

Professional Learning for Blended Education:

Michigan Teacher Case Studies

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About Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute

In 2012, the Governor and Michigan Legislature passed legislation requiring *Michigan Virtual University*® (MVU®) to establish a center for online learning research and innovation, and through this center, directed MVU to work on a variety of projects. The center, known formally as *Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute*™ (MVLRI™), is a natural extension of the work of MVU. Established in 1998, MVU's mission is to advance K-12 education through digital learning, research, innovation, policy and partnerships. Toward that end, the core strategies of MVLRI are:

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- Research – Expand the K-12 online and blended learning knowledge base through high-quality, high impact research;
 - Policy – Inform local, state, and national public education policy strategies that reinforce and support online and blended learning opportunities for the K-12 community;
 - Innovation – Experiment with new technologies and online learning models to foster expanded learning opportunities for K-12 students; and
 - Networks – Develop human and web-based applications and infrastructures for sharing information and implementing K-12 online and blended learning best practices.
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MVU dedicates a small number of staff members to MVLRI projects as well as augments its capacity through a Fellows program drawing from state and national experts in K-12 online learning from K-12 schooling, higher education, and private industry. These experts work alongside MVU staff to provide research, evaluation, and development expertise and support.

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Introduction

This report shares the experiences of blended learning teachers in Michigan and is the result of interviews conducted to understand their experiences and professional learning choices. Information is organized into profiles of each teacher that describe his or her definitions and perceptions of blended learning. The profiles also share how the teachers learned about blended learning (both formally and informally) and how they perceive the impact of their learning on their students.

For the purposes of this report, the Christensen Institute definition of blended learning is used. (See call-out box below.) The majority of blended learning programs in Michigan resemble one of four models: Rotation, Flex, A La Carte, and Enriched Virtual. The Rotation model includes four sub-models: Station Rotation, Lab Rotation, Flipped Classroom, and Individual Rotation.¹

According to the Christensen Institute, the definition of blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns:

1. at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace;
2. at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home; and
3. the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience.¹

Using a combination of references and calls for volunteers, 11 Michigan teachers agreed to participate. Each teacher was interviewed using a variety of video conferencing tools. Prior to the interviews, participants were provided with the interview questions. (See Interview Protocol found in Addendum A.)

The teaching experience for these teachers ranges from one year to over 30 years. Many teachers started blended learning within the last two years. They teach in a wide variety of subject areas and grades – from special education classes to computer science, from 2nd to 12th grade. The profiles include the teachers' names, grade level(s) and subject area(s) they teach, the number of years they've been teaching, and how long they've been blending learning in their classroom. The importance of connection with other educators was key to their learning how to blend in their classrooms so they've agreed to share what they know and who they are with the field and hope to connect with others by way of this project, thus the name of each teacher precedes her or his profile.

¹ Clayton Christensen Institute Website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <http://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/>

Andrea Filip

Grade(s): 3rd grade

Subject area(s): all

Total number of years teaching: 13

Number of years blending learning: seven

What does blended learning mean to you?

To me, Blended Learning is an exciting way to reach and engage students in a much different format than what we are used to. It's a way to integrate technology, and it allows opportunities for me and the children to collaborate and learn, not only from each other, but also from outside sources using technology and a flexible learning environment. Blended Learning to me includes a visualization type atmosphere – videos, links, apps, images, and sound bites – that allow the students to “picture and connect” to their learning. Blended learning is about exploring external resources, personalized learning and group collaboration. It's also about connecting with the LMS (Learning Management System) and actively exploring resources every day, connecting lessons and strategies at times with the whole class discussion, and allowing opportunities for students to extend their learning by either collaborating with others or working independently.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

In the beginning, blended learning practices were mostly creating new approaches using my Promethean board where I tried different activities, integrated video clips and pictures, and offered at least one new link daily, which tied into the curriculum. Our district supported us with help from our 21st Century Staff. Many of the techniques and learning practices I learned were through self-exploration and many hours collaborating with my amazing colleagues. When we received our 1:1 devices, I found myself left to my own ingenuity to figure out what this meant and how to connect the 1:1 devices to reach all of my students and their individual needs. Again, turning to self-exploration and my colleagues helped advance [my thinking] in blended learning practices. When we received a learning management system recently, it felt a bit overwhelming. Our district offered training on the system, and it was a lot of trial and error on the teacher's end to implement it with our wide age range of students since it is district wide K-12.

There are now mini-groups in our district to help build curriculum units for our new LMS system. The system will “warehouse” the materials so all teachers/students may have access to them. I attended these mini groups about seven times this year to help create content that would be relevant for everyone. Sometimes we will offer mini groups over the summer. I went to MACUL one year, but my primary new learning comes from watching what other teachers are doing and just diving in! Sometimes I use Facebook to connect with other teachers from different schools and districts. I love the WeAre Teachers website and find many useful resources and ideas. I use Twitter for academics, and I follow former Michigan Teacher of the Year, Erin Klein. After reading through these resources or speaking with my colleagues, I often think, “I could try that!” I have never taken any online courses – nothing formally. My teaching partner and I share a lot of materials. I make videos of all spelling sort lessons, and other teachers create the tests to accompany them. This has been mostly trial and error.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

It was overwhelming to teachers in the beginning of a 1:1 district. The kids figured out things quicker than we could. Now it's no longer us as the drivers anymore, and it's ok to come to school and have students show me different ways to learn. I turn it over to them and let them guide us. So

much has changed in the last four years, for example, Apple IDs and downloading apps. There is more freedom from kids' points of view about what you can and cannot add to iPads. They have amazing ideas and suggestions! It is also important from the teacher end to guide and provide strict policies and procedures in order to help keep our students safe as they learn to navigate with 1:1 devices.

My favorite class activity is exploring Michigan and researching a specific place that the individual student finds interesting. Students are able to choose from a list of activities to present their research findings to the class. They may use the green screen in my classroom, create an iMovie, make a pic collage, design a poster or brochure, create a game to play, or even make a mini model of their special place. I love offering my students a choice and having an open mind to any new ideas they may have. We then hold a museum and invite the school and families to tour it and view their creations.

The changes that I have seen in blending learning are that:

1. Kids are more excited to come to school every day and are more comfortable with the routines and procedures that blended learning provides. If they are absent that day, they may go back to see what they have missed. I have podcasts/audio recordings from actual lessons and provide daily assignment links so students that are absent are able to connect from home, if they have access. This way they do not get too far behind.
2. Technology encourages the students to venture out on their own and become self-motivated learners. It is exciting to teach them through imagery where a story actually takes place. I can show them pictures of places and say to them, "As you are reading your own stories and articles, find out if your places are really around." It encourages the students to drive their own learning, and they consistently pull in their own favorite resources for extending their learning based off of their personal learning styles. Listening to the dialogue that many of them have on a daily basis on their discoveries is inspiring and exciting to me. They often become the "teacher" to me and their peers.
3. I have seen them learn about safety issues and how to treat each other properly through blogging, thereby increasing their digital literacy.
4. Kids surprise us a lot of the time with how much more they are able to accomplish at such young ages.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Stay open minded. Don't be afraid of the technology or change in tech.
- Allow kids to have input because their ideas are creative and thoughtful. Letting them have a say in the projects assigned will create an excitement in your students and inspire you as the facilitator!

Blended learning has given opportunities for choices that help students personalize learning using resources that help them learn best, based off of their individual learning style. I encourage teachers not to be afraid of change and to surround themselves with positive people who are also blending learning in the classroom so they have a support system and someone to share ideas with.

Just like we tell our students daily, "Don't be afraid to try something new." Some of my favorite blended learning lessons now were epic failures on the first run. It takes time to figure it all out. And when all else fails, ask that one student – we all have a few in our rooms every year! – to become the expert on what it is you are struggling with, and they will show up the next day with it all figured out, and they will make it look so easy!

Angela Mellott

Grade(s): 10th – 12th

Subject area(s): Business Tech Management B/ACCT

Total number of years teaching: nine

Number of years blending learning: two

What does blended learning mean to you?

It is a different way of teaching that reaches your students at many different levels. It allows my students to learn my content outside of the typical classroom setting. Blended learning is about preparing kids more for the future. They get to learn and practice time management skills. Adopting a blended approach changes your classroom [and] your schedule, and it is structured more for the students and geared more to their learning style and their interest in technology.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I started with PD courses [with a local group]. I also received instructional designer support from them, and they encouraged mutual sharing of resources. I reworked all the content I had used in the past. My district allowed me ten days during the summer to front load my courses and work towards blended learning.

When you go to the big conferences, you hear a lot of the same thing; but I am always looking for that one speaker who jumps out at me and grabs my attention for my next big concept to try out. I presented at Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning Conference (MACUL) with [a blended learning PLC] last year. I gave my input on my experiences as a new “blended teacher,” and I will be presenting this summer to share experiences about blended learning. I also do a lot of reading online about upcoming teaching practices and technology advances. I believe that there is no set way to teach anyone how to blend. There are so many great tools and ideas, you have to find the one that works for you.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

Last year I started the year with a survey and constantly checked my student process. Originally, we made a student survey to ensure that they were prepared to work with our blended learning support program. I spent all of the summer recording, preparing for the new course and way of teaching with the support of my blended learning mentor. In my second year, I added a full online accounting course. We meet two to three times weekly based on specific grade goals and have the rest of the time as “out” days where work is done at their own convenience. My classroom serves as an “open lab” for students daily, and I have set appointments for students I either need to see because they may be struggling or because I have noticed a decline in their scores along the way. There are also open slots for students who need extra assistance or clarification with the coursework. Usually not many kids pass the national test, but all of my students passed without any “extra” or additional work. They took a “test” that managed to test where they are at, and they have demonstrated mastery of their skills.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

I got to a spot where I didn't know if I wanted to teach anymore. When I started doing blended learning, I realized I love doing what I do: I love teaching. It makes me think. I'm not afraid of letting others teach me. Many students teach me other topics and give me ideas.

For those starting blended learning in their classroom, I would send them to my blended learning mentor. I would also encourage them to do PD courses about blended learning. Some of the most useful PD choices I have made include PD courses and MACUL and International Association for Technology in Education (ISTE) conferences. I am finding ways to attend more conferences. I read a lot online - now that I know what to read. Don't just stop at an online course, read some articles and keep going!

Laurie Hogan-McLeanGrade(s): 8th

Subject area(s): Language Arts

Total number of years teaching: 30

Number of years blending learning: five

What does blended learning mean to you?

Like many teachers, before I knew there was a term “blended learning,” I’d been using technology as a natural extension of the classroom, increasingly so as computers became more easily available to my students. Now I use technology in all facets of my teaching. My website is a virtual classroom, so students can access handouts, links to help sites, instructions, class calendar, and example writing. Through online communication with other students, students often have an audience and a purpose outside the classroom for their writing. This creates excitement that their writing is going somewhere public to say something important. Students feel a greater sense of responsibility, both in writing and in giving online feedback.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I learned about blended learning through a wide variety of experiences. Our school supports technology integration through PD and staffing (supporting people in every grade level, sending us to MACUL, providing mini-grants). I haven’t taken a college class but have gotten ideas from my tech-savvy colleagues, from articles and workshops at NCTE² and MACUL, and from reading professional journals and books by my favorite teacher gurus. The “20% Time” session at a MACUL conference – inspired by Google, when students spend about 20% of their class time working on a project of their own choosing, such as an invention, service project, or personal learning goal – has inspired me to bring back the idea to our grade level. We implemented it with our students last year and had some success.

The most effective venue for PD for me is to learn directly from wonderful teachers through professional books, workshops, or talking to colleagues. When I see these teachers using technology to get kids excited about books, communicate across the country, improve and publish their writing, make their own discoveries, or collaborate with each other, then I get fired up about using technology for similar ends in my own classroom.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

The program created a strong learning community; students could find and suggest additional articles and resources for us to add so they felt some ownership. Students also knew that they were working with the other 8th-grade team and with kids in Alabama as they read and responded to articles and learned about stereotypes. Some of the outcomes were that my slower readers could pick articles more at their reading level. Student engagement increased because they were talking to other 8th graders. The opportunity to see people in Alabama face-to-face was huge for them.

Students started teaching themselves and facilitating their own learning. Some students started to learn a new video tool at home to support their own learning. One kid became an expert on his own using a lot of tutorials. I saw students taking initiative and seeking their own answers rather than being given answers. The nature of the experience allowed for me to be taught by the students. I would ask the students lots of questions, and they would teach me. Watching over kids’ shoulders

² National Council of teachers of English NCTE Website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <http://www.ncte.org/>

helped me. I am not a tech whiz, but I can figure things out. Once kids figured something out, I could learn from them. I have come to understand that their relationships with each other are way more important than their relationship with teachers. It would make sense then that their learning relationship is more enhanced by them learning together.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Garner student interest and enthusiasm because they love technology!
- Engage kids more actively in the learning.
- Add more opportunities for students to share their ideas and reflections.
- Stay focused on the mission and do not get distracted by the “gadgets.”

I learn best by just jumping in with a larger project/purpose that I believe in first. Then we all work hard to learn about and add the technology that can help get us there. I also learn from in-school staff, from teacher blogs, from NCTE publications,³ from our colleagues at school, from my students. I believe in the importance of reflection and having a strong partnership, too. Working with a younger teacher who is very grounded, student-centered, open to learning, reflective, more tech-savvy, and patient is the best. When something that we’ve tried doesn’t work, we don’t consider it a failure that stops the engine. It’s also good for our students to see us working as a team with them as the heart of what drives us and our choices. I think our students know that we value their ideas and knowledge as we collaborate.

³ National Council of teachers of English NCTE Website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <http://www.ncte.org/>

Anne Weston

Grade(s): 8th

Subject area(s): Language Arts

Total number of years teaching: one

Number of years blending learning: one

What does blended learning mean to you?

To me, blended learning is the use of technology to extend the experiences students can have in the classroom. It exposes students to perspectives or ideas that may be different from their own, and it creates opportunities that may otherwise be difficult for a school to provide. Blended learning also seems to be a very natural way to teach in a time when technology has such a large influence on our society.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

Because I graduated from Grand Valley State University with my bachelor's degree this past spring, I haven't had the opportunity to attend many conference sessions or trainings about different blended learning practices yet. Most of my undergraduate classes discussed strategies for integrating technology in the classroom, however, so I feel that I have an up-to-date understanding. In lieu of official training, I try to talk to people at my school, such as the district technology director and other teachers in my building. I also use Pinterest a lot to gather ideas for integrating technology into lessons.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

The most exciting blended learning opportunity my class has is Project North and South.⁴ My classroom connected with an 8th grade Language Arts classroom in Auburn, Alabama. The project focused upon identifying where stereotypes exist in our society and seeing past them to show respect and empathy for others who may be different. We used Google Hangout for a get-to-know-you session with the students in Alabama. Later on, both sets of students read articles about the various influences of stereotypes and had group discussions via Google Hangout.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Talk to your support staff, such as technology directors, before starting a project because they can offer great insight and advice.
- Stay focused on the learning and not on the gadgets. Technology is a tool to support learning. Doing something as simple as a blog post or Google form, for example, can sometimes be better for the learning that needs to happen compared to a more complex use of technology. At the end of the day, it's more important that the students achieve the objective of a lesson rather than make a really cool, exciting project that may be missing key concepts.

It is important to have a teaching partner. My teaching partner and I talked after school every day about how the lesson went and how we could improve it for next time. She has many more years of experience than me, which makes her an amazing mentor and great person to bounce ideas off of. We rewrote our entire curriculum together.

⁴ North and South Project Website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from www.northandsouth8.weebly.com.

Being reflective is especially important for teaching. When using technology, things can go wrong so quickly. Staying positive during reflection is key. It's important to remember that a failed lesson doesn't mean that one is a bad teacher; it just means that one needs to think of a different approach.

Brenda Said-WrightGrade(s): 2nd

Subject area(s): All

Total number of years teaching: 16

Number of years blending learning: one

What does blended learning mean to you?

Blended learning means taking the student where they need to go in the 21st century. Blended learning also means recreating my classroom environment. For example, there are no desks in my classroom; there are leather couches and coffee tables, other tables, round chairs, and bean bags. Kids work where they feel comfortable. It also means collaborative workspaces and allowing students to use technology as part of their learning.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I went to observe a 21st century classroom in the Saline Area Schools that was funded through a grant. They were focused on taking learning from paper and pencil to what works for each learner. I also work with four other teachers. We are building blended learning into our classroom and working in collaboration with other teachers to learn what we can do together and how to collaborate. My current personal learning network is mostly at Saline Schools and my principal. I also connect with a few teachers at some area schools via email or text. I have asked for support for one day a month to participate in a Teacher Leadership Cohort, which is a two-year commitment.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

With Common Core, I felt like I was in a factory model, and I was losing getting to know kids. By implementing some of this stuff, I can get to know kids again. Technology has enhanced the relationships with my students, and I don't feel guilty about meeting kids one-on-one because I know the other kids are doing something and not wasting time. I also want to switch from teacher-led instruction to student-led instruction. I want to support student learning:

- We use Seesaw⁵ software for online portfolios. As a result of student videos, parents now feel like they are in the classroom.
- We also use Raz-Kids⁶ and the students receive immediate feedback on their iPad about how they are doing with their reading.
- We have an interactive board that students see every day when they come in the door so the kids have taken on duties.
- I use math scores and the feedback from Math Apps.

I can clearly see the difference between the second and fifth graders. The grade twos mentored the grade fives on a project day. According to the grade 5 teacher, my second graders had stronger soft skills than the fifth grade students. My second graders are stronger critical thinkers due to the change in instructional design.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Acknowledge the challenge - For me it is a lack of access to more technology, and I know I could do so much more and set up my classroom differently with more resources.

⁵ Seesaw website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <http://web.seesaw.me/>.

⁶ Raz-Kids website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <https://www.raz-kids.com/>.

- Consider going desk-less. Parents have mixed reactions. There is still a lot of doubt. It's not for everybody, but it's a way that works with my personal teaching philosophy.
- Trust the students. A kindergartner can upload video for a teacher. They can do it by themselves, and I have seen how the kids get the parents to sign up for Seesaw. Like decluttering my room. I asked the kids what they wanted up, and they changed everything.
- Target students' instructional levels, then you are meeting their needs. It's important to me if they can tell me about their learning and their goals. That's more important than everyone doing the same thing.
- Find a model that resonates with you. I would send future blended learning teachers to my principal and then tell them to visit Saline Schools. The whole learning process takes a while, and it's hard not to feel pressure.
- Start with what you are comfortable with. You just get more and more motivated.

Chris Thomas

Grade(s): 7th

Subject area(s): Science

Total number of years teaching: 16

Number of years blending learning: six

What does blended learning mean to you?

Blended learning is mostly about pace and place. Students have the opportunity to continue their mastery wherever and whenever. I use my classroom websites to host information, and kids can progress as they are ready.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I learned on the fly. You find your people. There were others that were interested in similar thinking. I spent a lot of time talking to one teacher about what he was doing, why he was doing it, looking at his site. There was not a lot of formal learning. We would try something, and bits and pieces of it would work, then it wouldn't work, and then we would try something else.

Conferences offer professional development opportunities. The best way for me to learn is through collaboration, a team or community with the opportunity and time devoted to actually putting something into practice. I was able to connect with a local professional development group and have been working with a few who coach me along, including over the summer. I will be leading the professional team this time, as one of the only teachers, along with district folks and the professional development group. It's also important for me to be a coach/mentor because I want to steal ideas from other people, too.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

One of the things that I like to do is to offer remediation opportunities. Any time a student scores below mastery (I set it at 80%), they have the opportunity to try again and earn some of those points back. Another strategy which often gets pushback from colleagues is that I am flexible with due dates. I want them to know it and have mastered it; the timeline is less important to me.

I work really hard at making sure that the content is attached to middle school standards and that the things we are doing in class are mirrored on the website. I also work really hard at building community in the classroom. We do that by completing group activities. I push kids to put themselves together by pace and collaborate. I pretest most units on something like Kahoot.⁷ If they score 90% or above, I will assess them individually to see if they are ready for a differentiated assignment.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Create and work with “buddies.” I think teachers really just want to see what other teachers are doing, but I believe you have to just jump in and give it a shot. I want to seek out people who are interested in the same instructional models or pieces of it.
- Join professional development groups. They've got lots of good information, and they've got a ton of blog posts, links to examples, and teacher talks.

⁷ Kahoot Website. Retrieved August 10, 2016 from <https://kahoot.it/#/>

- Let the kids know that you are learning. I say, “We’re going to try something out. It might be a little crazy, it could be totally awesome or just garbage, but bear with me and let’s give it a shot.”

Based on my own experience, thinking about teaching and learning this way has changed me as an educator. Get away from an old paradigm of how students are successful when they do their work when it’s due and instead into this new idea – that’s not a new idea – that student learning is a lot more fluid as opposed to static. I like the opportunity to reflect in the moment and make changes that are going to support my students based on a lot of different pieces.

The biggest challenge I’ve had is overcoming the negative public perception of what we are doing. Most of the time when I am talking to parents I am selling it, “This is why we want to do this; this is what kids are getting out of this, and here’s why.”

Malena Schrauben

Grade(s): 6th-7th

Subject area(s): Science and Computer Science

Total number of years teaching: 10

Number of years blending learning: two

What does blended learning mean to you?

Being able to take traditional classroom environment and technology and marry the two in a way that students take account of their own learning. Students are taking advantage of their learning environments and learning to create a culture; teacher role has changed to the role of facilitator. I am there to support and keep them on track. Blended learning has changed my whole perception.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I was asked to join a pilot, the REMC BLIC course⁸. Three other teachers and I took the course together. The course taught me that blended learning is NOT canned but rather something that develops into its own entity in every classroom.

When I was first challenged, I used trial and error to learn – I tried it all. Some things were awesome, and some things flopped. It was okay. That's what teaching is all about. I would conference with students using interactive science notebooks. Using a blended aspect helps me identify students that need help or not give them my time if they don't need it. Every student is getting what they need. There are also so many formative assessment tools, and they are all helping me track data.

I now have teachers coming in, and I am able to give others feedback and support. I get feedback from them, too. That keeps me fresh. We also have coaches; it's nice to be around people who know how the students work. For social networking, I tend to use Instagram and Twitter. Twitter is more for professional use. I use Instagram, the hashtags in particular, for anything we are doing in the classroom because science is everywhere, and I'll use any way to keep them engaged. The students love it.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

I don't lecture. I don't give the whole group direct instruction. Not all students need to hear everything. I have become an individualized instructor. Now, all my conversations are one-on-one or individual. We also do pre- and post-tests, and we allow students to retake quizzes. This year I plan on tracking retakes and collecting other data to help us meet students' needs and address some misconceptions ahead of time.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Take the BLIC course. It was like getting a second Masters. It gives you a baseline of what blended learning is, and it forces you to take that definition and apply it to your classroom.
- Know how to use data in the right way; use it to help your students.
- Know that whenever you try something, it might not work.
- Be open and honest with students. They really appreciate it.
- Find your rhythm.

⁸ REMC Website. Retrieved September 11, 2016 from <http://blendedlearning.remc.org/>.

- Help colleagues reshape their idea of technology in a classroom. My colleagues think we just use laptops in my classroom.
- Know that time is a challenge, and there are only so many hours in a day. This approach takes a lot of time, effort, and support.
- Get the support of administration. You will need it – especially the first year.
- Join Twitter and social networks to support student learning.
- Visit blended classrooms.
- Have blogs, a website, syllabus, or some other place to send parents.

Kathryn Koch

Grade(s): high school

Subject area(s): Special Education

Total number of years teaching: 25

Number of years blending learning: 10

What does blended learning mean to you?

It is heart directed teaching, self-paced learning from the computer. The teacher is integral, but at some point, the students take over.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

On top of my regular work, I was given the opportunity to work with the hybrid virtual school made up of a traditional high school and the hybrid program, where the curriculum is all on the computer. (We used Odysseyware, PLATO [now Edmentum], and Compass.) Also, being a part of a cohort has given me a network of people. It's exposing me to enough stuff that I can take pieces, but not everything. I also have a personal learning network consisting of the MACUL group, listservs, assistive technology, and educational listservs.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

A blended classroom encourages the kids to ask, "Let me hear how to do this in a different way." There are dialogues, back and forth; that does not happen in a formalized program. I see positive and negative aspects of social media. For instance, I am communicating all the time with kids by text. I am available to them. They can contact me and want to contact me. I was nervous they would use that contact in a different way, yet they are asking me school based questions. They like having that direct communication, and they like being able to connect with me. There is a power to the digital presence. I wonder, what does that look like in a classroom?

We used a backchannel, and those students who liked it really clamped on to it. They had to figure out how to use it themselves. Instead of being worried about it not working well, as I would in the past, it became a fun assignment, and I gave them permission to use it. I ask for feedback and say, "What did you like? I really want you to tell me." They didn't know how to do that, so we now have an online survey that they are able to answer without fear. The whole process is different. I tell them that I need to hear from them and that their education is a two-way instructional practice; it's not just about me deciding.

I have found that when I use direct instruction and integrate technology the students are more engaged. Both need to be happening at the same time. It is not one and then the other. I feel that they are learning as much about themselves as they are about the curriculum. Having them become familiar with what's going on around them is a life skill. So are the discovery and self-reflection skills.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

I was unsure about social media and the potential negative effects. I didn't want to expose kids or myself to unwanted attention, but I wanted to show them all in the best possible light. My biggest challenge is figuring out how to get that digital presence without giving up privacy and how to do this in an appropriate manner because I can't ignore social media anymore.

My advice is check with your ISDs (Intermediate School District), and take the first step such as a one-day course that you can build on. You don't have to dive into the deep end of the pool. Take a little bite, try it, then another little bite, and try it again!

Michelle Dubois

Grade(s): 5th

Subject area(s): All

Total number of years teaching: 10

Number of years blending learning: six

What does blended learning mean to you?

When I think of blended learning, I think that it's bringing multiple resources into your room. Not necessarily technology but gathering all available resources that you could possibly use to enhance lessons for students. It's turned out to be a better than I thought because it serves so many multiple purposes.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I am 90% self-taught through articles and Twitter. I usually seek out answers for myself, as my questions are usually time sensitive, and I end up helping the people around me. Our ISD is a huge support system, and they have challenged me to try new things. I would call them my mentors, and they are coaches as well. Most importantly, though, are that students are part of my personal learning network. Once I found how much I could learn from my own children, I started to realize, "Geez, if I can learn from just four of them (my own kids), imagine how much I could learn from 30!"

I like any digital learning conferences like Google conferences where I do a lot of presenting. I'm fine with that. I like sharing my knowledge, but often I learn from other people that are in those rooms as well. I like when they use the actual tools within a presentation at the MACUL Conference, for example, an interactive GoSoapBox presentation where the presenter shows me how I could use it in my classroom. I like it when I see it.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

I like to use Skype in the classroom. We use Kidblogs, where we can add further communication options for kid-to-kid connections. I also look for teachers from different states to collaborate and connect with, and I use the same teachers over and over. The use of technology in my classroom is creation focused; in other words, "Show me what you know. Sing this to me" with very little teacher direction other than saying what points I want addressed. Independence and making good choices is huge for me - the independence of their being able to go back and check what they need. I also believe in using rubrics because they support kids to function at a higher level, which is an opportunity they have not had in the past. I never expected these outcomes in the classroom much less outside the classroom. They will go and find what they need.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Attend conferences. Present!
- Give students a voice. Ask for their participation. Ask them to give me feedback.
- Find PD that teaches you how to integrate technology and that answers the questions: What do you want out of tech? How do you want to use tech? Otherwise, PD should support your instruction and be about what are you struggling with as a teacher.
- Do a small amount and do it well and then move on. A lot of teachers try to do everything, and then everything flops because they try to do too much.
- Don't be afraid to fail.

- Don't be intimidated to try anything new. You don't have to know how to do it at first. Bust open new things!
- Explore with your kids.
- Build up your own PLN according to what you are interested in. I can't suggest one specific place. A lot of mine are blogs that are specific to me. If you find someone that is posting something that you like, look to see who they are and follow them.
- Go deskless and consider alternative furniture - exercise bags and no regular chairs.
- Go outside of your comfort zone. You have to and you have to expand horizons, which may be beyond the school.

Tanya LeonGrade(s): 7th

Subject area(s): English

Total number of years teaching: eight

Number of years blending learning: five

What does blended learning mean to you?

Blended learning means being able to use 21st century skills to help students expand their knowledge. It means 21st century skills and tools, anything to utilize and access content based knowledge.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

Some venues where I have received training include our ISD, and our district has done a lot of work bringing PD in. They will tell us about some tech tools that support us on our competency-based journey. People share research about a blended learning model (like Modern Learner). The district is also committed to media specialists and tech coaches who meet with teachers regularly to look over our instruction and give us feedback and support. Our media specialist is a MACUL Educator and Apple Distinguished Educator. These credentials bring a wealth of tools for us to use. SIP (School Improvement Plan) chairs provide new tech tools each time we go to conference.

I completed a professional learning course outside college – the *MiChamps* program with MACUL that was about how to implement blended learning in the classroom. It really helped me figure out how technology can organically enhance education. Some teachers just use replication and replace the paper with an iPad. I've been a part of the *MiChamps* technology cohort. They helped me rebuild a lesson, and I used the tech to enhance and augment learning in a way that had not been done before. I began using it as a tool to reimagine what I can do in a classroom. I also enjoy going to MACUL as often as possible, and speaking at conferences (including MACUL), which increases my contacts, which has led to me hosting several site visits to collaborate with educators from across the state. Twitter is one of the best PD tools in addition to MACUL.

I am also very blessed to be the leader of a Personal Learning Community (PLC) with a group of amazing, innovative women. My PLC colleagues are devoted to new learning. It's all about a love of learning shared within the district and personal passions and interests.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

One of the projects my class did was a screenplay analysis. Just being able to see how they are able to take our standards and competencies and apply them in a multi-genre way was beautiful to watch.

The ease of use of the Learning Management System (LMS) for kids and seeing them being able to learn. The ease of use is just as important for the parents. They are able to find out why we are doing what we are doing. Also the M-Step test scores were the highest in the building and among the highest in the district which I think is related to their blended learning experience.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- The same ways we are talking about student learning in 2016 are the same ways teachers need to learn.

- Technology can be challenging. When every single day the students are using technology all the time, and at least 80% of students in some way incorporates technology, the occasional network issues can create a struggle.
- It is important to ensure that students are demonstrating their own understanding and not their friends'. Learning the way the students would be able to best deal with online assessments would help. The more in depth we get with it, the fewer challenges.
- Acceptable use policies are important. In my case, the media/admin team follows up and, if needed, restricts the device. Sometimes students make poor choices and I use "guided access" as a threat.
- I would love to work more on how I can publish students' work and get it out there. I would really love to publish their work in a place where students are not just consumers but creators, too.
- Having a mentor teacher is key. Many districts have done 1:1, so I suggest you reach out to other districts. Learn as you go and do your research. Having a mentor will save a lot of the headache.

Tara MaynardGrade(s): 8th

Subject area(s): Math

Total number of years teaching: 19

Number of years blending learning: four

What does blended learning mean to you?

Blended learning means a combination of students being able to decide to use technology or not to use technology whenever they want to do something. It's a little more under their control.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

I have not taken any courses. I have learned through conferences and from teachers, and Twitter has been a main source of PD. The National Flipped conference and MIFlip conferences were both great.

My learning has also developed as a result of a combination of a number of mentors who helped me with pedagogy, development of new ideas, and adding video to my courses. The #michED community is also a big part of my PLN. When I need an idea or have a specific idea, I send my questions out through Twitter. I can also figure something out a lot faster through YouTube and Twitter.

Describe a class activity where you have used blended learning and what kinds of changes you observed as a teacher.

Now I use videos in my math lessons before class starts. When they get to class, we do more discovery stuff on websites, card sort. Sometimes [we] do rote practice. Sometimes we explore a deeper question.

I also don't care what order they go in – they get to choose things, not necessarily choose technology, but they have a choice about what they are doing. In my geometry class, some boys wanted to use this Heron's formula. It turned into them doing all these different calculations on their calculators. I didn't know the answers so I sent the student questions to some professors that I know. The professors sent back some feedback and answers to my students, and we all learned together. It was great to see them get so excited about professors writing proofs to the questions. The idea of helping kids when they are ready is important because they are able to process things more quickly. Some of the outcomes I've seen are:

- Student engagement takes off because I made changes.
- C-D grade-level kids, who needed more processing time, have gained confidence and do not have as much anxiety.
- Kids are so much more open to asking questions.
- The whole classroom environment dynamic has changed.
- The changes in grades have not been more than about two percentage points.
- A year-end survey has great comments about loving math and understanding math, descriptions of them enjoying math, and thanking me for being patient and giving my help.

There is more personal time, time for that chit-chat and learning about who they are. I never had that before. I feel like I have much deeper relationships, and the kids know I care. Once you have that face time with your kids, you won't go back to talking in front of your class.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

- Attend subject level conferences such as the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) conference.
- Present at conferences. I have learned so much from that experience. It's the network of people you learn from when people ask you questions in a small group setting.
- Keep up on all the new stuff.
- Use Twitter. Find that content hashtag and look at other people's ideas. People who are out there sharing have really good stuff. Do not be afraid to ask a question. A lot of teachers have no clue what some of this would look like, but there are a lot of people who help you change one little thing.
- Group kids in order to randomize behaviors, or try mixing the top six with the bottom six and watch the whole environment change.
- Identify student leaders. If I don't have that kid in each group to get things going, then I need to build those leaders.
- Teach students that it's ok to make a mistake. They don't want to take risks and look foolish in front of their peers. It takes some time to build a safe atmosphere.

You just have to do it. It is never going to be perfect. So many teachers want it to be a pretty little package. Show the kids that you are taking that risk.

Discussion

This section is organized around the four key questions answered in each profile and describes some similarities and differences that came up in the interviews.

What does blended learning mean to you?

The majority of the teachers used a self-created definition of blended learning. While the definitions were diverse, the overall point was clearly made that blended learning is an extension and enhancement of didactic or lecture-based approaches. Some teachers suggested that the use of blended learning provides opportunities for increased collaboration and student agency. Moreover, teachers suggested that engaging in blended learning changed everything that happened in their classroom.

One teacher used the definition: “Blended Learning is mostly about pace and space” (Thomas, 2016). This comment represented what most teachers communicated as important and valuable about blended learning. Teachers defined blended learning by including words and phrases such as “self-paced,” “meeting students where they are,” “empower,” and “individual.” The phrase most used was “taking charge of their own learning.” Another perspective that added to the depth of defining blended learning came from one teacher who stated, “Multiple resources. That’s the first thing I think of” (Dubois, 2016). Or another teacher who described blended learning as “using 21st century skills and tools to access content based knowledge” (Leon, 2016).

Another observation was that teachers gave a student-centered answer when defining blended learning; they did not include “teachers” in their definition, although Koch stated, “The teacher is integral at some point” (2016). Another teacher commented on the changing role of teachers in the new teaching environment where they have moved from being a lecturer to facilitator (Schrauben, 2016). The teachers often described their role as one of facilitator or project manager supporting the learning for the students. The teachers also described themselves as learners as well as facilitators within a learning community. They conveyed the idea that they were no longer being needed for their ability to lecture about content and instead supported students in their understanding, curation, and use of the content to learn. Success in the classroom was described in terms of how well students were able to demonstrate their understanding of the content in a wide variety of ways as opposed to how well a lesson was taught. According to the teachers, blended learning afforded a transformation from class lesson plans to individual learning plans.

How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

The teachers described a range of blended learning professional development opportunities.

Limited formal professional development opportunities or college programs

Teachers felt that a system for motivating teachers to participate in and support blended learning environments within their own schools and districts has not been formalized. Some research has found that most teacher education programs have not even begun to include substantial coursework related to online learning (Archambault, Kennedy, DeBruler, Shelton, Dalal, Huyett, & McAllister, 2016; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). One teacher said, “They did not offer anything when I went back for my Masters” (Filip, 2016). In spite of the lack of formal educational options, Filip was able to learn a great deal using a variety of online and community resources. The main skill set this teacher used was a competency for self-directed learning. The self-taught method was common across many profiles and provided some insight into how professional development is managed when there is a dearth of accessible resources. One teacher developed a blended learning

work group with four other teachers. The administration was supportive and was willing to learn along the way. “My principal was a huge help” (Said-Wright, 2016). In this instance, leadership had an impact on the process and supported the development of a blended learning curriculum.

Mentoring and coaching support

One teacher found a mentor and was able to work with the same person over time to learn about blended learning and the best practices related to implementing a blended learning curriculum. The interviewee spoke about how her mentor taught her to change not only her approach but also the philosophical underpinnings of teaching:

He modeled how to rethink teaching for me as a learner, and I did the same in my class. He was like a second teacher in the course. He would come to visit and give tips and ideas (like assessment for journals) helped with problems, gave me advice. My students would go on entrepreneurial day with business plans, and he offered to work with them to prepare the plans. He was part of the class.

Mellott, 2016

Self-directed informal professional learning opportunities

Coaching paired with self-learning was a mixed approach to professional development that one teacher described as being useful when there is no formal training. Another teacher described a complicated process of discovery where she had to find like-minded people in order to develop an effective peer network. One of the elements that seems to emerge within this particular group of teachers is the capacity to learn in an abstract environment. The sentiments of learning “on the fly” and trying new things to see if they worked were echoed in various forms throughout the interviews.

Combination of informal and formal professional development opportunities

One of the teachers created a professional development program, which he described in detail. The elements in this teacher’s process included self-learning, peer network support, coach/mentor support, and practical application. These words represent much of what others shared as important elements of comprehensive, blended learning professional development.

There was a partnership between Ann Arbor Public Schools teachers and a cohort program. I participated in those and it was super easy because it was focused on all the things that I was already doing. A lot of people dropped out, but I was able to plug in and say, “This is what I am doing. What do you think?” At that point, I was able to connect and work with others who coached me.

Thomas, 2016

Learning from and with students

Many teachers spoke about using their own children and their students as their “teachers” in relation to technology.

I will ask, “How do I do this?” and they will answer, “It’s right up here in the top corner.” I have no fear of failure. None. First, because of my own kids and because I could feel dumb with my own kids. But once I found how much I could learn from my own kids, I started to realize, “Geez, if I can learn from just four of them imagine how much I could learn from 30!”

Dubois, 2016

Peer to peer learning

An element that was reflected more than once among the teachers was the presentations and support they provided as experts in this area. Through this process of teaching others about blended learning, they seemed to learn a great deal. This may also be an element of effective professional development in this area.

I have learned a lot from my peers. I feel like a lot of the PD that is offered in my area – I'm already presenting on that. I'm fine with that and sharing my knowledge, but often times I learn from other people that are in those rooms as well. They'll say, "This is how I am using that tool," and I will say, "Wow. I have never used it that way before."

Dubois, 2016

What changes have you observed as a result of integrating blended learning in your classroom?

Teachers observed real changes as a result of integrating blended learning in their classrooms.

Students are more engaged and excited about their learning.

One teacher stated that "kids are more excited to come to school every day...technology encourages the students to venture out on their own...[and] blogging also helps them learn about safety issues and how to treat each other" (Filip, 2016).

Students demonstrated mastery of skills and exceeded curriculum and standardized test expectations.

Melott chose to quantify her experience by implementing a survey process that she could use as needed to gauge student progress. She also initiated a blended learning readiness assessment to determine readiness for students to participate in an online course. Melott (2016) observed another outcome: "All of my students passed without any 'extra' or additional work. They took a 'test' that managed to test where they are at, and they have demonstrated mastery of their skills."

Teachers felt that they were able to develop closer relationships with the students due to the time they were able to engage with them.

As a result of having extra time, teachers reported that they were able to connect the learning to students' personal interests and ensure students received the specific personalized learning support that they needed through technologically-assisted formative assessment and direct communication with the students. Koch mentioned the increase of texts specifically and communication in general from her students. Similar comments were made by other teachers about the increase in emails, texts, or online communication from students and parents. Some teachers felt that the increase in communication helped students complete their assignments. Maynard spoke about how much more time she was spending with her students. In her student reflections at the end of the year, she noted the comments about supportive student-teacher relationships as a result of her ability to spend quality time with her students.

Technology provided a means to connect with experts to offer enriched learning opportunities.

Maynard also mentioned how her students were able to extend their learning beyond the classroom and connect with experts, like university professors. Similarly, Dubois used Skype in the classroom as another example of bringing in learning experts. In Dubois' example, the experts were students and teachers from other states around the country.

Teachers learn about blended learning because they are working on their own and want to innovate or because they are part of a learning community of innovators.

Some of the teachers' examples are based on the individual teacher's decision to try something new within his/her classroom. Not all the new ideas were based on technology integration, but all of the new ideas were based on an innovation or new idea. For example many teachers cited a focus on rethinking the design of their classroom or focusing on an environmental 'no paper' classroom. They had limited professional development and various levels of support to prepare for the implementation.

Alternatively, in the "learning community" examples, there was more of a 'technology for learning' focus for teachers and students. Teachers were told that their classroom was going to be a 1:1 classroom the next year, and they were assigned to a cohort, coach, mentor, or support community with whom the teachers could collaborate and implement the changes together to support changes to learning. The transition happened in increments; and coaches, mentors, or the cohorts supported the teachers by identifying priorities, encouraging risk taking, accepting failure, and acting as a key resource for support and confidence.

Social media is easier to use for professional learning than in the classroom.

Social media was not used by the teachers as a primary means to learn about blended learning. According to the participants, Pinterest was the number one social media tool to professionally learn about and share new ideas about blended learning. Many teachers felt that they would like to integrate social media into their classrooms or use it to learn more themselves but were hesitant for a variety of reasons including concerns about privacy, data, security, and personal versus professional space.

Data collection and tracking is unclear with the increase of technological support.

Data tracking and evidence of the impact of blended learning in the classroom is lacking in general as compared to the perceptions of the influence of blended learning. Many teachers use a wide variety of tools as examples of formative assessment throughout the year and course. However, the teachers mentioned they are expected to track data for their districts that is not as meaningful as tracking data about the use of blended learning in their classrooms would be because that data would inform changes in their instructional practice to support student learning.

What advice would you give other teachers as they consider blended learning?

Two elements of advice the teachers would give other teachers as they consider blended learning stand out.

Consider a growth mindset.

There were numerous examples of teachers changing their mindset, reflecting upon their practice, and making changes as a result of integrating blended learning into their classrooms. As one teacher mentioned, "I think teachers really just want to see what other teachers are doing, but I believe you have to just jump in and give it a shot. Let the kids know that you are learning" (Thomas, 2016). This helps to cultivate a growth mindset for students as well.

Student-teacher relationships are essential.

The indication of the increase in summative student achievement was not a primary focus for the teachers. Instead, there was a focus on learning over grades. The teachers described a wide variety of formative assessment strategies that included extension activities for students beyond the

curriculum that connected students with experts outside the classroom, a depth of learning about specific topics based on student interest, and the acquisition of lifelong learning strategies and skills that students take beyond a class or course. The increase in student engagement was described in terms of love of courses and topics, appreciation for the increase in teacher time, experience of teacher patience with students, development of student-teacher relationships, and an increase in student agency.

Conclusion

The blended teacher profiles represent a variety of teacher learning across Michigan K-12 classrooms. According to the 11 teachers interviewed, creating a personal learning network (PLN) is the most important element for supporting professional learning. The PLNs were all created in various ways and differed in membership but included fellow colleagues, administrators, parents, students, and other educators from around the world and depended greatly upon the needs of the teachers. However, these PLNs were just the first stage for support in terms of professional learning in blended learning for Michigan teachers. As described by the teachers, the emerging mentors, coaches, and cohort programs in Michigan provide the opportunity to create professional learning communities. It is these communities that provide sustainable support in systemic ways and a differentiated and personalized learning opportunity for teachers.

Teachers perceived evidence of deeper learning, stronger relationships between them and their students, more time in the classroom, and an emphasis on student agency and learning. There was evidence also of differentiated learning, as described by Smith and Throne⁹ in terms of

- modification of instruction;
- student accountability and participation;
- group-driven, class, and individual tasks;
- comfortable learning environment;
- pre and post assessment;
- focus on student needs;
- student-centered, constructivist approach;
- activities connected to student needs and/or interests; and
- instructional actions dependent on student readiness.

The teachers' reflection about their practice demonstrated how they were building deeper learning communities with their students because they learned from and with their students, they focused on continuous formative assessment, and there was an emphasis on learner-centered approaches to teaching. There was also strong support around the concepts of failure, perseverance, and determination, which not only supports the idea of a "growth mindset" but also suggests that the teachers are using a design thinking process in their continuous iterative instructional design.

Lastly, teachers spoke about where, with whom, and how they learn, which included formal school and district-led professional development as well as communities of practice, and informal learning in terms of professional learning networks, social media, and conference presentations. Most importantly, all the teachers spoke about their peers, mentors, cohorts, and coaches upon whom

⁹ Smith, G.E. & Throne, S. (2007). *Differentiating Instruction with Technology*. Washington, DC: International Society for Technology in Education.

they are extremely dependent. The collaboration between and among teachers was the key finding in terms of what made their blended learning and professional learning experiences successful.

Further exploration is recommended around the evidence of “learning” in Michigan’s blended classrooms. Other recommendations include the consideration of future research in the similarities and differences between the blended education professional learning needs of teacher innovators and learning communities and comparison and contrast of the variety of Michigan programs that are already offering this kind of training. An iterative cycle of action and design based research can be used to understand the impact these instructional changes have on students and their learning environments. Finally, research that examines the opportunity for teachers to experience differentiated learning as a result of blended learning would also provide valuable insight into future changes in professional learning opportunities.

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Addendum A

Interview Protocol

This project will highlight 11 Michigan blended learning teachers. The case studies will focus on how Michigan blended learning teachers make professional and personal learning choices and how they perceive those choices shaping their instructional strategies, learning environments, and their students' experiences. This will be explored through questions around their perceived changes in teacher instructional strategies, use of data tracking, use of resources, choices in social media networks, implementation of blended learning strategies, incorporation of support networks and anything else that the teachers themselves determine as influential in their efforts. Once all cases are written, similarities and differences will be summarized in a cross-case analysis. Based on that cross-case analysis, implications will be shared.

Interview Questions:

A. What does blended learning mean to you, where did you learn about it, and how do you implement it?

1. What does blended learning mean to you?
2. How long have you been blending learning in your classroom?
3. How did you learn how to blend?
 - a. What courses or degrees have you completed through a college or university that are specific to online and/or blended teaching and/or learning?
 - b. Are you currently taking any college or university courses that are specific to online and/or blended learning? If so, what program or courses are you registered in?
 - c. Are you currently learning about blended learning through informal learning opportunities? Can you describe what kind of informal learning opportunities you are participating in?
4. Describe how you have blended learning in your classroom:
 - a. What instructional strategies do you employ?
 - b. Could you provide some examples of how you've blended learning in your classroom/learning environment?

B. How do you keep up with advances in blended learning practices?

5. The next two questions are about formal and informal professional development opportunities focused on online and/or blended learning:
 - a. What, if any, professional development or learning courses have you registered in, both inside and outside of a college or university that are specific to online and/or blended learning? From your perspective, what is the most effective professional development experience that you know has directly applied to your students in some way? How did you know that your learning directly applied to your student's learning?
 - b. What platforms (online, f2f, informal, formal, social media, university, district-led, etc.) do you see as most useful in supporting your PD in online and/or blended learning?
6. The next few questions are centered on the social media you use for keeping up with learning for online and/or blended learning:
 - a. What social media do you use for professional development and professional learning?

- i. Why do you use the social media that you use?
- ii. How do you use it?
- iii. How often do you use it?
- iv. What do you learn from each social media space?
 - 1. Blog posts
 - 2. Twitter
 - 3. Facebook
 - 4. Google Plus
 - 5. LMS
 - 6. Blog posts
 - 7. Digital Newsletters
 - 8. Email
 - 9. Other?
- b. What space has been the most fruitful in providing resources to enhance your professional development?
- c. Do you have a Personal Learning Network?
 - i. How do you find the connections and networks to support your professional learning that directly connect back to your students?
 - ii. Who is involved in that network?
 - iii. How regularly do you connect with them, how do you connect with them, and for what purpose?

C. How do you perceive your professional learning opportunities in online and/or blended learning having been able to support your students?

- 7. Have your instructional practices changed as a result of your use of blended learning?
 - a. If so, how?
 - i. Do you see evidence to support a change in your students' learning?
 - ii. If so, how do you measure that change?
 - b. If no, please explain.

D. Professional Development Needs Moving Forward

- 8. What have been the most useful professional development choices you've made when it comes to learning about online and/or blended learning/teaching?
- 9. What are some of the challenges that you have discovered in your professional learning especially when it comes to online and blended learning/teaching, and how have you tried to overcome those challenges?
- 10. What would you like to know more about when it comes to online and/or blended teaching/learning?
- 11. What advice would you give to other teachers who are considering implementing blended learning in their classroom? Where would you send them for more information?

Addendum B

Informed Consent Form

Michigan Blended Learning Teachers Study Informed Consent Form

Information and Purpose: The recording of our meeting(s) is part of a research study that is focused on understanding the work and thought processes involved in how teachers learn to implement blended learning in their classroom. Because the work of MVU is dedicated to working with educators like you, Verena Roberts, a Research Fellow for the Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute, is interested in including her interactions with you as part of the data collection for the study. The purpose of the study is to learn about how Michigan blended learning teachers make their professional learning choices and how they perceive those choices shaping their instructional strategies and their students.

Your Participation: Your participation in this study will consist of my recording our meetings together through Skype. At any time, you may notify me that you would rather not participate in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation.

Benefits and Risks: The benefit of your participation is to contribute information to the understanding of the thought process and decision making behind teacher blended learning implementation and professional development choices. This may assist future blended learning teachers by offering them a snapshot into the choices educators are making regarding their professional development that guide and support their implementation of blended learning. It could also benefit district-level and school-level administrators and other stakeholders to think about what structural support systems, like the incorporation of consistent blended learning professional development, are needed for sustainable and quality implementation of blended learning as well as meaningful and on-going teacher support.

Confidentiality: The recording will not be shared; it will only be used in the data analysis process and will be deleted thereafter. Because of the nature of this report, and the creation of case studies, your name and identifying information will be associated with the written research report. Your contact information will be essential for others to connect with you and build upon your blended learning implementation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researchers:

- Verena Roberts, Research Fellow, Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute, MVU, verenanz@gmail.com
- Dr. Kathryn Kennedy, Director of Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute, MVU, kkennedy@mivu.org

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information. I am aware that I can discontinue my participation in the study at any time.

Signature_____ Date_____

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