



The sky is  
the limit!



## What Is Blended Learning and What Can I Do to Support It? For Board and School Administrators

### ***What is blended learning and how does it benefit students and teachers?***

Blended learning is a combination – or blend – of face-to-face and online learning. In Ontario, blended learning may be conducted through the provincial learning management system (LMS), where students and teachers have access to:

- Provincially-developed content (i.e., secondary courses, elementary course packages, multimedia activities).
- Communication tools, such as the blog, pager, discussions, news, schedule, and e-mail tools.
- Assessment tools, such as dropboxes, quizzes, and surveys.

### **What Blended Learning Teachers Say**

“Some parents are actively using the e-learning site at home with students to complete work or help them with activities that they were unable to complete during school time. Parents like being able to see exactly what is happening in the class and feel much more involved.”

“The discussion forums gave our weekly feedback session new life! Students could now immediately see what other students were writing about how their learning had been going that week (what they found most intuitive, what they struggled with most) and comment and share. I've picked up excellent insights from this.”

“There are also questions about discussing late or missed assignments. This doesn't go on in a face-to-face environment but in this environment students are more forthcoming about difficulties.”

Preliminary research on blended learning suggests that it can:

- Prompt critical thinking and increase student achievement;
- Build skills needed for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Produce a greater sense of community than either fully face-to-face or fully online classes can;
- Increase student-to-teacher and peer-to-peer interaction;
- Transform teaching and learning practices; and
- Encourage students to take control of their own learning.



[www.ontario.ca/elearning](http://www.ontario.ca/elearning)

### ***Where does blended learning happen?***

- In a lab or regular classroom, where individual or pairs of students have access to computers for a specified period of time (e.g., desktops, mobile lab).
- In a regular classroom, where students have rotating access to a smaller bank of computers (e.g., a few computers at the back of the room, computer pod).
- In a wireless classroom, where students are permitted to bring in their own computing devices from home.

### ***What can I do to support blended learning?***

Blended learning depends on teachers and students having regular access to computers and the Internet and knowing what to do with that access. As an administrator, you support blended learning when you:

- Support teachers in their professional growth and experimentation. Trying something new can be lonely and intimidating; a quick visit can go a long way to show your support and interest in how blended learning works.
- Purposefully plan for blended learning classes to have consistent access to computers (e.g., increase lab time, devote a cart of computers to specific classes, install several computers in each classroom for rotating use).
- Ensure, with the cooperation of IT staff, that computers are fully operational (e.g., mice work, plugins are installed) and sufficient bandwidth is available for online applications to function (e.g., streamed video).
- Include it in your School Improvement Plan. See *How Does Blended Learning Support School Priorities?*

### **What Blended Learning Teachers Say**

“Identified learners and students who were previously disengaged are now more engaged to write/contribute. Parents are checking the LMS for news/classroom updates.”

“Students having difficulty are able to use the content in the LMS to see concepts presented in a different way. Math students get lots of extra practice using the exercises provided in the LMS.”

“The students get increased opportunities to read and write through their exploration and activities.”

“I am having 100% completion of the assignments being given.”

“It certainly eases program delivery as the lesson plans are already made. It allows me to focus on lesson delivery and classroom management. It also allows me to give more time to my students as they work.”

“One of the biggest changes from the pilot has been in the role of the teacher. The tools of the LMS and the content have helped teachers change their role from telling and testing to asking and assessing.”