OLTD 511 Major Inquiry Project: Creating your own Blended Learning Program

By: Edward Frison, George Knight, and Melanie Sedergreen

Scenario:

You have been tasked and funded by your school district to put forward a proposal to create a blended learning program for your school district. You have two and a half weeks to research and create a proposal to present to senior admin and the school board. In three weeks time you are to present your plan live to the board. Your presentation must be accompanied with a more detailed written report detailing the specifics of your plan.

(Please note that we adjusted question order but retained the questions and numbering to facilitate assessment)

1) What problems are you trying to solve?

According to Horn and Staker (2015, 444) in order for students to be motivated and engaged at school, they must have an opportunity to feel successful and have positive social relationships. Horn and Staker also emphasize that programs effecting change must define a problem in terms of being a SMART goal. The problem we are trying to solve is supporting at risk students entering grade eight in an eight to twelve high-school. Wikipedia defines at risks students and youth as follows:

> "An **at-risk student** is a term used in the United States to describe a student who requires temporary or ongoing intervention in order to succeed academically. At risk students, sometimes referred to as **at-risk youth**, are also adolescents who are less likely to transition successfully into adulthood and achieve economic self-sufficiency" (Wikipedia, At-Risk Students)

This cohort of youths is comprised of a diverse population, some are recent immigrants, some are living in Ministry care, some live in single adult households, some have parents with disabilities and others live in dual income homes. Leaving grade seven, between ½ and
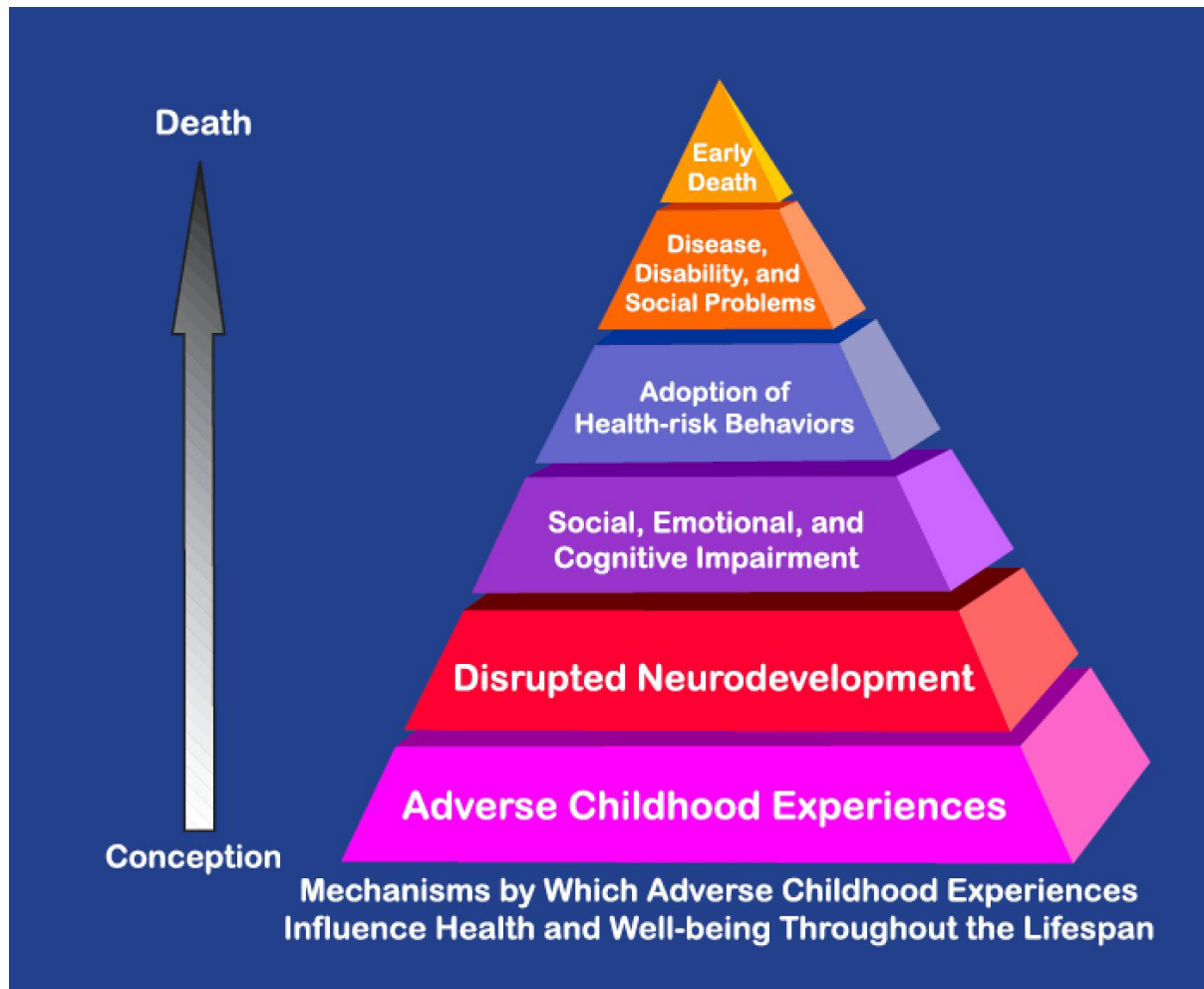
⅔ struggle with academics on some level and ⅓ are at grade level or higher.

From: 7 Elements of Campaign

Concerns exist because significant adaptations and modifications have been put in place for those who struggle the most at the elementary level, and such individualization tends to cease or decrease dramatically once students begin secondary school. From our team`s experience this impacts students beliefs about their ability to achieve success and consequently their self-esteem, leading to increasing risky behaviour during a developmentally complicated part of their lives. Thus a significant percentage of our students are at risk academically and of "adverse childhood experiences" (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, Wikipedia).

Death

Conception

Early Death

Disease, Disability, and Social Problems

Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors

Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment

Disrupted Neurodevelopment

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

http://tinyurl.com/ozrshro

As a SMART Goal our problem is defined as:

Specific Target: At risk grade 8 students in an inner city environment, with relatively low social supports.

Measureable: Progress will be measured by increased completion of online activities; increased attendance and engagement in face-to-face sessions; and increased achievement results from just passing marks at 50%, to more successful marks at 60%. Progress will also be measured by qualitative surveys of students. They will be asked about whether they feel they have opportunities to be successful and whether they feel they have opportunities to develop positive relationships at school.

Assignable: A team of teachers will be responsible for collaborating on the blended plan and implementing the station rotation and face-to-face sessions. This team will be focused on an incoming cohort of students that have been identified as at risk for due to academic or socio-economic factors or both. This incoming cohort will be divided between a team of teachers learning about how to integrate blended learning into their practice and a team of teachers who use more 'traditional' models of teaching and learning. This ensures that if a particular student is really struggling with either model they can possibly join the other

model. There will also be a lightweight team consisting of other district personnel because this is a pilot program that requires funding.

Realistic: The blended team has received some level of professional development in the areas of online and blended learning as well as Universal Design Learning. There has also been some collaboration time built into their schedules. There is a budget providing for devices, applications, some easy (low) readability resources, and the physical space already exists.

Time: The program will begin the Fall of 2016

Our program will emphasize personal progress and success while celebrating all "academic" engagement, progress, and successes. Our blended program will also foster positive social relationships in all face-to-face interactions. Relationship building and mentoring will shape face-to-face discussions, tutoring, and learning guidance.

3) What experience would you like to provide to students?

All students have different needs. When considering the needs of 'at-risk-students and youth' it is helpful to recall Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of human needs theory. According to Maslow, humans have basic needs with physiological needs at the base, followed by safety, love / belonging, esteem, and finally self-actualization. (Wikipedia, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).

In the context of our blended program, there are school food programs to provide for physiological needs. The teachers on our team aim to offer safe non-judgemental environments for students to engage in learning that they can be successful at and develop positive relationships within. Everyone is cared for and everyone belongs. Learning design is shaped by the goals of students experiencing success and having positive relationships.

While significant control of pace and path may be appropriate for students who "have a safe place with a nurturing parent or other learning coach to support and supervise" (Staker & Horn, p. 682), our students require caregiving, as well as, face-to-face instruction, mentoring and tutoring. Thus, they will have some control over pace and path within the station rotation models in classrooms, while also receiving face-to-face supports.

The key for us is that students have an opportunity to feel continued success. This will enable them to build confidence as they work towards increasing independence. The teachers will assess what students need to feel success and design learning activities accordingly.

6) What model of blended learning will you adapt?

Change in educational teaching methods can be difficult for teachers. If a model has worked, why change it? Moreover, what works for one teacher, may not work for another. For example, a physical education teacher may find that demonstrating a stretching exercise works best for them. If you cannot do the "splits", then it is best that you do not use that

model. Good teachers, however, always want to find ways to teach their students better. This is why blended learning and the Station Rotation model has been chosen.

Horn and Staker (2015) define blended learning as "a formal education program in which a student learns in at least in part through online learning with some elements of student control over time, place, path and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home" (p. 54). Blending our classrooms using the Station Rotation model can personalize learning, improve teacher effectiveness, and student and teachers' working conditions. Students will have the opportunity to choose how they learn, what they learn, and at what pace they learn it. Teachers will be able to work with small groups of students to better meet their needs and build better relationships. Since the student and teachers' needs are meet, the working conditions for all are greatly improved.

The Station Rotation model of blended learning is a combination of a traditional teaching with an online component. As this model of teaching combines the old with the new; it is the best of both worlds (p. 84). Students rotate through small group instruction (traditional), group work or assignment work (traditional), and an online station (new).

Classroom instruction will include (traditional) teaching to a whole class and small group differentiated instruction tailored to meet specific needs. Thus, depending on teacher assessments, groups can be levelled based on ability to provide enrichment, instructional, or remedial learning but also based on interests for group projects, as well as heterogeneous groups for social and emotional learning. Our hypothesis is that learning based on student needs will improve their level of engagement. Students will also learn how to work cooperatively with one another which also helps to build positive relationships in the classroom and school community (Cooper, 2015).

The group work or assignment work station is traditional classroom learning. This station will be used to reinforce or master the lessons taught during small group instruction. Alternately, this station will also be used for project work. Students will work in small collaborative groups on projects. Ideally, these projects will be based on student interest.

The online station is new to most teachers. This station allows for students to work at their own pace and work at their own level. Depending on the subject and teacher design, this station may be related to the other two stations, or it could stand alone.

Having the right program for the students to use is paramount. The program should have some learning management features and be able to assess students and provide engaging instructional and learning activities. It will reinforce concepts taught, help in remediation, foster mastery and even provide for the gifted student. The online station will keep track of the students' progress and provide instant feedback. Students will feel empowered because they can see what they have accomplished (opportunity to feel successful) and the teacher will be able to use this information to help direct small group instruction. For example, a math teacher may notice that a group of students are having trouble using the substitution method in algebra. The teacher could form a small group (targeted remediation).

By using the Station Rotation model, teachers can slowly modify their teaching without feeling overwhelmed. The intent is to make it easier for teachers to personalize learning for the students and implement a manageable model of blended learning. As teachers feel proficient using this model, they may try other similar models to suit their teaching styles.

What does the Station Rotation Model look like?

Horn and Staker (2012) provide a clear illustration of the station rotation model as it appears to cycle students through instruction, practice activities, and online learning and practice.

Station-Rotation Model:
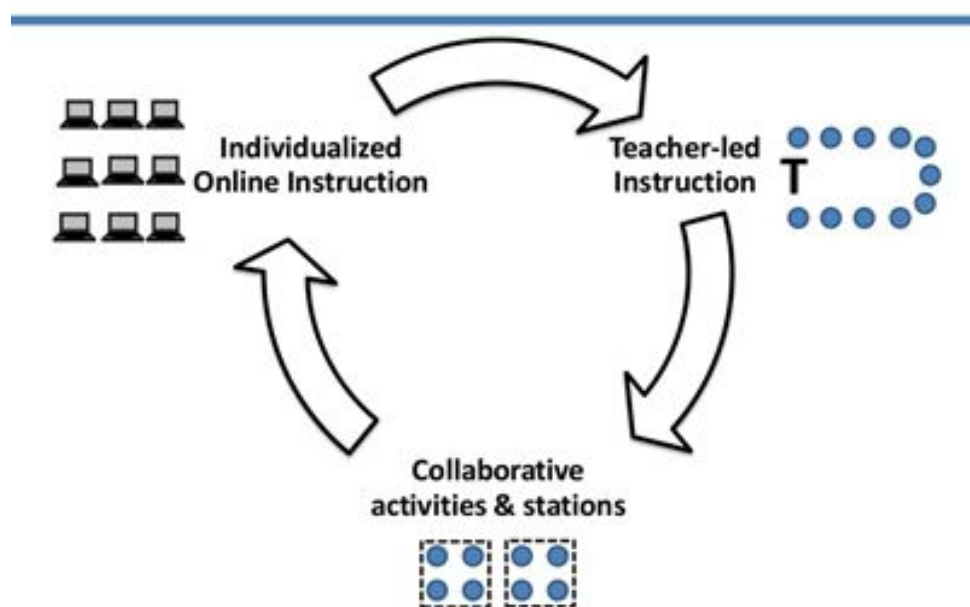
Source: Heather Staker and Michael B. Horn, "Classifying K-12 Blended Learning," Innosight Institute, May 2012

The Station Rotation Model is very flexible and designed to be used in standard classrooms with relatively low device to student ratios if budget constraints require this. Each block within the school is one and a half hours long. Teachers may choose to divide this time evenly between the stations or even rotate less often. Teachers can vary the size and the amount of time spent with each group. There will also be areas where students can work collaboratively without bothering fellow learners. This area may be a common area shared by other classrooms, but still within supervision of the classroom teacher. The teacher knows what will work best for both teacher and student and will divide the groups, time, and space accordingly.

Schedule for Station Rotation

	9:00 – 9:30	9:30 – 10:00	10:00 – 10:30
Group A		GROUP WORK or	
Group B			GROUP WORK or
Group C	GROUP WORK or		

10 minute break

	10:40 – 11: 10	11: 10 – 11:40	11:40 – 12:10
Group A		GROUP WORK or	
Group B			GROUP WORK or
Group C	GROUP WORK or		

50 minute lunch break

	1:00 – 1:30	1:30 – 3:00
Group A	Advisory, guidance relationship building, and support	and the
Group B		
Group C		

Source for Clipart: Microsoft Word 2010

Pink, blue, and yellow sections rotate each day so that students get their subjects at different times of the day. Some students might work better in the morning and others in the afternoon. If a student is often late for school, then they will not always miss part of the same subject.

Calendar - Weekly schedule - what will a typical week look like?

Grade 8 sample schedule 3 day rotation)

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
9:00 – 10:30	Language Arts and Social Studies	Physical Education Fine Arts / Practical Arts	Mathematics / Science
10:30 -10:40	Break	Break	Break
10:40 – 12:10	Mathematics / Science	Language Arts and Social Studies	Physical Education Fine Arts / Practical Arts
1:00 – 1:30	Advisory, guidance relationship building, and support	Advisory, guidance relationship building, and support	Advisory, guidance relationship building, and support
1:30 – 3:00	Physical Education Fine Arts / Practical Arts	Mathematics / Science	Language Arts and Social Studies

There are many facilities that must be shared throughout the school. Not all students can be in the gym or fine art classes at the same time. The grade 8 schedule (above) might look like this and the grade 9's and 10's "Day 1" would be the second day and the grade 11's and 12's "Day 1" would start on third day.

4) What do you want the primary role of the teacher to be?

Horn and Staker believe that a blended model enables teachers to 'specialize' (547) as: content experts; small group leaders; project designers; mentors; evaluators and data experts. When orchestrating a blended model, they suggest that the step 4 question should be "What do you want the primary role of the teacher to be?" Horn and Staker offer three options: a) delivering face-to-face direct instruction; b) providing face-to-face tutoring, guidance and enrichment to supplement online lessons; and c) serving as an online teacher. While they acknowledge that different teachers take on different roles, they ask us "for the purpose of this exercise, consider only the lead teacher for the course or subject that you want to blend. What do you want the teacher's role to be within this course?"(574)

Our team rejects a binary or dichotomous division of the teacher role, and prefers a blending of all these roles and more. For example, Horn and Staker do not offer a clear explanation of the distinctions between face-to-face instruction and tutoring. The time spent with students in a classroom cannot be broken into distinct modules. It is fluid and integrated. Assessments

are made, then direct instruction may occur for five to ten minutes followed by student practice while the teacher circulates, questions, provides feedback and conducts ongoing informal assessments. If necessary, more direct instruction may occur.

Implementing a station rotation model enables our teachers to assess and then provide face-to-face instruction, tutoring, guidance and enrichment, while online learning supplements and reinforces the classroom social learning processes.

Our team will not design learning solely based on assumptions of content specific prior learning. If as Horn and Staker state (2014, 444) students must have an opportunity to feel successful in order to be engaged and motivated, then our teachers will "start with where they are" (Hume, 2008). They assess current level of performance, then they make decisions about what will students help students feel success and design learning activities accordingly. This occurs through file review and in class assessments such as asking students what they remember or already know about the topic. Our online programs will also play a role in assessing prior knowledge.

Once our teachers have an understanding of students' current level of knowledge and performance they will draw on the theory of Universal Design Learning (CAST, 2011) and Understanding by Design (UbD) developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2005). Thus, learning goals will be developed, and essential questions will be formed to foster inquiry and understandings. Students will be aware of the long term learning goals and will be encouraged to develop short term goals and their own action plans to achieve them.

For in class face-to-face learning, our content experts will draw from a variety of resources, with as many as possible created for Universal Design Learning. Thus, 'low readability' texts will be used for English classes with our at risk struggling readers. Social Studies, Science and Math lessons will include video, audio and text resources with a variety of options for assessing learning.

While some students are at the online stations, the teacher will facilitate small group learning at times providing direct instruction, at times facilitating small group discussions based on essential questions, and providing mentoring, feedback and guidance as needed. Teachers will also facilitate and guide collaborative or independent project work.

The online programs chosen by the team will support learning, through online practice, video tutorials and feedback from the online assessments. The students will work independently at the stations, yet the teacher presence exists through the thoughtful selection of programs and content. The blended team will also ensure the software programs they choose to use in the classroom have Universal Design Learning (UDL) features. Thus students who struggle with reading or writing will be supported with screen reading and speech-to-text applications (such as "Read & Write Google").

From: 7 Elements of Campaign
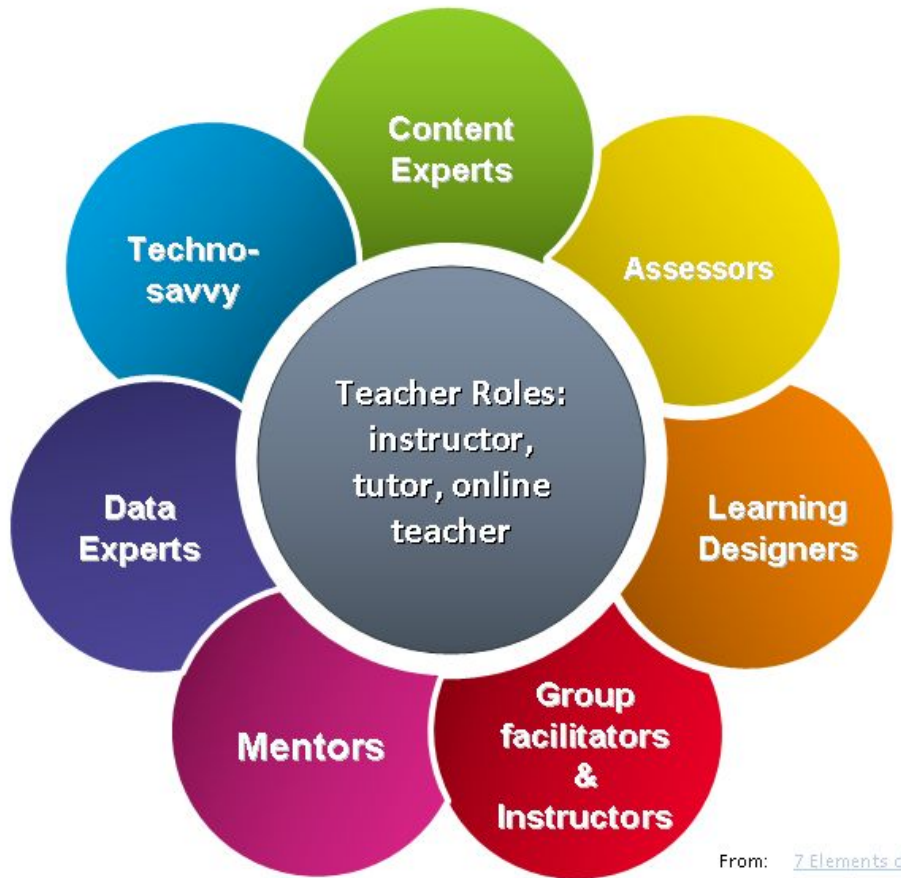
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2) How will you organize your team?

In order to achieve our goal of supporting at risk youths by designing learning for support student success and relationship building, we must have a strong team. The team will also have a big role in the creation of our class and school culture. Staker and Horn (2015) suggest specific types of teams be matched to specific types of problems and specific types of models. We find this process somewhat constricting. In order to be successful, our team needs a significant amount of autonomy, yet it is questionable that they will have this using the teams and models suggested by Horn & Staker. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this assignment we will assume the teachers will have the necessary autonomy to implement the program.

We believe we need a combined team approach, a lightweight and autonomous team. Horn and Staker suggest relating the team to the problem (669), An autonomous team is required as the teachers need to be able to adjust space, budget, and staffing plan so as to redesign learning paradigms. Our classroom teachers must have the necessary level of freedom and autonomy to create new learning environments and the ability to make unilateral decisions that will restructure the learning systems for the innovations happening within the blended classroom.

"If the problem requires coordination with other parts of the school, outside of the classroom, department or grade level teachers," (669) a lightweight team is ideal. Because our program is new and experimental and it requires additional district funding we are also part of a larger team. The larger lightweight team will be composed of a combination of personnel with a variety of expertise.

What does the lightweight team look like? It is made up of practitioners in online learning, online school administration, students taking online courses, a technology consultant, and representation from senior district management.

We believe it is important to include teachers working in online environments and their findings relevant to best practices that ensure student success. Student perspectives on how they like to learn will also be valuable in looking at supporting best practice. Moreover, integrating student perspectives into our team also reflects the importance of building positive relationships. Our technology consultant will support the team by providing research covering an array of studies on this topic and possibly networking with outside experts that can contribute their thoughts and experience. Of course, our team will include someone from senior management to provide the outlook of the District and the policies and parameters of funding this type of initiative. This person is also the interface between practice and the system hierarchy. Finally, the team will have the school administrator with the dubious honor of chairing or leading the team. The administrator will bridge the gap between the teachers' and students' realities and the needs and requirements of management. The school administrator will ensure that the students have the opportunity to move back into a more traditional F2F environment running parallel to our blended program if they are having difficulty adapting to the new environment. With this team working together, the potential for moving toward a student-centered approach to blended learning is significant.

7) How will you shape and maintain a positive culture in your school?

We plan to address culture within the school on two levels. One will be the culture of our cohort of students and the other is the culture of the staff in the school. Our goal is to establish a culture that supports our blended learning environment and creates a place where our students feel safe, able to take risks in learning, and feel supported for where they are at academically, socially, and emotionally.

To make our pilot project viable, we will need to break the traditional culture of block timetabling. We will create a "school within a school" model that operates separate from the mainstream block schedule other than the start and end of the school day. To start, we will use our rotational order to establish a rhythm of change in the class that, over time, will evolve into more student managed access by creating weekly menus that students work out with their advisor teacher.

First, our team will work with students to identify the cultural aspects that will be important to everyone. As is pointed out in Horn and Staker (2015) we will identify our cultural priorities - what matters most to us, and the processes that we need in order to execute our priorities (p.255). To fit in with the broader school goals, we will focus on improving student

performance and attendance. Once these broad priorities have been discussed, we will look at priorities that are important for our class culture.

We can use a method of co-constructing our criteria such as developed by Sandra Herbst where students and the teacher(s) in our program work together to identify the priorities of our learning environment and even how assessment will look. Giving the students strong positive models to compare to will allow for the growth of ownership in how successful the class is as a whole and also how successful each individual can be. This is a similar process to the example of the Eyres family given by Horn and Staker, (252), - first, teach them how to do the task well, then second, let them set goals for themselves.

Outline 5 initiatives for students and 5 initiatives for teachers

Student initiatives to help create our culture:
1. Working with teachers to co-create a culture-change project.
2. Create a "Friend Zone" in the school where students not in the program can come to chat with our students to find out what the learning environment is really like.
3. Create a system of celebrating "random act of kindness" in our classroom.
4. Create/conduct a "School Culture Assessment Survey."
5. Create a class Mascot that represents our intended cultural goals.

Staff initiatives to help create our culture:
1. Working with students, to co-create a culture-change project
2. Provide information updates showing research, best practice, comparative models, etc. for eLearning environments.
3. Administration and lead teachers offer advisory support for those staff interested in developing their own eLearning initiatives.
4. Ensure scheduled collaborative time so other teachers can sign up for visits to our classroom to observe and/or participate in activities.
5. Provide focused and ongoing Professional Development days to offer training in pertinent areas of eLearning.

5) What hardware, software and physical space will you choose?

Physical Space

As we are creating this program within an already existing framework, we will modify a standard classroom space into our learning commons. If possible, because this is a pilot program, we would like restrict initial enrollment to 25 students with leeway to increase if necessary - especially if funding requires an increase. Furniture will need to be changed from standard student desks to tables with multiple arrangement functions. Some existing shelving will need to be removed to create more space for comfortable station set-up. The individual work stations will have comfortable chairs along with low tables and large floor cushions as well as regular tables.

How many internet-connected devices are available?

The creation of our blended environment does not limit the use of technology to the time when students are at the online station. We will be increasing our reliance on digital resources while decreasing our reliance on print resources. This will save space and money* in the long term. Internet access will be available by multiple LAN drops and a dedicated wireless node in the classroom with a separate login access and reduced filters from the rest of the school. There will be an interactive whiteboard in the group learning station area. The teacher have a desktop (laptop) and tablet to connect to the whiteboard. Each student will be assigned their own laptop or tablet that is internet ready and networked with the whiteboard through the teacher's devices. The class will also need a networked printer/scanner. (do I justify the reasons for individual devices here?)*

What software will you choose for online learning components?

Classes will be set up with individual Moodle accounts for the students and teachers. Access to Google Apps for Education is required and will accompanied with digital citizenship consent forms and teacher training. Teachers will set up Fresh Grade to manage assessment and reporting. We will use a variety of Web 2.0 tools to integrate into our online (Blackboard, Zoom, etc.) and Moodle platforms. Students will be given access to digital libraries, research tools, and eTexts.

How will you manage cost to make this program realistic?

Implementation of our model will take five years. We will begin with the grade 8's and they will continue with this model through to graduation. Each year a new group of grade 8's will start the program until the whole school is using the blended learning model.

We have many students with needs that are not being met in a traditional school. Some of these students may choose, for lack of any other choice, to attend private school or homeschool. Other students do not fit in a regular brick-and-mortar school. Perhaps it is anxiety that keeps them from attending, so they choose to homeschool too. By offering students what they need and want to learn, our school will increase enrolment. The projected increase is 2 students per grade. Since we have available spots in our classroom, extra enrolment costs will be minimal. The short term budget will increase $16,000 and long term increase $80,000.

Since students are doing more work online, our school will require less textbooks and photocopying. The grades will save $6,000 in the short term and $30,000 in the long term ($50 textbook costs and $10 on photocopying per student per year).

In the long term, we will increase our enrolment to fill one of our empty classrooms. These, at a minimum of twenty four extra students, will generate another $92,000 in profit after the teacher has been paid for. Clearly this is enough money to pay for all the extra software, hardware, classroom supplies, cleaning, bussing and admin time for our students.

Yes, our school will require some extra equipment and change of design, but our budget will balance. In the short term, grade 8's will require a set of 15 laptop computers, their own personal tablet, and storage carts for these items. Programs for these devices will also need to be purchased. The total short term cost is $60,000. The profit for the grade 8's in the first year is only $22,000, so we project losing $38,000 in the first year. Future costs, however, are only replacement costs of the technology and renewing of the programs used each year. The grade 8 students will be told that they will get to keep their device when they graduate, so replacement costs are set at $2,000 per year. The programs will cost about $10,000 each year. The second year, the now grade 9's, will only cost $12,000 and generate a $10,000 profit. This group will continue to generate this profit each year. Total five year cost for the grade 8's is $108,000 and extra generated money is project to be $110,000, for a $2,000 surplus budget.

There is a risk because the money has to come first before we can see any profit. These are, however, at risk students. What we are doing now is not working for many students. We need to change. We need to blend our learning.

Conclusion

By providing a loving and caring environment, the Blended Learning Model (Station Rotation) will meet the needs of all students. It is a blend of the old and the new. The teacher works with small groups of students and becomes a facilitator, a guide, a tutor, and a mentor. This face to face delivery model provides for remediation, reinforcement, instruction, and enrichment. The online programs will support learning through practice, video tutorials and feedback from the online assessments. Teachers and students will be motivated by this approach to learning. By offering student what they need, enrolment will increase. The budget will balance. The positive school environment will correspond into successful students with 21st century skills.

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Live Presentation Assessment

- Scored out 20 - 4 categories - 5 marks each - See rubric

Each category marked out of 5	5 - Exemplary	3 - Effective	1- Baseline

Organization	- A logical structure is present and the presentation flows well.	The presentation may not flow well at times however there is an attempt at a logical organization.	- This presentation is at times unclear to understand, and lacks flow and or structure.
Content	-You have summarized all aspects of the questions in the required time - Your presentation is convincing because of your well researched presentation. - Information is concisely conveyed	- You have partially summarized some aspects of the questions. - Your presentation lacks information in some areas but is mostly convincing - Presentation of the information is sometimes imbalanced and not always concise	You have not adequately answered or addressed the main questions. - Your presentation is poorly researched, lacks information and is not convincing - Information delivery is imbalanced and not concise.
Presentation	- Presentation is dynamic and clear - You have chosen a presentation format that works flawlessly with Blackboard Collaborate - no avoidable technical issues. - Presentation style is positive and convincing	- Presentation is not very dynamic but is mostly clear - You have chosen a presentation format that is not ideal for Blackboard Collaborate but still partially works - some avoidable technical issues. -Presenter(s) could be more convincing and dynamic, but overall adequately convey the information	- Presentation is not clear - You have chosen a presentation format that does not work with Blackboard Collaborate - avoidable technical issues are in abundance. - Presentation style of the presenter(s) is not convincing.
Time Management	-Presentation is between 14-16 minutes - with time left over for questions.	-Presentation is less than 13 minutes or longer than 16	Presentation is less than 10 minutes or longer than 20 minutes.

Question 1-8 Rubrics

	5 - Exemplary	3 - Effective	1- Baseline
Content	- You have accurately answered all aspects of the question in detail. - The great majority of ideas are related to the subject matter as	- You have partially answered some aspects of the question -The student has some original ideas and an attempt is made to	- You have not adequately answered or addressed the elements of the question. -The ideas expressed are not original,

	indicated by the guiding question. -The student has original ideas that make connections with the weekly readings. Ideas are expressed clearly	connect with the course readings. - Ideas are mostly expressed clearly. - Not all ideas are related to the subject matter as indicated by the guiding question or topic.	often confused and are not connected to readings/discussions around the subject matter. - Ideas are not related to the subject matter as indicated by the guiding questions.
Organization and Writing Quality	- This section is easy to understand, clear to read and aesthetically appealing. - A logical structure is present and the section flows well. - Your response is well written. (Graduate course level) - There are no spelling, grammar or punctuation mistakes.	-The section lacks aesthetic polish, but some attempt has been made to make improve the general appearance. -This section may not flow well and there is an attempt at a logical organization, but some smaller problems exist. -Only a few small errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation	- This section is at times unclear to read, and lacks flow and or structure. - There is a general lack of organization - Several spelling, grammar or punctuation errors are present.
Research	-Student cites and makes connection with relevant material from the text. -Student references multiple sources making connections from other relevant sources and materials. -Student may include a graphics, links or imbed a video that makes a connection with the topic or guiding question.	- Student attempts to reference material from the text. -Student references at least one relevant source.	- Student does not cite any outside sources or make references to the text