Blended Learning for Community Schools

OBJECTIVE

To provide guidance for sponsors and community schools for implementing a blended model for instruction, as required in statute. Blended learning opportunities may only occur in site-based (brick-and- mortar) schools. State law prohibits blended learning instruction by online community schools.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Ohio Revised Code 3314.03 (A) (29)

If a school operates using the blended learning model, as defined in section 3301.079 of the Revised Code, all the following information must be included in the contract:

(a) An indication of what blended learning model or models will be used;

(b) A description of how student instructional needs will be determined and documented;

(c) The method to be used for determining competency, granting credit and promoting students to a higher grade level;

(d) The school's attendance requirements, including how the school will document participation in learning opportunities;

(e) A statement describing how student progress will be monitored;

(f) A statement describing how private student data will be protected; and

(g) A description of the professional development activities that will be offered to teachers.

Ohio Revised Code 3301.079.

(D) (2) (J) (1) **"Blended learning"** means the delivery of instruction in a combination of time primarily in a supervised physical location away from home and online delivery whereby the student has some element of control over time, place, path, or pace of learning and includes noncomputer-based learning opportunities

(3) "Digital learning" means learning facilitated by technology that gives students some element of control over time, place, path, or pace of learning.

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BLENDED LEARNING

1) What is blended learning?

Blended learning is a planned and consistently implemented instructional delivery model that combines time spent in a school setting (supervised physical location away from home) and online and or noncomputer-based learning opportunities. The key components of blended learning models include location of instruction, method or mode of delivery, and flexibility regarding the time and pace of learning.

2) Can community schools offer blended learning?

Yes, a community school may offer blended learning unless the school is an internet- or computer-based community school.

3) What requirements must be met for community schools to offer blended learning models?

To use a blended learning model to deliver instruction, the sponsor-community school contract must include required blended learning provisions. Specific information about how the school intends to implement blended learning must be included in the community sponsor-school contract (ORC 3314.03(A)(29) (a) - (g)).

In addition to contract provisions, the community school also must notify the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Office of Community Schools, in writing, no later than July 1 preceding the school year if it wishes to begin or cease using a blended learning model.

4) **What types of provisions need to be included as part of the community school sponsor contract in order to use blended learning?**

A contract between a site-based community school wishing to operate a blended learning model and its sponsor must specify ([3314.03 (A)(29)](#)):
- Which blended learning model or models will be used;
- A description of how student instructional needs will be determined and documented;
- The method to be used for determining competency, granting credit and promoting students to higher grade levels;
- The school's attendance requirements, including how the school will document participation in learning opportunities;
- A description of how student progress will be monitored;
- A description of how private student data will be protected; and
- A description of the professional development activities that will be offered to teachers.
- These provisions must be reviewed and verified annually by the school's sponsor.

5) **Can site-based community schools use more than one blended learning model?**

Yes. Site-based community schools may use more than one blended learning model if all methods of instructional delivery are identified, explained, and agreed upon in the community school contract. In addition, they should be reflected in the school's education, performance, and accountability plans.

6) **Do students in a blended learning environment spend any time in the school building?**

Yes. In Ohio, blended learning models require that students be served **primarily** in the school building. Online community schools cannot utilize blended models to deliver instruction as students work online and primarily from their homes.

Site-based community schools using blended learning models provide learning opportunities through a combination of online and traditional classroom instruction at supervised physical locations away from home (school building). Attendance requirements, including minimum time required in the school facility, should be detailed in each community school's education plan and student handbook. Please note, not all blended learning models meet requirements included in state law. Blended learning models used by Ohio community schools must require that students spend the majority of their school year onsite at their school facility.

7) How do site-based community schools that use blended learning models document student learning opportunities?

All sponsor- community school contracts must include a description of the learning opportunities that will be provided to students, including both classroom-based and non-classroom-based settings. Documentation of student learning activities should include a combination of attendance in the school facility and documentation of online and offline learning activities.

Documentation of all learning opportunities and total time in activities must comply with standards for documenting student participation established by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ORC section 3314.08 (H)(2)). In addition to reporting attendance, all time when students are not in the school facility must be documented in order to count as a learning opportunity.

8) Can internet- or computer-based online community schools use blended learning models?

No. Under Ohio law, students enrolled in online community schools must work primarily from their residences on assignments in non-classroom-based learning opportunities provided via internet- or other computer-based instructional methods that do not rely on regular classroom instruction (ORC 3314.02).

9) Can online (e-schools) community schools operate instructional facilities?

Ohio law allows online community schools to provide a physical location, within a 50- mile radius of a student's residence, at which a student may receive counseling, instructional coaching, and testing assistance but not instruction. Students enrolled in online community schools work primarily from their residences on assignments in non-classroom- based learning opportunities provided via internet- or other computer-based instruction methods that do not rely on regular classroom instruction.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BLENDED LEARNING

WHY BLEND?

A formal program of blended learning for instructional delivery allows students to have truly personalized learning experiences. Digital technology has revolutionized daily life and modernized the definition of success on a global scale. Ohio students require the right tools and technologies to engage them in relevant and quality instruction—as engaged in learning as they are in their everyday lives.

Learning is more than the transfer of information. By embracing technology as a transformative tool and driving force of communication, creativity, and globalization, educating Ohio students can move from a traditional style of learning to a more personalized approach. Bringing digital innovations and blended learning initiatives into the classroom will foster world-class knowledge and skills that enable students to achieve success in the global economy.

To personalize learning for students, a blended learning model is like a set of operational gears representing the aspects of blended learning. Each gear represents either the physical place, online, time, place, path or pace. At any given time, they are interchangeable in scope but still part of the blended learning process. The school can arrange the gears as it prefers, but they all need to be present for the instructional delivery method to be considered blended learning. They do not need to be equal, but they all need to be present as part of the model.

For example, the school's model can have a big gear representing in-person delivery of instruction and a smaller gear for online, depending upon the educational plan of the community school.

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The Clayton Christensen Institute has identified some of the more common models of blended learning. One of the most common is The Rotation Model:

Students rotate on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion between learning methods, at least one of which is online learning. Other methods might include activities such as small-group or full-class instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignment.

The students learn mostly on the school campus, with some portions being online. Some examples of rotation models are station, lab or individual rotations or a flipped classroom model.

Additional Information and Resources:

No matter which model or models the school chooses, an easy way to think about blended learning is on a continuum. If we look at the gears, even though they are different sizes, they could represent a continuum. The gears can be different sizes depending on the model chosen or student needs. All the gears need to work together to make blended learning successful.

Gear 1: In-person, in- classroom activities, facilitated by an Ohio certified educator.

Gear 2: Synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities that are part of the school's approved education plan.

Gear 3: Structured, yet independently guided study time using the material, lectures and skills developed during the classroom learning experience. Students need to have choice in, at least, one of the following: when they work (time), where they work (place), on what content they work (path), or how quickly they work (pace). They can choose all, or only one, as part of their education plans, but their voices and choices are critical to the successful implementation of the blended learning model.

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