



Reinventing School with
BLENDED LEARNING

Defining
Blended
Learning



The Potential
of Blended
Learning



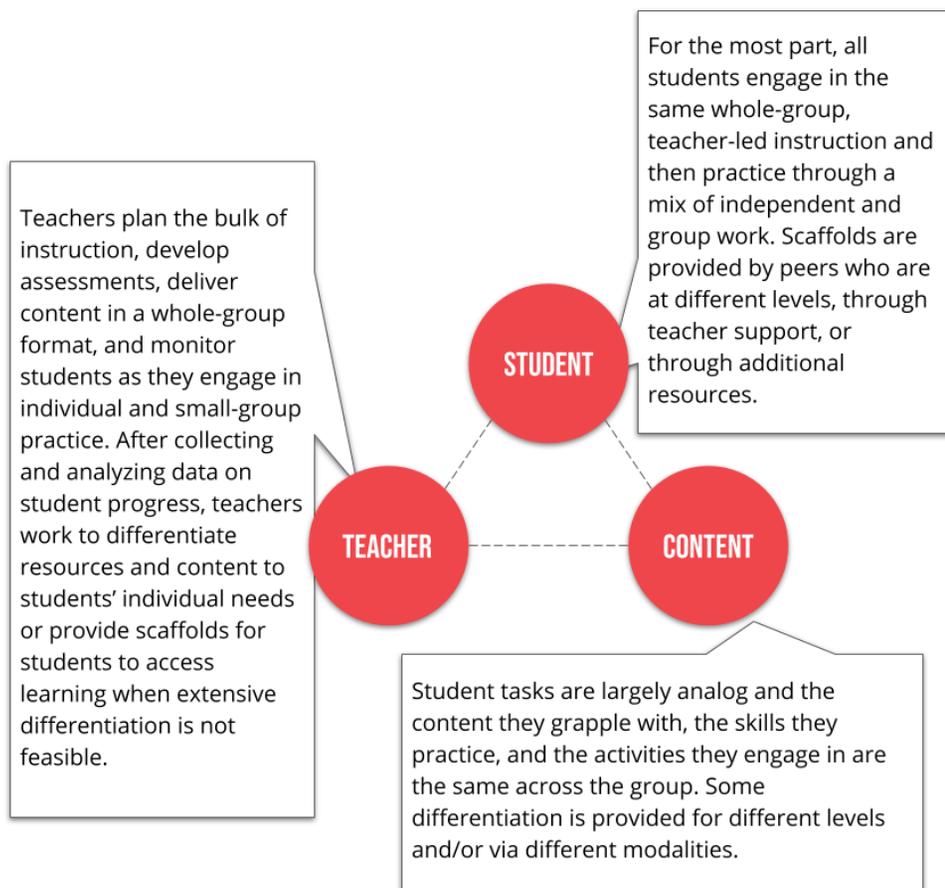
Schools & Resources
to Explore

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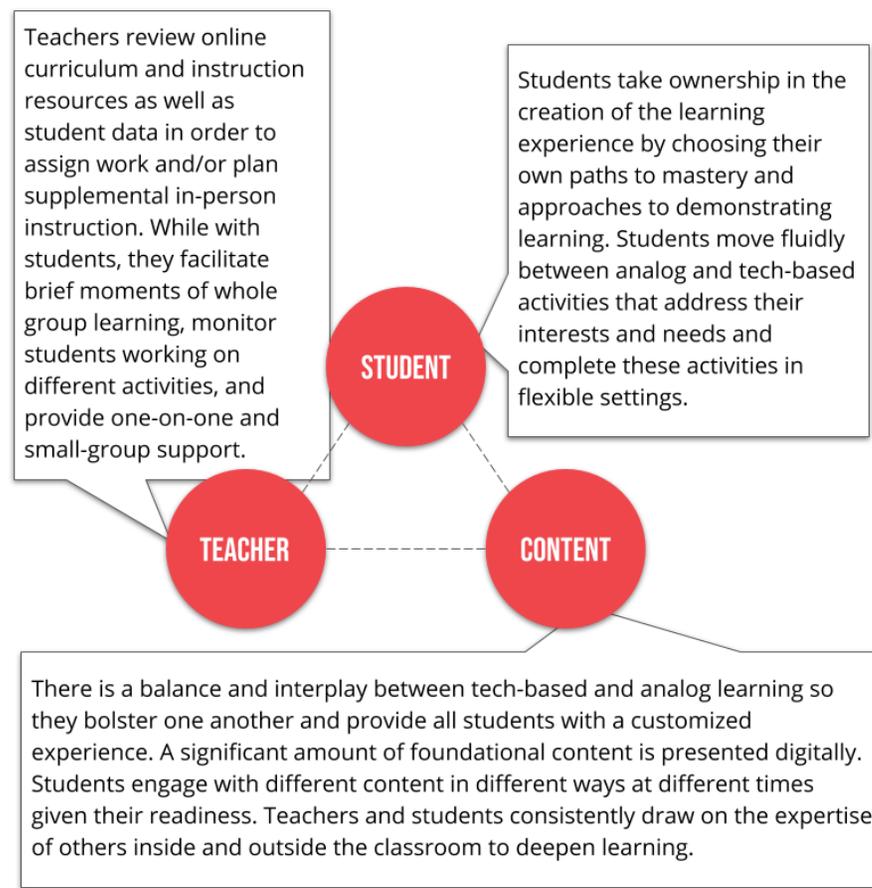
Setting Up &
Supporting
Blended
Learning



TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION



BLENDED LEARNING

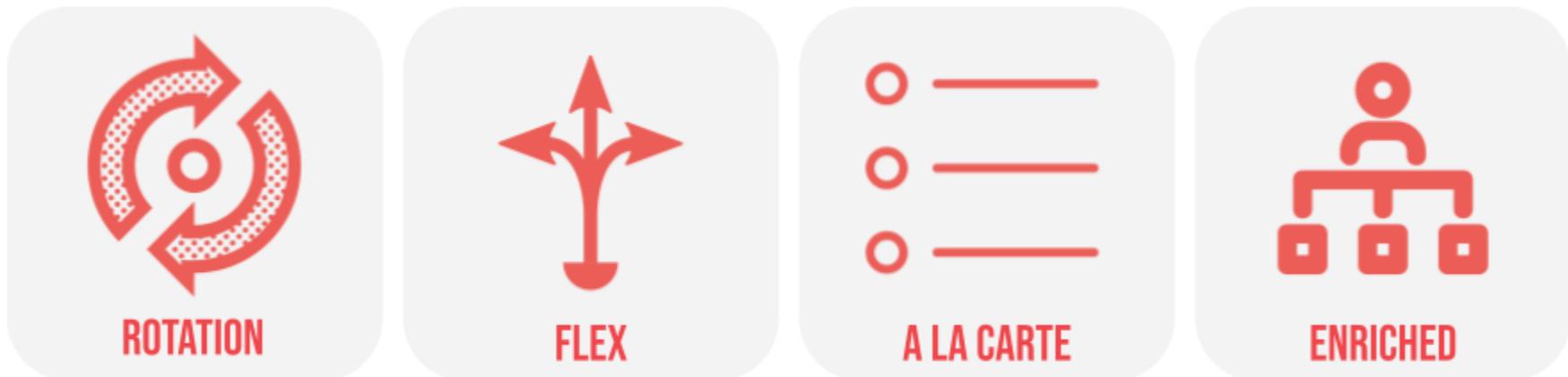


There are a variety of different approaches to blended learning.

While there is a good degree of consensus on what blended learning is at the broadest level, the specifics of the instructional model are defined in various, sometimes conflicting, ways. For example, some say not all blended learning is created equal; they differentiate between blended-learning courses that are fully computer-based versus those that are technology-enhanced (Ross and Gage, 2006). Others go so far as to say that to be considered blended learning a course must have between 30% and 79% online content delivery (Allen, Seaman, and Garrett, 2007). The debate over what exactly blended learning looks like means schools have both the flexibility and the responsibility of defining and continually improving upon an approach to blended learning that will best suit their context.

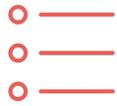
The debate over what exactly blended learning looks like, means schools have both the flexibility and the responsibility of defining and continually improving upon an approach to blended learning that will best suit their context.

The table below presents a common way of categorizing the different blended models, which can be used alone or in combination with other models. The four are: a **rotation**, **flex**, **a la carte** (sometimes called self-blended), and **enriched virtual**. The model or combination of models you choose should be driven primarily by academic goals for students, as well as staffing needs and the available technology.



Model	Description	What It Might Look Like
<p>ROTATION</p> 	<p>Learners rotate, on a fixed schedule, between different learning modalities and at least one of these modalities is online learning. Other modalities might include small- or whole-group instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments.</p> <p>Within the “rotation” model of blended learning there are also various types schools can consider using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Station Rotation</i>: Learners rotate within a contained classroom or classrooms, and cycle through all stations. This can include a “flipped classroom” approach. • <i>Lab Rotation</i>: Learners rotate to a computer lab for the online-learning station. • <i>Individual Rotation</i>: Each learner has an individualized playlist and may or may not rotate between all stations depending on their needs. 	<p>Some learners begin their day focused on content and activities tailored to them by adaptive learning software, which they complete in either the classroom or a computer lab. Other learners are working with a teacher to explore new content, receive remedial support, and engage in mentoring or another activity. Students then rotate between the lab and the classroom.</p>
<p>FLEX</p> 	<p>Online learning is the <i>primary</i> mode for everything from engaging with new content to practicing to demonstrating mastery. Learning happens mostly on the campus via individually customized learning pathways, which integrate a variety of learning modalities, including activities completed without the use of technology. Teachers provide face-to-face support on a flexible and adaptive basis as needed.</p>	<p>Learners learn via an online curriculum in flexible spaces in the school, while in the classroom students learn face to face with a teacher who uses a data dashboard to offer targeted interventions and supplemental support throughout the day for core courses.</p>

A LA CARTE



Online courses supplement the core in-person experience the learner is having at their brick-and-mortar school. The course may be delivered at the school, or off-site. Keep in mind this is not a whole-school experience—learners take some courses a la carte but much of the learning takes place face to face at their brick-and-mortar campus.

Learners engage with core content with their teachers at school, but can take one or more online courses aligned to their interests and goals. Courses are asynchronous and learners can work on them at any time. The online teachers may already work for the school or be contracted with to provide added capacity and expertise.

ENRICHED VIRTUAL



Online learning is the cornerstone. For any given subject or course, learners have some required face-to-face learning sessions with their teacher but complete the *majority* of their coursework remotely. The same teacher facilitates both the online and face-to-face portions of the learning. Think of it like a mostly online program where learners meet with their teachers for mandatory ‘office hours’ every so often.

Learners meet face to face with teachers for their first course meeting at a brick-and-mortar location. They can complete the rest of their coursework remotely or in cafe-type spaces in the school building.

The table above outlines four general blended-learning models. However, in order to implement blended learning in your school, you need to get even more specific about what the model will look like in action. To get started, check out the rubrics and frameworks below, which contain more detailed descriptions and in some cases specific ‘look fors’ for what high-quality blended learning entails.

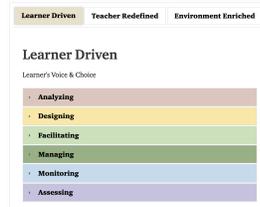
Core Look Fors Guide

EdElements

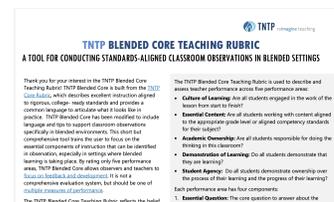


Blended Learning/Personalized Learning Framework

Texas Tech



Blended Core Teaching Rubric TNTP



Raising Blended Learners' Student Experience Continuum Raise Your Hand Texas

THE POTENTIAL OF BLENDED LEARNING

Rigorous research studies are beginning to show that blended learning has a variety of positive outcomes for students and teachers.

Blended learning is a complex and still-evolving concept in education. However, many studies show optimistic results in terms of the impact blended learning can have on young people and the adults who work with them. Here's what we know:

Blended learning can increase **engagement and academic achievement**, even after just one year of implementation.

[\(Hesse, 2017; Jenkins, 2014; LEAP, 2019\)](#)

Blended learning can improve **teacher retention and satisfaction**.

[\(Quillen, 2012\)](#)

Blended learning can improve graduation rates, with the highest improvements seen in schools delivering content-recovery courses.

[\(Christensen Institute\)](#)

Blended learning can improve **academic outcomes across different subgroups**. In DC Public Schools (more than 2/3 African American and nearly 3/4 FRL), scores for students in blended math programs rose 19 points, compared to 5 points for students in the control group.

[\(Christensen Institute\)](#)

Blended learning can have a particularly strong influence on **math and reading outcomes**. One study of 7,200 districts found that students in blended classrooms outperformed their peers by 57% in reading and 26% in math.

[\(Jenkins, 2014\)](#)

The positive outcomes associated with blended learning may be driven by its potential to help schools take various Leaps toward more equitable, 21st-century learning.

When carefully planned and implemented, blended learning helps teachers to diagnose learners' prior knowledge, differentiate academic paths for each learner, and adjust lesson execution based on real-time information about learner mastery ([Christensen Institute, 2013](#)). It is a data-driven approach that can ensure learning experiences address the unique interests and needs of *each* learner, encourage learner ownership, and provide flexibility.

More specifically, blended learning can help schools take the following [Leaps](#) toward more equitable, 21st-century learning:



Moving from Unequal Expectation & Opportunities to

HIGH EXPECTATIONS WITH UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Blended learning can provide young people with the opportunity to learn, regardless of the time and support needed. This is because it provides greater flexibility in terms of the pace of learning, the pathway through objectives, and the support received. In addition, learners can make progress outside of school and have multiple opportunities to achieve mastery instead of being pushed on to new learning objectives before they are ready. This can help ensure that expectations are not being lowered for some students and can foster a sense of self-efficacy, or confidence, among students that drives motivation along with learning.



Moving from Rote Activities to

RIGOROUS LEARNING

In blended learning, computer-based curricula and activities help students build foundational knowledge and skills. This frees teachers up to focus on higher-order thinking skills through questioning and discussion, as well as to go deeper into topics through challenging extension projects. These types of activities can help learners deepen their understanding of a topic in ways that are more long-lasting. In addition, rigorous discussions and projects may be more interesting to young people, bringing value to learning and fueling their motivation to tackle the work.



Moving from Inflexible Systems to

CUSTOMIZATION

A high-quality blended-learning model uses either teacher knowledge or a computer-based algorithm to take into account each student's individual needs and assets and offer customized content, instructional methods, and even schedules to each student. Oftentimes, these customized options readjust on a daily basis in response to student progress. Learning in this way can be affirming and motivating, and support deeper learning. Each learner has access to what they need to be successful and those who need more (time, teacher support, scaffolds) get more. Furthermore, blended-learning software can help teachers provide more detailed, in-the-moment feedback to students on their specific progress and opportunities for improvement.



Moving from Passive Compliance to

ACTIVE SELF-DIRECTION

In a blended setting, students often have at least some freedom to define their learning plans, including their personal goals, how they will engage with content, and how they will demonstrate their learning. This type of agency fosters a sense of control over one's learning, which is motivating and supports deeper learning. The fact that blended learning puts such an onus on students empowers them and helps prepare them for postsecondary success.



Moving from Siloed Schooling to

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE LEARNING

The tech-enriched aspect of blended learning affords students more flexibility in when and where they learn. Students can go deeper or access additional supports whenever and wherever they want to, which honors the varied needs and desires of learners. It also helps to prepare them for a future that is likely to include increasingly flexible working arrangements, more remote work, and more short-term work.

SETTING UP & SUPPORTING BLENDED LEARNING

Implementing and continuing to support blended learning will require your school to make a variety of decisions as well as set up systems and resources.

In order to implement blended learning well, a number of resources and supports are needed. [The Highlander Institute](#), [The Learning Accelerator](#), [EdElements](#), [Raise Your Hand Texas](#), and more, have all outlined many of these resources and supports, which we have synthesized below. We have also indicated where these connect to the five [Effective Schools Framework Levels](#).

ESF Lever 1

STRONG SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND PLANNING

- ❑ **Focused Vision and Plan for Blended Learning:** Given the different approaches mentioned above, it's important to **get clear on what blended learning will look like at your school** and in your unique context. Include input from teachers, students, families, and community members and ensure that voices from those traditionally left out of school decision-making processes are elevated. Focus on 'key priorities, clear timelines, milestones, metrics, and task owners' before setting a plan into motion.
- ❑ **Student Outcomes:** To shape the program's design, clearly define the student outcomes you hope to achieve and map these outcomes to the various elements of your blended-learning approach. This will help you understand whether, and how, the approach will support your outcomes. Use these to set goals that are attainable and sustainable and define specifics such as the number of students blended learning will reach and the changes in student outcomes you expect.
- ❑ **Intentionally Integrated Technology Tools and Systems:** Leaders will need to ensure students and teachers have access to robust and adaptive digital tools to support blended learning and increased personalization. This includes access to a learning management system, online curriculum, and collaborative tools, along with aligned policies and plans to promote sustainability and growth.

- ❑ System for Continuous Improvement and Transparency: Leaders use quantitative learnings from the LMS as well as inputs from the community, for ongoing, short-cycle data analysis, and adjustment. This data is held up against the vision for blended learning. Those insights are shared back with the community, including what changes will be made based on learnings.
- ❑ Creative Scheduling Options: Leaders must support the redesign of time. Innovative and flexible schedules, compared to the typical bell schedule with equal time in all classes, can help teachers and students give an appropriate amount of time to each activity.
- ❑ Flexible Uses of Space: Leaders rethink physical space to be designed around specific modalities of learning. If the school wants to deliver a mix of whole-group, small-group, and individual learning, the space must enable that and correspond with schedules and grouping decisions.
- ❑ Sustainable Funding Streams: Leaders must understand the one-time, periodic, and recurring costs of blended learning. They should have answers to [key questions](#), leverage grants, and seek funding wherever possible for sustainable, long-term implementation.

ESF Lever 2

EFFECTIVE, WELL-SUPPORTED STAFF

- ❑ Specialized Staffing: In the traditional model of schooling, teachers typically focus on an age group, content area, or both. In a blended and personalized model, staffing models can be shifted, where teachers specialize within a content area, teachers add additional content areas for specific needs, other staff pick up responsibilities that do not require a teacher, etc.
- ❑ Hiring and Development of Mindsets, Qualities, Adaptive Skills, and Technical Skills: As [teachers' roles shift](#), they embrace change and innovation as they develop a new vision for teaching and learning. To navigate implementation well, they will need to possess perseverance, transparency, reflection, communication and collaboration skills, and be prepared to take risks. Finally, teachers leverage data and instructional tools to manage the blended experience and varied instructional strategies.
- ❑ Professional Learning and Ongoing Support: Carefully selected and personalized PD options—for both synchronous and asynchronous learning—meet the varied needs, skill levels, and interests of teachers. Support for staff in achieving blended

competencies is embedded in coaching and resource allocation and is tracked toward professional goals and schoolwide expectations.

ESF Level 3

POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

- ❑ Culture of Innovation: Administrators, students, and staff step out of their comfort zones, take risks, and publicly share successes and failures. Teachers are empowered to explore new ideas, pilot innovations, and conduct action research around instructional delivery. Students are encouraged to do the same, especially when learning how to leverage their unique attributes to succeed in a blended-learning environment.
- ❑ Student-Centered: Students are empowered and responsible for doing the thinking in the classroom and own the process of learning, acting on their understanding of where they are in the learning journey.
- ❑ Digital Citizenship: The school has clear expectations for technology use, which enhances and expands on traditional learning. Instead of employing filters and scripting students' engagement with technology, they are taught digital citizenship and encouraged to independently make appropriate decisions.

ESF Level 4 & Level 5

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT

- ❑ Research-Backed Curriculum Suite: A suite of tools that addresses all grade-level, intervention, and remediation priorities is critical. The suite should ideally include whole-group, small-group, and individual curricula in both face-to-face and online modalities.
- ❑ Rigorous Diagnostic, Formative, Summative, and Adaptive Assessments: Rigorous and authentic assessment opportunities help one understand where students are at the beginning, middle, and end of a learning cycle. Adaptive assessments help students (and schools) understand what supports they need to access or transcend curriculum standards and enable teachers to use data to make instructional decisions about content, pace, grouping, mastery, etc.

- ❑ **Flexible Grouping:** To ensure that every student is receiving the learning experience they need, the grouping of students must be flexible throughout the day. By intentionally responding to student voice and assessment data, we can make sure students are always learning something appropriate for them.
- ❑ **Standards-Based Learning:** Students gain 21st-century skills through real-world content and authentic learning experiences. Policies focus on ensuring all students make ambitious growth across standards using whatever materials are appropriate for the learner.
- ❑ **Personalized Learning:** Just like standards-based learning, personalization is an essential pillar of blended learning. All students can customize their education (how they demonstrate learning, pathway to mastery, how much time they spend doing it, etc.).



SCHOOLS & RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

There are many strong and exciting schools already implementing blended learning! The examples listed below are incredibly inspiring and have shared a bit of their magic with the world.



[Lindsay Unified School District](#), a large, K-12 district in California, was a turnaround school who a few years ago decided to become personalized with deeper technology use. They have become a model for 'anytime, anywhere learning' by ensuring tech access for all students. Lindsay students advance based on mastery, guided by customized curriculum and tracked through their online system, Empower.

Resources:

- [Lindsay Profile, The Learning Accelerator](#)
- [It Starts with Pedagogy: How Lindsay Unified is Integrating Blended Learning](#)
- [How Lindsay Unified Redesigned Itself From the Ground Up](#)

Videos:

- [Welcome to Lindsay video](#)



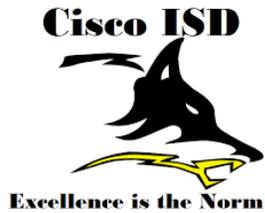
[Chicago International Charter School, West Belden](#) is a K-8 charter school in Chicago which balances personalized learning strategies - including flexible learning environments, learner profiles, personalized learning plans, competency based progression, and technology-enhanced instruction - with strong curricular approaches to encourage students' success and growth.

Resources:

- [CICS West Belden, The Learning Accelerator](#)
- [Journeys to Personalized Learning: CICS West Belden](#)

Videos:

- [About Us: CICS West Belden](#)



In 2016, [Cisco](#) Junior High School (and now the elementary school) started implementing their blended learning pilots as one of five [Raising Blended Learners](#) demonstration sites. The schools use station and rotation models - along with progress monitoring, playlists, student-led instruction, and a mastery-based progression system - to personalize learning for all students.

Resources:

- [Cisco Junior High School, The Learning Accelerator](#)
- [Cisco ISD, Raising Blended Learners](#)

Videos:

- [Cisco ISD: Year 1 Blended Learning](#)



[Rocky Mountain Prep](#) is a charter network of four elementary schools in the Denver metro area. RMP uses a rotational model: a mix of small group instruction, student-led learning sessions with their specialized software, and one-on-one targeted help with teaching staff in areas of weakness.

Resources:

- [Rocky Mountain Prep, Christensen Institute](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Blend: Great Teachers, Strong Culture](#)
- [Blended Learning at Rocky Mountain Prep](#)

Videos:

- [Rocky Mountain Prep - Rigor & Joy video](#)



[Da Vinci RISE](#) is three high schools in LA which serve a large population of youth facing homelessness, the foster care system, credit deficiencies, etc. The learning experience at RISE is an Enriched Virtual model where students attend in-person classes two to three days per week based on a personalized learning schedule. The remainder of learning occurs online via a peer-driven learning platform called [Dream See Do](#). RISE teachers develop their own curriculum and house it on the platform, which doubles as a learning management system. The real key to this platform is that it creates an active, online learning community—all student work is submitted there for feedback and discussion from both teachers and peers. (Note: they also use [mental health practices](#)).

Resources:

- ["Super School" Targets At-Risk Students for Real-World Success](#)

Videos:

- [XQ Super School: Da Vinci RISE](#)

There are also many other schools right here in Texas that are doing amazing work implementing blended learning.



In [Clear Creek ISD's](#) three elementary schools, students drive their own learning by choosing the specific stations they need and track progress toward their individual goals using data. Teachers meet at least every other week to check in with students on their goals. At the intermediate and high school campuses, 8th graders are working through pathways, including stations, playlists, menus, and strategic flexible groupings.



At [Point Isabel ISD's](#) (TX) elementary level, students spend class rotating among several stations involving individual work, collaborative tasks, small-group sessions with the teacher, and self-directed work on online content. At the middle school level, Point Isabel has adopted the Summit Learning program approach, which involves three core elements: students learn content at their own pace through an online platform, teachers facilitate project-based learning, and teachers hold one-on-one mentoring sessions with students to set and monitor goals.



In [Spring Branch ISD](#) (TX), elementary classrooms use data to increase the frequency of flexible instructional groupings as well as rigorous personalized station activities and goal-setting conversations, to help students close academic gaps and develop agency. At the middle school, teachers focus on refining their assessment practices so they have a holistic picture of where each student is and can share that data with students. Learning modalities include strategic flexible instructional groupings and self-directed assignments through individualized work stations and online programs.



[Georgetown ISD's](#) (TX) blended-learning strategy is guided by the Georgetown Learner Profile, a vision of student characteristics that foster success in college and the workplace. Math pilot teachers utilize multiple data sources including a nationally normed interim assessment tool, which provides standards-level data and daily learning results to inform small-group instruction needs and student pathways.



Pasadena Connect (TX) uses the Summit Learning Program model for flex learning, which involves three core elements: students spend part of the day learning content at their own pace through an online platform, teachers facilitate project-based learning, and teachers hold 1:1 mentoring sessions with students to set goals and support progress. Each Connect student has a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) where students set goals, track their progression, receive immediate feedback, and are able to access learning resources at any time.



Point Isabel's (TX) middle school has modified aspects of Summit Learning to match its local context, but has retained core elements. The Summit Learning Program involves three core elements: students spend part of the day learning content at their own pace through an online platform, teachers facilitate project-based learning and grade students on a cognitive skills rubric, and teachers hold one-on-one mentoring sessions with students to set goals and support progress.



ACTON ACADEMY

Acton Academy's (TX) model of Learning at Acton involves three components: Learn to Learn, Learn to Do, and Learn to Be. Socratic Discussions and self-paced challenges equip children to be independent lifelong learners. Hands-on Quests for Science, Entrepreneurship and the Arts prepare children for apprenticeships and real-world challenges. The Hero's Journey, relational covenants, and real-world consequences transform difficult decisions into virtuous habits.

Finally, explore some additional blended-learning resources that can further deepen your understanding of the approach and prepare you for implementing it.

Independent school districts in Texas have autonomy to choose digital tools as long as they're meeting their accountability and their school board approves. Use the resources below to learn more about blended learning and the programs that help support their implementation.

Resource	Description
Texas-Approved Vendors List 	This list provides examples of Texas-approved blended-learning vendors and a quick description of the services they provide.
Texas Resource Review 	TRR is in its infancy and aims to get schools to choose better tools. The list is very short, and many of these tools are digital textbook materials. All tools are aligned to TEKS.
Texas Home Learning 	Through TLH 3.0, Texas Home Learning is making high-quality TEKS-aligned curricula designed for hybrid learning available for free.
Raising Blended Learners 	This is a large, state-wide, philanthropically funded blended-learning initiative through Raise Your Hand Texas . They have worked with a dozen or so districts extensively and many others in light-touch consulting or workshops.