

The Main Idea's PD Suggestions for *Go Blended!*

The summary includes descriptions of the different steps schools take in implementing blended learning. Below are just a few ideas to help your team get started.

1. Identify an *Instructional Focus* Your School Can Address Using Blended Learning

Like other instructional initiatives you may have already led at your school, blended learning begins with data analysis and goal-setting. Once you've analyzed student achievement data, you and your team might ask yourselves the questions below, which will help you identify a focus for blended learning at your school:

- Which students and academic subjects would benefit from increased differentiation?
- Would our students benefit from additional instructional time for a particular subject or concept?
- Which concepts are challenging for our students? Where could they benefit from multiple points of entry or additional practice?
- What new kinds of student data would help us make instructional improvements?

2. Is Your School *Ready* to "Go Blended"?

To determine the school's readiness for blended learning, you can organize a meeting for leaders, teachers and the IT staff to go through the criteria for readiness below. At the meeting, you might create several small groups, assign selected criteria to each group (e.g., IT specialists can work on criteria 7 and 8 below), and then have each group present their findings to the entire team. Group members can use the blank spaces in the chart below to take notes on whether the school currently meets the criteria.

Is Your School Ready to "Go Blended"?

Criteria	Questions to Ask	Readiness
1. School Leadership: The <i>most important</i> factor in blended implementations is leadership's willingness and capacity to do the work involved.	* Are school leaders willing to make time to prioritize a major new implementation? * Do leaders have good working relationships with staff? * How comfortable are leaders with uncertainty and change?	
2. Staff Readiness: Teachers are also very important; classroom-level implementation depends on them. Arney strongly recommends <i>piloting</i> with a selected group of teachers.	* Are most teachers at the school focused on student learning? Are they collaborative and comfortable with change? Is there a group of 4-8 strong teachers who can pilot the model? • Good classroom managers and instructors • Positive influences on other teachers • Able to work well in changing conditions	
3. Focus on Learning: Blended learning works best in schools that are already focused on student learning and using successful instructional practices, with some room to grow.	* Has there been steady growth in student achievement at the school? Or, is there currently a schoolwide focus on student learning? * Does the school, as a whole, have a solid culture, effective instructional practices, and successful classroom management?	
4. Staff Willingness: Interest in blended learning can grow over time, but teachers need to have some initial willingness to explore the model.	* Are teachers interested in finding new ways to improve student learning? * Will blended learning support any key teacher goals? * Are there any tech-savvy teachers?	
5. School Stability: Blended learning works best if staff and structures are already in place and the school functions well.	* How is teacher retention? * Is there a balance of new and experienced teachers?	
6. School Culture: It's best to launch blended learning in a school with a stable, positive culture.	* How positive, collaborative and supportive is your school's culture?	
7. Technology Use: Students and teachers will need to take care of technology at the school.	* Are students and teachers responsible in their use of technology? * Are effective technology policies in place and enforced?	
8. IT Team and Infrastructure: Your school will need to have functioning networks and devices, with the ability to make real-time fixes, and ideally an on-site IT team.	* IT Team: Do you have one? If so, is it responsive, and is there a system for logging issues already in place? Is there an experienced network person on the team? * Network: Viable infrastructure? Sufficient bandwidth?	
9. Potential for Growth: At capacity, blended learning can take up a good deal of classroom and/or lab space.	* Is there sufficient classroom or lab space for the computers or devices we'll be using? Is there enough usable space to schedule blended learning for all the classes in the school?	
10. Other Demands: Implementing blended learning requires a schoolwide focus. You can integrate blended learning with another initiative, but you have to be strategic about it.	* What other initiatives are we planning? • Can blended learning be used to support one of the other key initiatives at the school? • Can blended learning be a key priority for the next three years?	

3. Selecting the *Right Software* for Blended Learning

Before looking at software options, it will be helpful to know how much funding you have, per student, for the software. (For instance, if you have \$50 per student, and a goal of improving reading across the grades, \$40 software that only targets reading in the early grades probably wouldn't be feasible.)

Next, your blended learning team can use the questions and criteria below to evaluate each of the programs you're considering. Team members can assign each software program a score of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, for each of the criteria.

Software Scoring Sheet	
Software Program Name: _____	
1. Fit: <i>How well does this program fit into our school's mission and approach?</i>	
_____	The program helps us address a key instructional goal
_____	The program supports our preferred instructional strategies
_____	Data from the program seamlessly integrates with other data at our school
_____	Total Score for Fit
2. Feasibility: <i>Do the economics and logistics make sense for us?</i>	
_____	The cost of the software makes sense within our technology budget
_____	We mostly use existing processes and teams to implement the program
_____	We won't have to make many changes to classroom spaces or schoolwide schedules
_____	Total Score for Feasibility
_____	Total Combined Score for this Program

4. Kicking Off a Blended Learning Pilot

You will need 4-8 teachers, preferably at the same grade level, to pilot the program. Arney recommends that piloting teachers be:

- Good classroom managers and instructors
- Positive influences on other teachers
- Able to work well in changing conditions

Once you've decided on your piloting group, you can meet with members to outline the process and clarify responsibilities. Arney recommends having the teachers sign piloting agreements that specify what they can expect. (She also recommends giving teachers stipends that are tied to the agreements, if your budget allows.)

Below is an excerpt of a sample agreement, based on a longer pilot agreement from Appendix D in the book. It describes what the teachers will be doing and how school leaders will support them. Develop *your own* agreement that outlines the commitments piloting teachers and the leaders will make. At a meeting, teachers can review the agreements in pairs and use the third column to write down questions that arise. Then, bring the piloting group together to address the questions.

What Leaders Will Do	What Teachers Will Do	Questions?
1. Show you examples of how you might organize blended learning in your classrooms.	1. Create a schedule and routines for blended learning in your classroom.	
2. Help you balance the blended learning pilots with other school initiatives and responsibilities.	2. Balance the blended learning pilots with other school initiatives and responsibilities.	
3. Support piloting teachers' collaborations and observations of each other's classrooms.	3. Collaborate with other piloting teachers: share successful strategies, solve problems, and seek leaders' help with large-scale issues.	
4. Help you analyze blended learning data and use it to improve instruction.	4. Make improvements to instruction based on blended learning data.	