructional strategies (e.g., create customized learning pathways for students). They must also know how to effectively manage the blended learning experience, and be able to select and use digital content appropriately.

Education Elements (2014) similarly developed a rubric to help teachers using blended learning practices set goals for implementation, as well as help school leaders assess and focus on key areas to provide coaching and support. The rubric consists of five domains that comprise effective blended teaching practices:

1. **Classroom culture:** A blended learning classroom culture develops students' digital ethics and provides opportunities for pursuit of personalized academic goals. Teachers also involve stakeholders (e.g., parents) and demonstrate new teaching practices in order to build enthusiasm and gain buy-in.
2. **Blended learning management:** Teachers develop routines and systems that maintain an effective blended learning environment by training students to use digital tools independently and routines that guide students through digital and non-digital work time.
3. **Blended instructional planning and delivery:** Teachers provide differentiated learning paths through the use of digital content, and can use a combination of offline instruction and digital content to support all levels of Bloom's taxonomy.
4. **Blended assessment and analysis:** Teachers use both offline and online assessment data to gauge student learning and identify learning needs.
5. **Blended learning technology:** Teachers continually develop and refine their proficiency with digital tools and progress in their ability to choose digital tools to enable greater personalization.

The authors argue that the rubric should be used at the start of a blended learning program to clarify expectations for teachers and help them set goals for further development and selection of professional learning experiences. New blended learning teachers should be provided with plenty of opportunities to observe master blended teachers, and have access to ongoing coaching with expert peer mentors who can use observation data for purposes of reflection with their colleagues within professional learning communities (Education Elements, 2014).

What Are Other Considerations for Observing and Measuring Online and Blended Teaching?

School leaders will likely need to rethink walk-through tools and better align them to identify effective blended teaching practices; core teaching rubrics will need to be modified to address blended learning considerations (TNTP, 2014a). For example, it is more difficult to determine whether students are learning within blended classroom environments since they may be working on multiple lessons at any time and since deep content engagement is more difficult to observe when students use computers. An additional priority to consider when evaluating blended or online learning involves measuring "off-stage" teacher activities to capture data on collaboration, data analysis, and planning (TNTP, 2014b). For example, school leaders can observe teachers as they examine formative data gathered from online assessments, and determine their proficiency in both understanding and acting on the assessment data to enhance student learning.

References and other resources

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