

What is Blended Learning's Potential?

Blended learning has the potential to improve K-12 education quality and cost by redesigning the education delivery system.

Blended learning programs can offer a higher quality learning experience by letting students learn at their own pace, and receive immediate feedback on their performance without having to wait for a teacher to review the material. Online programs can capture student achievement data in real-time, so that teachers can spend more time helping to personalize learning for students.

Blended learning can also create new and different staffing structures that might increase school-wide pupil-teacher ratios even while allowing teachers to spend more time with each individual student. However, while blended learning allows schools to leverage technology to require fewer and more specialized teachers, in the early years properly executed programs require an upfront expense for improved technology, more computers and a student management system that carefully monitors the activity and progress of students while online.

Michael Horn and Heather Straker in *The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning*, say it best: "These opportunities to innovate can occur even as providers take advantage of the things that leading brick-and-mortar schools do well, such as creating a strong, supportive culture that promotes rigor and high expectations for all students."

Other Thomas Jefferson publications of interest:

What is a Virtual School? ... and how can it help Virginia's students?

<http://www.thomasjeffersoninst.org/files/3/Virtual%20School%20Brochure.pdf>

Students Without Borders: Funding Online Education in Virginia

<http://www.thomasjeffersoninst.org/files/3/21433%20Virtual%20Booklet.pdf>

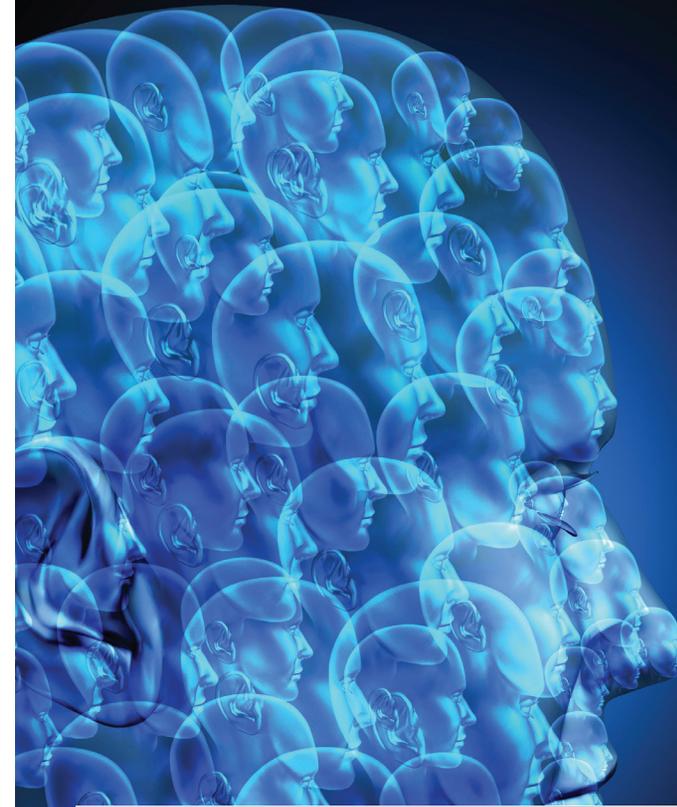
Helping Students Learn ... One Child at a Time: How You Save By Supporting Virginia's Educational Improvements Scholarships

<http://www.thomasjeffersoninst.org/files/3/2013%20scholarship%20donor%20brochure.pdf>

Published and distributed by:
The Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy
9035 Golden Sunset Lane • Springfield, VA 22153
(703) 440-9447 • www.thomasjeffersoninst.org

What is Blended Learning?

... and how can it help Virginia's students?



Today, there are nearly two million enrollments in K-12 distance education courses. Many are in Blended Learning courses, in which a student learns partly in front of a teacher at school and partly via computer. For at least part of the time, the student has control over the time, place or pace of his/her own learning.



What Blended Learning is ...

Most frequently in Blended Learning, students rotate between online lessons and face-to-face instruction. For example, a class of 45 students might simultaneously have 15 students working on the computer, 15 students receiving direct instruction from the teacher, and 15 students working in a group project – providing more students per teacher in the classroom, but better quality of instruction. However, blended learning may also take a variety of formats, including --

- Work alternatively in a classroom and a computer lab;
- Rotate through a series of activities such as a teacher lecture and small group problem-solving;
- Watch pre-recorded lectures at home and then apply the concepts in the classroom with the teacher;
- Create an individualized plan for each student that includes online learning;
- Take traditional courses in school and online courses of their own selection at home;
- Take online classes at home and check in with teachers for face-to-face instruction only as needed; or
- Receive curriculum online in a learning lab while teachers provide support within the classroom

The key to defining “Blended Learning” is that the student retains some control over when he or she takes classes, where classes are conducted, the pathway they take to complete coursework, or the pace at which they learn. All of those elements need not be present, but there must be at least one of them.



What Blended Learning is not ...

“Blended Learning” is not a teacher using an electronic white board, or the use of online textbooks or curriculum or classroom lectures in which the only difference is that students watch the lecture online gathered together in class. While these are interesting uses of technology, they do not leverage the ability of online learning to shift instruction and the way students learn.

In short, blended learning is not about using technology as an “add-on.” It’s about making technology integral to instruction, and leveraging the use of humans to guide its use.



What Makes Blended Learning Different?

Blended Learning is different because...

- **It is individualized and mastery-based.** At Carpe Diem High School (Yuma, AZ), students must master each small increment of learning and do not move onto the next level until they have passed the current level. Software displays their progress in a bar along the top of the screen, providing continual feedback and assessment. And if they struggle too long with a concept, the software signals an assistant who is there immediately to help.
- **It is data-driven.** At Alliance Tennenbaum Family Technology High School (Los Angeles, CA) Student Management Systems record a student’s every keystroke, collecting information about what students are learning and how they learn best. Daily assessments help students and teachers see where they are, and regular benchmarks let students know where they stand in the class. By providing data to students, it empowers students to take ownership of their own learning.
- **It redefines the role of the teacher.** Teachers find that they can spend more time focusing on high-value activities with students, such as critical thinking, writing and directing projects with classes. By automating the more manual tasks so that they can spend more time with smaller groups of students, they are better able to help students where they need it and challenge students to greater heights.