TNTP *reimagine teaching*

# REIMAGINING TEACHING IN A BLENDED CLASSROOM

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# Introduction

Blended learning—the strategic integration of in-person and virtual learning to personalize instruction—involves much more than introducing technology into classrooms; it offers an opportunity to rethink how teachers teach and students learn. It doesn't replace good teaching; it demands it. Done right, it has the potential to personalize and accelerate student learning, expanding access to rigorous and engaging content. But that potential will remain unrealized if we neglect attention to the resource that matters most in education: people.

> Blended learning involves much more than introducing technology into classrooms; it offers an opportunity to rethink how teachers teach and students learn.

Blended learning is growing rapidly, with half of high school students expected to engage in some form of online study by 2019.[1] While considerable research has focused on the efficacy of distinct blending learning models, far less attention has been paid to the people developing and implementing those programs.

Over the past year, TNTP visited more than 20 schools across the country to better understand how blended learning affects key human capital issues. We observed various instructional models in action, and interviewed more than 60 teachers and leaders about their experiences. Findings from these visits highlighted that teachers need to adapt how they instruct students and, at times, take on major new responsibilities and, at others, split responsibilities with a team. That in turn requires district and school leaders to foster a culture of innovation, and intensively support teachers as they navigate this transition, with two particularly critical shifts in how they manage talent:

**1. The role of teacher is no longer one-size-fits-all, so recruitment and selection must adapt.**

**2. What teachers need to know and be able to do is evolving, and the way to develop and evaluate teachers must reflect those shifts.**

More in-depth guidance related to these shifts in practice is included in this working paper. All encompass a broad set of considerations for districts to contemplate as they introduce or evolve a blended learning strategy. Each section includes highlights from real schools along with practical tools to support adoption of recommended practices. Because of how new blended learning is, we expect our thinking to evolve over time, and invite you to submit your thoughts and ideas to us as we continue to investigate this topic.

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[1] Christensen, C., Horn, M., Staker H. (2013). *Is K-12 Blended Learning Disruptive? An introduction to the theory of hybrids.* San Mateo, CA: Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation. http://3jrru23si058xyg03oiyzu9p.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Is-K-12-blended-learning-disruptive.pdf
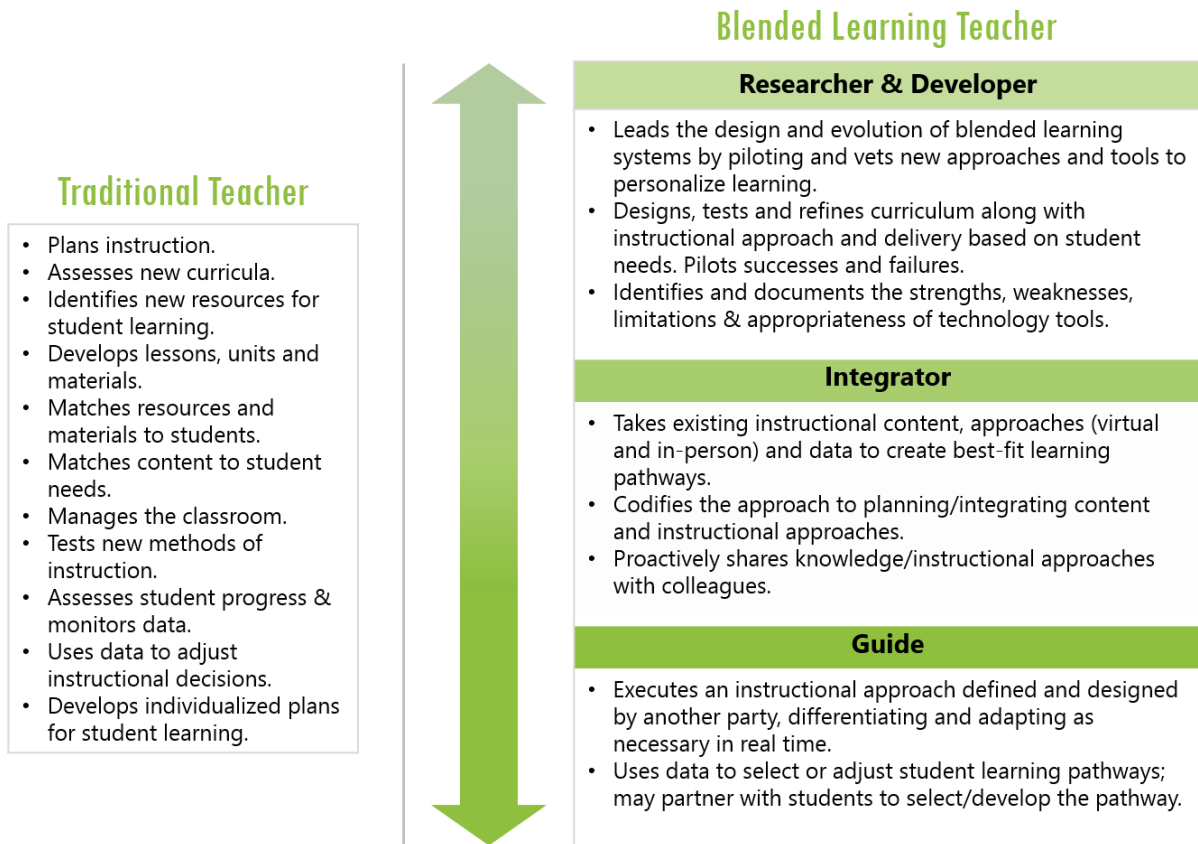
# Redefining the Teacher Role

## New Educator Roles

After visiting blended learning programs across the nation, an important trend became clear: in these programs, the role of the teacher is often divided up into several more targeted roles.

In traditional school models, teacher roles are essentially uniform--usually responsible for the entirety of instruction -- but a blended environment is more fluid. Technology enables considerable creativity in how classrooms are designed and managed, allowing teams of teachers and schools to be unshackled from the traditional one-teacher-must-do-all model.

Implementing blended learning presents an opportunity to think about the role of the teacher as a continuum with three distinct—and sometimes shared—responsibilities that can be managed across a group of educators (see Figure 1). The role of the lone traditional teacher is being replaced by teams of educators who individually assume the responsibilities of a Researcher & Developer, Integrator, and Guide.

**Figure 1. Blended Learning vs. Traditional Teacher Roles**

### Traditional Teacher

- Plans instruction.
- Assesses new curricula.
- Identifies new resources for student learning.
- Develops lessons, units and materials.
- Matches resources and materials to students.
- Matches content to student needs.
- Manages the classroom.
- Tests new methods of instruction.
- Assesses student progress & monitors data.
- Uses data to adjust instructional decisions.
- Develops individualized plans for student learning.

### Blended Learning Teacher

#### Researcher & Developer

- Leads the design and evolution of blended learning systems by piloting and vets new approaches and tools to personalize learning.
- Designs, tests and refines curriculum along with instructional approach and delivery based on student needs. Pilots successes and failures.
- Identifies and documents the strengths, weaknesses, limitations & appropriateness of technology tools.

#### Integrator

- Takes existing instructional content, approaches (virtual and in-person) and data to create best-fit learning pathways.
- Codifies the approach to planning/integrating content and instructional approaches.
- Proactively shares knowledge/instructional approaches with colleagues.

#### Guide

- Executes an instructional approach defined and designed by another party, differentiating and adapting as necessary in real time.
- Uses data to select or adjust student learning pathways; may partner with students to select/develop the pathway.

Teachers in blended learning environments must collectively possess distinct skills and mindsets from those found among traditional teachers. Figure 2 below highlights some key differences between traditional and blended classrooms, along with the key attributes a teacher needs to possess to succeed in the latter environment:

**Figure 2. Blended Learning Educator Roles**

| | RESEARCHER & DEVELOPER | INTEGRATOR | GUIDE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Key Attributes** | • Development/Innovation-oriented<br>• Designer, tester, tinkerer, risk-taker, creative problem solver | • Integration/Refinement-oriented<br>• Developer, continuous improver, content expert | • Execution/Facilitation-oriented<br>• Adapter, counselor, coach, guide |
| **Differences from Traditional Teacher Role** | • Works without guidance to create new approaches to personalized learning experiences for students<br>• Tests and vets non-traditional instructional methods, some of which will fail<br>• Adapts instructional practices quickly and fluidly to pilot new ideas<br>• Comfort with technology | • More expansive focus on determining best-fit instructional methods and meshing online and offline activities<br>• May require a broader and/or deeper content expertise<br>• Focused on differentiating student learning pathways (for groups and/or individuals) based on student data | • Increased focus on facilitating student learning rather than delivering knowledge<br>• Able to manage a class where students are often working on different activities and/or following different pathways<br>• May act as a content coach or tutor<br>• Heightened responsibility for choosing and adapting appropriate, differentiated student learning pathways (for groups and/or individuals) |

Notes: (1) The following roles describe discrete functions served by a teacher, and are not mutually exclusive. A teacher may hold more than one of these roles.
(2) These roles do not explicitly provide for the technology maintenance function necessary to the smooth operation of a mature blended learning model; this responsibility may be integrated into any (or all) of the positions detailed above, or may be a separate role.

It is important to remember that no single teacher needs to possess the skills of each or all profiles on the continuum, but that building a team that reflects the full spectrum of attributes above is ideal. In building such a team, four key factors should be considered:

1. **Program Status and Duration:** When launching a blended learning initiative, staff who can take on the responsibilities of a Researcher and Developer will be essential as strategies are designed, tested and refined. This ranges from choosing the instructional model itself to selecting in-class teaching techniques that best support student learning. While blended learning encourages continuous innovation, that priority will naturally diminish as the program becomes established and staff develop a clear viewpoint about what works.[2]

2. **Instructional Model and Academic Goals:** Choosing a blended learning model is a major decision that should be driven primarily by academic goals for students. At the same time, that choice will profoundly influence staffing needs. For example, in classrooms that emphasize highly personalized learning, students are typically engaged in a wide variety of activities reflecting their unique interests and learning levels. To succeed in that environment, educators need the skills to be effective Guides, capable of facilitating student learning rather than delivering highly structured lessons.

3. **Teacher Talent:** An honest assessment of existing and prospective talent pool is another important consideration when implementing blended learning. Understanding the strengths, weaknesses and interests of current staff members will help identify potential external hiring needs and the best roles for current staff.

4. **Decision-making Approach:** The degree of decentralization involved in decision-making will also shape staffing needs. To push key curriculum and content delivery decisions down to individual classrooms, you will need an "R&D" mentality. If those decisions will be made collaboratively at the school level, Integrators can research different instructional approaches and share that knowledge with colleagues to inform critical decisions.

Although these variables will influence the preferred staffing mix for any program, it is important to remember that the roles on the continuum are not necessarily fixed and some instructors may serve in positions that require toggling between two or even three roles. Others may start as a Guide, but over time, develop the skills and interest to assume the role of Integrator. In other words, there is a tremendous amount of flexibility in staffing a blended learning model, which can be used to build and grow teams with complementary skills and dispositions.

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[2] For more information about how to consider some of the variables described herein, please see Considerations for Launching a Blended Learning Program and Model Decisions in the Appendix.

## Establishing a New Value Proposition for Educators

An effective blended learning model requires teachers who are independent, creative and technologically savvy and offers those educators the opportunity to apply their talents in a high-impact and fast-paced work environment.

The good news is that this shift fosters a professional culture built around the very conditions Millennials, in particular, want in their careers: collaboration, opportunities to lead, frequent feedback and meaningful work connected to a larger social movement. [3] With the rise of blended learning, a cutting-edge teaching profession is emerging—one that offers a new set of job incentives to talented candidates who might not otherwise consider a career in the classroom.

With this new value proposition, blended learning can also help districts bolster retention of top talent, creating opportunities for great teachers to build new skills and advance their careers. This can feel like a breath of fresh air to educators who crave the chance to stretch themselves professionally while enjoying the freedom to innovate instruction to better support student needs. A fifth-year teacher who is a strong classroom manager but feels like he has plateaued in his performance and is interested in other sectors may see blended learning as the way to innovate and try out new methods of instruction. The 20-year veteran who is a master of differentiation may jump at the chance to reach individual students in a more efficient way by using new technology to support her instruction. In either case, the shifting professional expectations associated with blended learning may be key to retaining top teachers in the classroom.

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[3] Behrstock, E., & Clifford, M. (2009). *Leading Gen Y: Emerging strategies for school leaders.* Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. http://secc.sedl.org/orc/resources/February2009Brief.pdf

 John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. (2012). *Talent Report: What Workers Want in 2012.* Net Impact. www.netimpact.org/whatworkerswant

# PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: A New Value Proposition for Teachers

## TEACHER AS RESEARCHER & DEVELOPER
Jason Appel
9th & 10th-grade Geometry
Barrington High School
Barrington, RI

Although his school is taking a measured approach to introducing blended learning, Jason has gone all in, developing his own approach to a flipped classroom, where the lecture is delivered at home on video and students complete an exit ticket before class so classroom instruction can be tailored to individual needs.

"I'm a tech nerd. I've been waiting for technology to catch up with my brain for years and it's finally doing that.

I flipped my class—the kids have become used to it and I have too. The model has evolved a lot since the beginning of the year. It's working really well, but I'm sure it will continue to change."

## TEACHER AS INTEGRATOR
Claudia Zelaya
6th-grade Math
Christine O'Donovan Middle School
Los Angeles, CA

Claudia uses a station-rotation model to differentiate learning in a class of 32 students, with groupings based on weekly assessment data. Full-class instruction provides an overview of the standards being taught, small-groups work on a specific skills-based aspect of the standard, and online content delivers greater personalization.

"We have to be super creative, have good classroom management and train kids from day one. Once they get it you become more of a facilitator.

For sixth grade, there's no set curriculum. We get standards to cover each quarter, but I determine the pacing and sequencing and content is differentiated. Students work toward the same standard and objective, but each group might have a distinct set of problems to solve."

## TEACHER AS GUIDE
Jay Sawin
10th-grade Advisor
BIG Picture Learning's MET Center
Providence, RI

Jay incorporates online learning in a model that combines project-based learning with internships. As an Advisor, his primary role is to help students choose personalized learning paths and hold them accountable to the goals they set. Students use online curricula to build skills and take specialized courses, with Jay using a variety of digital tools to track student progress.

"We look after the whole kid. The majority of students come from single-parent working households. The personal quality piece is really important because a lot of kids are going home and have no one managing them. Our approach requires students to manage their own work, so they have to take it seriously.

As an Advisor, I spend a lot of time going over the learning plans with kids and making sure they are effective. I have to constantly ask myself, 'Where are the kids' priorities? How are they organized?'"

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# Rethinking Educator Competencies in a Blended Learning Context

In order to thrive in a blended learning environment, educators must possess many of the same core competencies that great teachers have always demonstrated. They still need to be able to maximize instructional time, teach rigorous content, ensure students are responsible for the thinking in the classroom, and provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding. At the same time, certain competencies are even more essential to success in blended classrooms due to the complexities involved with delivering highly personalized instruction. These include:

- Planning
- Classroom management
- Collection, analysis and effective use of data
- Collaboration
- Risk taking
- Content expertise

In the traditional classroom, teachers are expected to do most of these well, but in a blended classroom, success hinges upon doing all of them with a relatively high level of proficiency.

## Planning

In most blended learning settings, teachers no longer assemble daily or weekly lesson plans for full classes of students. Instead, planning takes place on a longer time horizon, and must feature built-in opportunities to differentiate instruction for multiple small groups and individual students.

For many teachers, the bulk of curriculum development and the scope and sequencing of lesson planning will take place before the school year starts. That approach frees up time for teachers to continuously analyze student data, enabling them to adjust instructional plans daily or weekly throughout the year to personalize student learning paths.

In practice, this means that teachers in a blended classroom are expected to:

- Create short- and long-term instructional plans that incorporate a variety of resources and tools;
- Be flexible with those plans so they can be updated and changed in real time;
- Personalize instruction to enable students to focus on the tools, content, skills and pacing that are appropriately rigorous for them; and
- Make those plans understandable to everyone who will potentially access them, including colleagues, administrators, parents, and students themselves.

Effective planning in a blended learning context requires exceptional adaptability and a familiarity with a wide variety of lesson planning tools and instructional methods.

## Classroom Management

Teachers often cite the shift in classroom management as one of the trickiest—but most important—aspects of transitioning to a blended learning setting. In blended classrooms, students are often working on a variety of tasks, at different paces and in varied groupings, requiring them to self-monitor and stay engaged without constant redirection from a teacher.

In practice, this means that teachers in a blended classroom are expected to:

- Prepare students to manage themselves during independent and student-run group learning time;
- Set clear expectations about student engagement norms from the very outset of the year;
- Make sure students understand how to progress through content independently, proactively troubleshooting problems, and seeking assistance from peers as needed;
- Increase students' comfort level with a noisier classroom to accommodate multiple working discussions;
- Simultaneously manage multiple learning configurations (*e.g.,* large group, small group, independent working time) while ensuring high-quality instruction across the board; and
- Be prepared with a "Plan B" to address unforeseen problems that can crop up when using online curricular resources and other digital learning tools.

Teachers who are already strong managers will have a head start on these skills, but those who have relied on a tightly controlled, teacher-centric classroom management style may need more time and practice to fully master them.

## Collection, Analysis and Effective Use of Data

Integrating digital technology into daily learning generates a trove of new student performance data. This information can provide teachers with valuable insights about how students are doing and where they need extra support, but the volume of data can sometimes feel overwhelming. Teachers in blended classrooms will need to quickly filter out low-quality data so they can focus on the evidence that will help them best support students.

In practice, this means that teachers in a blended classroom are expected to:

- Collect data from online and in-person lessons – recognizing that online data may be more accessible, but that the information is not always high-quality;
- Develop a keen ability to identify the data that will provide most actionable evidence about student performance;
- Accurately analyze student data to identify trends and learning gaps; and
- Capitalize on online tools that deliver data points in real time and use this information to make adjustments on the fly.

## PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: Data-Driven Instruction at USC Hybrid High

Alejandra Mendoza was a 10th-grade social studies teacher at USC Hybrid High in Los Angeles during the 2013-2014 school year. She and her colleagues continuously mined student data to personalize instruction.

Students completed the bulk of their work online, and as they finished assignments, an update appeared on the classroom's data wall, which was projected at the front of the class. Alejandra checked results and immediately determined whether the student was ready to proceed to the next assignment or needed targeted instruction to bolster mastery of the skill being studied.

"We're constantly looking at data compared with periodic assessments used at traditional schools. [Other schools] don't have this notion of mastery. I can look at data period-by-period and make decisions on the spot about how to direct kids."

## Collaboration

Although teachers value collaboration, traditional instructional cultures too often leave them isolated within their own classrooms. By contrast, collaboration is an inherent feature of blended learning models as teachers playing different roles need to regularly work together.

In practice, this means that teachers in a blended classroom are expected to:

- Test innovative curricula and instructional delivery models, sharing what they learn with colleagues to promote school-wide achievement gains;
- Be flexible about potentially working in a team-teaching setting, collaborating with colleagues who possess different strengths to better personalize student learning; and
- Rethink conventional "grade" and "class" distinctions, working with colleagues to help students follow personalized learning paths that draw on educators' diverse areas of expertise.

Hiring teachers with the right disposition provides the foundation for this work, but true success requires school leaders to create collaborative instructional cultures, including a professional development strategy that intentionally and consistently fosters teamwork.

### PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: Collaboration at Village Green

Collaboration among the faculty at Village Green in Providence, RI resulted in a total transformation of the school's instructional model during its first year of operation. Village Green launched with a 1.5:1 desktop model featuring extensive online work in labs with individual rotations for direct instruction. Teachers were divided between learning labs and workshops.

After one and a half months, the faculty advocated for a change. Rob Pilkington, Village Green's Founder & Superintendent explains:

"We shifted to a flex model based on requests from the teachers. They wanted to be able to use the data from classes to determine which kids to work with and when. Now all teachers are in the labs and pull kids out into the workshops rather than having assigned workshops for each discipline."

The teachers at Village Green realized that they could more effectively target instruction if they were all in the lab observing students and working with them directly. This allowed them to use a combination of data and direct interaction with students to determine whom to pull out and what to teach. The result has been that every teacher feels more connected to their students and is confident that instruction is more targeted to student needs. But the change wouldn't have been possible without a deeply collaborative effort with the leadership team to reconsider the model. Musheng Alishahi, a ninth- and 10th-grade science teacher, explained:

"It's really team focus. In a traditional school you can exist in a bubble and be successful but it's a lot harder to do that here. There's so much collaboration among teachers and kids."

## Risk-Taking

While many teachers would relish opportunities to explore innovative instructional approaches, such risk-taking is rarely rewarded in traditional classrooms. In fact, deviating from the status quo is often actively discouraged given the high stakes associated with student learning. By contrast, a commitment to innovation is fundamental to success in blended classrooms. As a relatively new educational model, blended learning requires teachers to test novel instructional practices and carefully assess their efficacy, making thoughtful adjustments along the way.

In practice, this means that teachers in a blended classroom may be expected to research, pilot, assess or scale:

- The overall structure or individual components of an innovative instructional model;
- New curricula or instructional delivery methods;
- Solutions to classroom management problems that cannot be solved with traditional tactics;
- Innovative assessment practices;
- New approaches to support student learning progression, either within structured classroom periods or as part of a more flexible schedule; or
- A shift to mastery-based progression that may pull some or all students out of a standard grade-level classroom structure.

This is not to say that proven practices should be abandoned. Productive risk-taking requires educators to invest time and resources wisely, distinguishing worthwhile risks from those unlikely to bear fruit. But success in blended learning setting requires teachers to think differently about what works in education and to recognize that "failures" actually represent vital opportunities to learn and grow.

## PRINCIPLES IN ACTION: Taking Risks at Quest to Learn

Rebecca Grodner is an eighth-grade ELA/"Points of View" teacher at Quest to Learn, a New York City public school that uses a curriculum based on the structure of gaming, with purposeful integration of technology where appropriate. Because the school adopts a different theme each year, and that theme is used to create game-like content aligned to grade-level standards, teachers are required to constantly test and reinvent their instructional strategy. As Rebecca states:

"You have to be willing to take risks and fail and to admit to your students when you have failed. Sometimes I try something and realize along the way that it's not working. It's nice to be able to take those risks because we don't have a 'gotcha' administration. We all, including our kids, reframe failure as iteration."

## Content Expertise

All teachers need solid content expertise to be effective. Every blended teacher needs to be able to assess whether content and instructional materials are appropriately standards-aligned and rigorous for individual students' subjects and interests, especially with respect to online content.

In many cases, blended instruction also demands broader and deeper content expertise than that typically expected in traditional classrooms. As blended learning leads to more personalized learning, students in any given classroom may be studying an unusual variety of topics, while working at their own pace across a variety of learning levels.

In practice, this means that teachers in many blended classrooms are expected to facilitate content access, respond to questions and assess student work across a broad spectrum of topics and learning levels, often covering multiple standards. The main exception to this rule is schools that expect teachers to be interdisciplinary, such as schools that place an emphasis on project-based learning.

## Selecting for and Cultivating These Competencies

While each of these competencies is critical to achieving success in a blended classroom, some components represent foundational capabilities that teachers must possess from the outset, while others may be cultivated over time through targeted professional development.

When considering how to fill the educator roles assigned to blended classrooms, selecting for and developing these essential skills will ensure teachers are poised to thrive and grow in a blended learning setting.

| | Foundational | Coachable |
|---|---|---|
| **Planning** | • Develops lesson plans with grade-appropriate standards.<br>• Outlines steps to achieve learning goals. | • Develops both short- and long-range planning skills.<br>• Builds competency in differentiating instruction and personalizing student learning based on academic data. |
| **Classroom Management** | • Delivers focused, engaging lessons<br>• Ensure that students stay on task without constant redirection. | • Builds student capacity for ongoing self-management.<br>• Seamlessly adjusts groupings and learning environments. |
| **Collection, Analysis and Effective Use of Data** | • Understands basic student data and can use it to adjust instruction. | • Able to access new data, manipulate and present it (should be introduced during onboarding).<br>• Collaborates with peers to deepen capacity to capture, interpret and use data effectively. |
| **Collaboration** | • Shares and models practices.<br>• Willing to receive feedback and coaching. | • Regular modeling of collaborative behavior and effectively using structured and unstructured time and space to work with peers and engage thoughtfully in their practice. |
| **Risk Taking** | • Embraces uncertainty.<br>• Tries things with no guarantee of success to improve practices. | • Quickly iterates approaches when failure occurs.<br>• Able to identify whether risk taking is likely to be productive. |
| **Content Expertise** | • Knows content well.<br>• Selects appropriately rigorous content for students. | • Identifies new methods to teach rigorous content<br>• Explores connections across content areas. |

While this framework provides a useful guide for selecting high-potential candidates, it is by no means comprehensive. Other critical competencies beyond those outlined here may emerge out of each specific blended learning model. As that happens, tools and exercises should be designed to screen for those skills.

# Recruitment & Selection

Identifying needs for various educator roles and then selecting the right candidates to fill those positions is central to managing talent in a blended environment. Targeted recruitment allows districts to proactively recruit candidates with the disposition to succeed in a blended classroom while a refined selection process helps distinguish "best-fit" candidates from the overall talent pool.

## Targeted Recruitment by Educator Role

While the basic strategies to recruit high-potential blended learning teachers are largely consistent with traditional recruitment tactics, the unique needs of a blended learning classroom allow hiring pools to include candidates with a broader set of experiences and backgrounds.

Before taking that step, however, it is critical to first assess the current team of classroom instructors.[4] Introducing a blended learning model creates opportunities for to recognize the most effective teachers with a position that offers enhanced on-the-job rewards, boosting "smart" retention goals.

Once candidates among the current ranks who have what it takes to succeed in a blended classroom are identified, districts should consider where and how to attract external talent with skills aligned to each of the new educator roles needed for the instructional model. Reaching these external candidates and encouraging them to apply may require the following:

- Partnering with alternative certification programs to target prime candidates for selection, certification and tracking toward blended learning positions;
- Contacting schools and external recruiters to gather information about job search tools that strong candidates are most likely to use;
- Targeting job postings to non-traditional platforms where likely candidates tend to congregate and consume information;
- Incorporating new keywords to elevate the visibility of job listings on social media sites such as LinkedIn; and
- Modifying recruitment messaging to convey the value proposition offered by these specific roles.

Because of the shift in mindset and skills required for these educator roles, implementing blended learning cancan be considered an opportunity to expand the pool of potential teachers, Whereas teachers have typically come from a university prep program or a narrow band of alternative certification programs, the expansion of teacher roles may invite professionals who possess the necessary skills, but haven't considered teaching before. For example, individuals with science or research backgrounds who have experience testing new methods may be a good fit as Researcher and Developers, while professionals from the non-profit world who can flawlessly execute a plan and are excellent facilitators could act as Guides. It's wise to include these non-traditional candidates in the recruitment pool, even if their resume appears atypical at first.

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[4] See the Talent Assessment Tool in the Appendix for a more detailed overview of how to recruit candidates from an existing talent pool.

## Considerations for Selection

The selection process should be customized to screen for the core competencies that are most essential to unique needs of each blended learning model. We have identified several potential selection activities[5] that may be adapted to assess whether candidates have what it takes to flourish in a blended classroom. These activities can be used to screen both internal and external candidates.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Sample Lesson with Re-Teaching** | • **Purpose:** Observe how teachers respond to feedback on their planning, classroom management, and ability to teach appropriately rigorous content.<br>• **Competency alignment:** Planning; Classroom Management; Collection, Analysis and Effective Use of Data; Risk-Taking; Content Expertise<br>• **Process:** Ask candidates to use sample student data to plan and teach a lesson that incorporates online and offline learning, preferably in a setting that approximates what they might encounter on the job. Provide candidates with feedback, including concrete suggestions they can apply right away to improve their lesson. Ask them to reteach it to determine whether they readily internalize feedback.<br>• **Result:** Allows school leaders to see how candidates apply many of the key competencies in a classroom setting. |
| **Group Problem-Solving Exercise:** | • **Purpose:** Test candidates' ability to collaborate in real time.<br>• **Competency alignment:** Collaboration, Risk-Taking<br>• **Process:** Present a real-world teaching challenge the district anticipates encountering during the transition to blended learning to a group of candidates and have them collaborate to propose a potential solution. Give them a fixed time frame and allow for the use of one or two tools that must be shared to complete the exercise. Once they develop a solution, they must jointly determine how to present their result and then collaborate on the presentation<br>• **Result:** Provides evidence for how candidates might work with other teachers to solve problems in and out of class. Also provides information about candidates' creativity and problem solving skills, along with an indication of the level of risk they are willing to assume to achieve at a solution. |
| **Data Exercise:** | • **Purpose:** Test candidates' interpretation and application of data.<br>• **Competency Alignment:** Collection, Analysis and Effective Use of Data, Planning, Content Expertise<br>• **Process:** Present the candidate with a dataset of student academic information pulled from various online and in-classroom sources. Ask the candidate to interpret the data and present a set of instructional recommendations based on that evidence.<br>• **Result:** Enables selection team to see how well the candidate uses data to design instruction plans that support students in overcoming academic challenges. |
| **Panel interview with teachers:** | • **Purpose:** Test candidates' cultural fit with existing teacher team.<br>• **Competency alignment:** Collaboration<br>• **Process:** Allow teachers to influence interview structure and introduce their own questions<br>• **Results:** Enables teachers to become engaged in the process and co-own the final decision. Provides teachers with a leadership opportunity outside the classroom. Exposes candidates to the team to help them make a more informed decision about whether these potential colleagues would be a good cultural fit. |

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[5] See Appendix for sample questions for a one-on-one interview.

## Educator Evaluation

Evaluation systems support teacher and student growth by reinforcing high expectations, defining a clear set of priorities and creating a common vision of excellent instruction that advances student learning.

Generally speaking, evaluation systems for teachers in a blended learning model should adhere to the guiding principles that shape all good evaluation models: incorporating multiple measures to get a full picture of teacher performance and using student outcomes data to derive final ratings.

All good evaluation models also accomplish four key things. They:

1. Clearly define expectations for effective teaching.
2. Effectively communicate the criteria that will be used to evaluate teacher performance.
3. Ensure that evaluators have an accurate perception of classroom practice and student growth.
4. Assign evaluation ratings that accurately reflect teacher effectiveness and student learning.

While these goals are wholly applicable to a blended learning setting, we have identified an additional priority that is specifically relevant when evaluating teachers in a blended learning context:

5. Measure "off-stage" activities to collect data on teacher collaboration, data analysis and planning.

Addressing "off-stage" activities requires a few key adjustments to typical evaluation systems, with the level of modification varying based on how much instruction differs from that in a traditional classroom. For example, a teacher working in a classroom that mirrors a traditional classroom model but incorporates 30 minutes of daily online learning can likely be evaluated in the same way as other teachers in the school. By contrast, a teacher working in a blended learning setting where all students progress independently toward individual learning goals in an open classroom configuration should be evaluated quite differently.

Below, we outline some distinctive considerations involved in designing evaluation models for blended learning environments, with particular attention to the five goals outlined above.

### Clearly define the expectations for effective teaching.

Defining clear expectations for effective teaching is as critical in a blended learning environment as in traditional practice. Even in the earliest stages of blended learning implementation, teachers should know that the bottom line expectation is that their teaching will advance student learning. But going beyond that point can be challenging since blended learning models are new and are often "works in progress."

To account for this, school leaders should make it clear to teachers that ambiguity is a feature of their work, setting the expectations that teachers will need to embrace uncertainty and innovation in their daily practice. This, in turn, means that school leaders must guard against penalizing teachers for failures associated with strategic risk-taking.

### Effectively communicate the criteria that will be used to evaluate teacher performance.

If teachers will be evaluated in accordance with a specific rubric, then it should be shared at the beginning of the year, with the understanding it may need to be adapted to account for conditions specific to a blended learning environment.[6]

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[6] See Appendix for TNTP Core Rubric with blended learning annotations.

For example, it may be difficult to assess student engagement when learning is taking place on a computer. A student may appear to be deeply engaged in a virtual lesson but in reality they may be struggling to progress through the lesson at an appropriate pace, or may be working on content that is not appropriately rigorous.

Consequently, school leaders may need to modify the evidence they look for in observations, spending more time with teachers in post-observation conferences to determine how teachers are making decisions and how students are performing. *(See additional observation guidance below)*

## PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:

## Defining Expectations for Effective Teaching At Summit Public Schools

Adam Carter is the Chief Academic Officer of Summit Public Schools, which operates nine charter schools in California and Washington. Summit has evolved its evaluation rubric toward measures of student performance, since expectations of effective teaching are oriented around preparing students for success in college. As Adam explains,

"Student growth is what really matters. As we move more toward self-directed learning, we've moved away from high-touch observation data to data generated by our system. We still do observations but we're triangulating student information with observation. We care about achievement to a fixed standard only as far as making students college ready. As a teacher, your primary focus is on cognitive skill development on common assessments and on projects. The biggest way we isolate it is on the amount and quality of feedback teachers are giving kids and on their growth on those assessments. For example, we would have had a gut feeling about one of our strong performers as a first-year teacher, but now we can say with a fair amount of certainty."

### Ensure that evaluators have an accurate perception of classroom practice and student growth.

Because teaching and learning look different in a blended environment, it's also critical to ensure that all observers have a thorough understanding of the instructional model, including the roles that teachers and technology each play in it.

Ideally, a brief overview should be printed and posted in classrooms to ensure that observers understand what excellent instruction should look like in this setting. This will also prevent miscommunication with district leaders who may play a role in teacher evaluations.

### Assign evaluation ratings that accurately reflect teacher effectiveness.

High-quality evaluation systems incorporate multiple measures, but the most reliable indicator of a teacher's effectiveness is the actual academic growth of his or her students and student growth data should be included in evaluations where possible.

Online learning can generate an unusually robust set of student performance data, which may be used like any other formative assessment to inform teacher planning and personalize instruction. In cases where no other data is available, it may be feasible to use student growth data from online assessments such as pre- and post-tests for evaluative purposes. But school leaders and teachers in blended settings have emphasized the importance of being cautious about using online curricular assessments in that way.

As schools create and adopt blended learning models that push the boundaries of what teaching looks like, the role of student growth data in evaluation ratings is being reconsidered.

- For example, at USC Hybrid High, a team of four to five teachers work collaboratively with a group of approximately 150 students. School leaders have opted against attributing student growth to a single teacher. Instead, they use team scores to assess student growth at the subject and grade levels as a strategy to foster shared accountability and a highly collaborative culture.
- Big Picture Learning MET Center is moving towards competency based student growth measurements (especially for non-tested subjects). This approach is better aligned to their blended instructional model, in which students work on individualized learning plans, progressing through that content at their own pace.

## Measure "Off-Stage" Activities to Evaluate Teacher Collaboration, Data Analysis and Planning

School leaders agree that measuring off-stage activities, including teacher planning, collaboration and data analysis, are essential to effectively evaluating teacher performance in a blended learning context.

Incorporating a 360° review is the most effective and efficient means to measure teacher collaboration. These reviews should gather information from co-teachers and students who work with a particular teacher. Peers are able to talk about how a teacher works with colleagues and students can confirm whether this collaboration is evident during class time.[7]

The ways in which a teacher uses data to analyze student performance and plan future lessons can be measured through 360° reviews, during post-observation conferences and during common planning times. Evaluators should sit with teachers as they look at formative data gathered from online assessments and use these opportunities to evaluate teachers' proficiency in understanding and acting on that information.

### PRINCIPLES IN ACTION:
### Measuring Offstage Activities in Milpitas Unified School District

Cary Matsuoka is the Superintendent of the Milpitas Unified School District in Milpitas, CA. He acknowledges that blended learning schools need to do a much better job of measuring offstage activities, and he is thinking critically about how best to adapt the district's evaluation processes to reflect the shifts that blended learning demands.

"I have to look at information that's outside of classroom and our rubric doesn't even acknowledge those activities. The [existing] evaluation system is all about evaluating the teacher on the stage. We have to revamp the system so it's less dependent on observing overt data—we have to look at many sources of information other than what's in the classroom.

I think [the evaluation of soft skills such as collaboration] should be moved to more of an objective rubric that includes principal, fellow teacher and student input... Peers know and students know, especially high school kids. Moving the responsibility of evaluation and improvement from one person to a shared, collaborative responsibility just makes sense."

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[7] See Appendix for sample teacher and student questions for a 360º review.

## Conclusion

Blended learning and the integration of technology into classrooms will only become more commonplace over time. Schools and districts that navigate this transition successfully will be those that understand that the core challenge is not identifying which software or tablet to buy, but rather ensuring that educators are fully prepared to embrace the transformative potential of the new model.

The spread of blended learning creates opportunities to redefine and expand our traditional conception of the teacher, creating a continuum of roles that require a unique mix of skills and strengths. This shift holds the potential to reimagine teaching as a cutting-edge profession, one that appeals to a much wider range of prospective candidates. In the intermediate- and long-term, schools and districts adopting blended learning models should consider revisiting and expanding their traditional talent pipelines to tap into this larger talent pool and build teams that reflect the continuum of skills necessary for success.

As always, teachers continue to be the most critical resource in education—new digital learning tools will only be as effective as those using them. There are many important decisions to be made in designing and implementing blended systems to bolster student learning, from selecting the right technology to choosing a quality curriculum. At every step, these decisions should be aligned to those made about the people—primarily students and teachers—who will be the driving force behind this new system.

As blended learning continues to evolve, the role of the teacher will undoubtedly continue to evolve as well. This paper represents an initial look at how blended learning influences key human capital issues, but this topic will likely need to be revisited as current blended learning programs mature and change. We are excited to learn more from the field and invite you to submit your thinking and feedback to blendedlearning@tntp.org.