

A photograph of a classroom with several students. In the foreground, a young man with dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is looking down at a tablet device he is holding. To his left, a young woman with blonde hair is also looking at a tablet. In the background, other students are visible, some looking at tablets and others looking forward. The lighting is soft and focused on the students in the foreground.

its Learning

Choose your blend

Case stories from real classrooms that show
how to succeed with blended learning



What is blended learning?


Blended learning is the mix of the online and physical classrooms. It can take many forms and formats, and teachers use it for different reasons. Some find that it enables them to pre-teach and check understanding before class, while others use it to give their students greater choice over when and where they study. But, whatever the format and reason, teachers who practice blended learning agree that it helps drive student engagement and ultimately, performance.

The theory

- 10 benefits of blended learning
- The blended classroom
- Choosing your blend:
The blended models

The practice

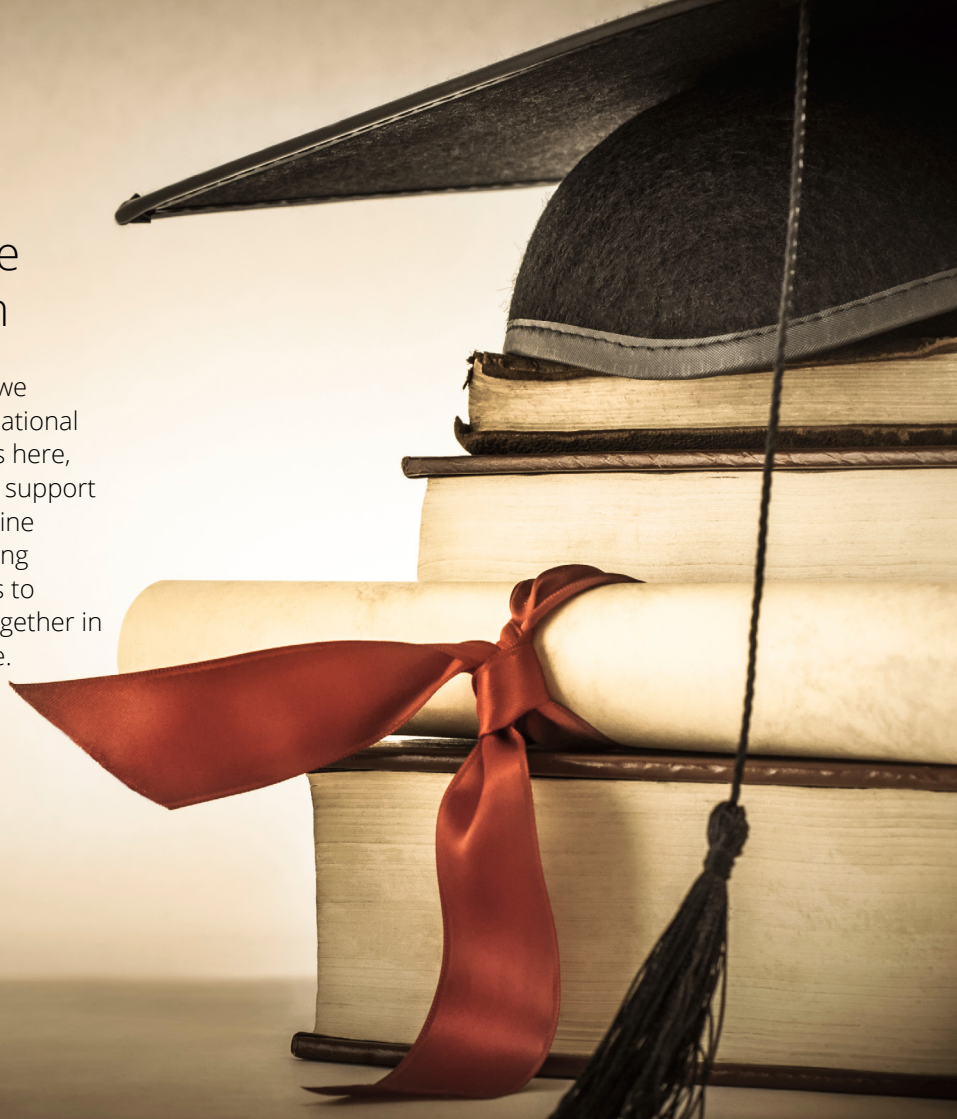
- Flipping out for the flipped classroom
- Learning by design
- Empowering students to choose when and where they study
- An online education



itslearning:

A safe and secure learning platform

When researching this paper, we visited many schools and educational institutions. In all the examples here, the teachers use itslearning to support blended learning. A secure online learning environment, itslearning enables teachers and students to share work and information together in a safe and private online space.



10 benefits of blended learning

1

Better use of classroom time

By moving some activities online, you have more face-to-face time with your students.

3

Easier differentiation

You have more time with individual students and so can better tailor your teaching to their needs.

5

More engaged students

As students can prepare online before class, they are more engaged in the topic from the start.

2

More active students

You spend less time lecturing, so your students have more time to practice what they have learnt.

4

More creativity for students

Students are motivated by online resources that enable them to create videos, animations, podcasts and other media as part of their schoolwork.

A grayscale background image showing a group of students in a classroom setting, with some students looking at a screen or book. Overlaid on this are five colored circles (orange and dark gray) containing text about the benefits of blended learning.

6

Modern skills

Blended learning helps students develop the critical-thinking and creative skills demanded by modern employers.

8

Simple administration

Learning platforms enable you to store all your resources, marking and admin files in one place. You can make these available to your students, other teachers and parents with one or two clicks.

9

Lower costs

Many schools and colleges report reduced long-term costs due to less expenditure on textbooks, paper and photocopying.

7

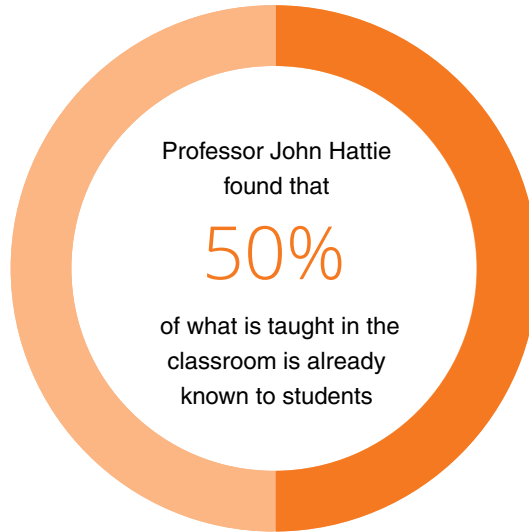
Less paperwork

Many learning platforms automate routine tasks, giving you more time for teaching.

10

Better informed parents

Most students do online work at home, giving their parents a greater chance to take part.



The blended classroom

You could argue that the school classroom has not changed since the 1950s. But while the basic set-up remains the same, modern technology is opening up new possibilities for teachers and students. Today, many teachers blend the physical and online classrooms in their teaching: We call this the blended classroom.

at school



online



at home

The blended classroom

The physical classroom

The physical classroom gives you a good overview of where the class is and how they are progressing. You can respond immediately to your students and give direct and personal feedback. It also gives your students the chance to develop the interpersonal skills needed for face-to-face work.

The online classroom

The online classroom enables you to pre-teach before a class or course begins, and discover in advance how much your students already understand. It also allows you to extend activities after the class has finished, and is ideal for formative assessment: Students can submit work online, for example, and receive your feedback before the next class or final deadline.



"We have shown how different technologies can improve learning by augmenting and connecting proven learning activities."

The 2012 NESTA report
Decoding learning: The Proof, Promise and Potential of digital education

Choosing your blend

The four most common models for blended learning

1 Rotation model



Students rotate between learning modalities, at least one of which is online.

Each modality

has a different approach to the same learning objective. Work can be completed at school or in other locations.

Teacher role:

The teacher sets the rotation schedule, gives direct instruction at one learning modality and monitors progress.

Student experience:

The students experience many ways of learning, but have little choice in when and where they learn. Includes: Station rotation, lab rotation, flipped classroom and individual rotation models.

Choosing your blend

2 Flex model

Online learning is the backbone of instruction. Most learning is done in the classroom, but group instruction is kept to a minimum.

Teacher role:

The teacher provides group instruction and individual support as needed.

Student experience:

Students move on an individually customised and fluid schedule among different learning modalities.

Choosing your blend

3

A la carte model

A course that students complete entirely online to accompany other experiences at the school, with regular support from the teacher in the physical classroom.

Teacher role:

The teacher mainly gives support online, although this can also be face-to-face

Student experience:

Students often take a la carte courses to supplement the standard curriculum at the school. In these courses, they work at their own pace with face-to-face support when needed.

Choosing your blend

4 Enriched virtual model

The course is delivered through online study, with infrequent face-to-face classes.

Teacher role:

The teacher leads face-to-face classes and provides remote assistance to students through email exchanges and online discussion boards.

Student experience:

In between face-to-face classes, students work at their own pace and get online support from the teacher.

These models are a framework for teachers to use when developing and discussing blended learning. Most teachers pick and choose elements from the different models to suit their class.

The practice

Real-life examples of blended learning

These case stories show how four teachers and schools have adapted blended learning theories to suit their own needs, with great success. Each case story shows a single blended learning model in operation. However, most teachers borrow from different techniques to suit the subject and students – and so use a number of different models during a semester or week.



Same product, new wrapping

When researching this paper, we spoke to many teachers who didn't realise they were practising blended learning. They were simply doing what they'd always done: Asking students to study in their own time as well as in class. The only difference was that the students' self-study was supported by an online element.

Case study:

Flipping out for the flipped classroom

Rotation model (flipped classroom)
Bjørgvin Secondary School, Norway

In traditional teaching models, the students learn the theory in class and then do practice assignments at home. The flipped classroom 'flips' this idea around (hence the name). A common example of the rotation model, the flipped classroom enables you to better prepare students before class, so you can focus class time more effectively.



Case study | Bjørgvin Secondary School, Norway

1. Teaching the theory online

The teacher films herself explaining the theory she is going to cover in the next class. She uploads the video to itslearning, her school's learning platform, as an assignment. For homework, the students watch the video and then do a quick digital test in itslearning to check their understanding.

2. Preparing the class

The test report tells the teacher if anyone struggled with a particular aspect of the theory. She plans her next class to focus on areas where her students need most help. She also identifies which students struggled, and sets aside time to work with them one-to-one.

3. In the classroom

During class time, the students complete assignments – in groups or alone, online or on paper – that practice the theory, while the teacher speaks to individual students and answers their questions. She may also cover a particular aspect of the theory in front of the class if many students struggled with it.

"Students themselves have to take responsibility. If they haven't seen the video before class it may be difficult for them to keep up."

Mathematics teacher Elisabeth Engum



<http://goo.gl/LD9y0t>

Case study: Learning by design

Flex model
Maria Primary School, the Netherlands

Learning by design is an innovative approach to teaching that lets students decide what they study and how they demonstrate what they've learnt.



Case study

Flex model

Maria Primary School, the Netherlands

Collaborating through itslearning

At this school, the students work and collaborate in itslearning, the school's learning platform. The final products can be shared through itslearning with other classes, teachers and parents – and teachers often add the products to a discussion forum so that other students can give feedback to the creators.



<http://www.itslearning.eu/mariaschool>

“We can see that our students' study skills have improved significantly since we introduced learning by design a few years ago. But more importantly, I see more motivated and happier students and more motivated and happier teachers.”

1. Students decide what they want to learn

The teacher starts by asking her students to brainstorm what they already know about the subject, as well as what they want to know.

2. Finding the answers

The teacher puts the students into groups and asks them to set about finding the answers to their questions. They can consult resources they find useful, from reference books and the internet to their parents and siblings.

3. Demonstrating learning

When the students have completed their research, they create a 'product' – usually a video, presentation or podcast – that explains the answers. The product is shown to the rest of the class and the teacher marks it to set the student's grade.

4. Teacher as facilitator

Teachers act as facilitators; regulating the questions the student will answer, pointing them towards useful resources and guiding them in their work. If the teacher notices that a child is struggling - or needs to be pushed further - she will step in, offering one-on-one tuition, giving the students extra study materials or adjusting their group task to better suit their needs.

Case study |

A la carte model
Växjö Fria Gymnasium, Sweden

Empowering students to choose when and where they study

Elite athletes comprise one third of the student body at Växjö Fria Gymnasium (VFG) and many students miss large chunks of the semester due to competitions and training. VFG uses a version of the a la carte model to ensure these students can successfully combine academic studies with high-level competitive sports.

A fully online library

As students are often away from the brick and mortar school, access to the library can be difficult. The school overcomes this issue by putting every resource, including books, on its learning in digital format. This means students can browse library resources from anywhere and at any time using their mobile phones, computers or tablets.





Case study |

A la carte model
Växjö Fria Gymnasium, Sweden



<http://www.itslearning.eu/vaxjo-fria-gym>

1. Everything ready six weeks in advance

Every teacher at the school puts their lesson plans on itslearning, the school's learning platform, six weeks in advance. This means the students can plan their training schedule around their schoolwork and ensures they are in school for the most important classes.

2. Work anywhere and anytime

The lesson plans include links to online study materials. These materials include everything – from reference books and articles to tests and videos of the teacher explaining the theory – so that students can complete the work online if they miss a class.

3. Individual learning plans keep everyone on track

Teachers and students use Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) – a standard tool within itslearning – to track progress. The teacher and student set learning goals together in the ILP. As the course moves forward, they can go back to the ILP to check targets and enter information to demonstrate progress. The ILP is also available to other teachers and the student's parents, so everyone always knows how learning is progressing. If a student falls behind, the teacher is quick to step in.

Case study |

Enriched-virtual model
AHAB-Academy, Germany



<http://goo.gl/Hk2SEr>

→ An online education

This higher education centre has found that blended learning can help thousands of students re-train and re-qualify, even while working full-time. As the students come from all walks of life, the centre uses distance learning courses that allow students to study at their own pace and in their own style.

1. Preparing for the courses

At the start of the course, each student is given access to itslearning, the centre's online learning platform, where they can find study materials including online lectures, links to articles, podcasts and instructive videos. The students begin working through the materials in their own time.

2. Creating an online community

In order to stop students from feeling isolated, the teacher creates an online community where the students can ask each other questions and share experiences. Each week the teacher sets up a discussion thread in itslearning that the group of students can discuss together.

Case study |

Enriched-virtual model
AHAB-Academy, Germany

3. Completing assignments online

When the teacher feels that the students are ready, she sets them assignments designed to test and stretch their new knowledge. These are completed online, but can be both theoretical or practical (a Nordic Walking assignment, for example, may include videoing yourself walking).

5. Final certification

The final stage of all courses is a two-part certification: the students sit an oral and written exam, and then work remotely on a written assignment that covers a particular issue in-depth.

4. Moving into the classroom

After completing the online section of the course, the students gather for two weeks of face-to-face classes. On longer courses, this pattern is repeated, with more online learning followed by more face-to-face classes.



The beauty of this approach is that students have the flexibility to choose when they study."

Teacher Nicola Goltz

References and further reading

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For more information about itslearning please visit:
www.itslearning.eu

