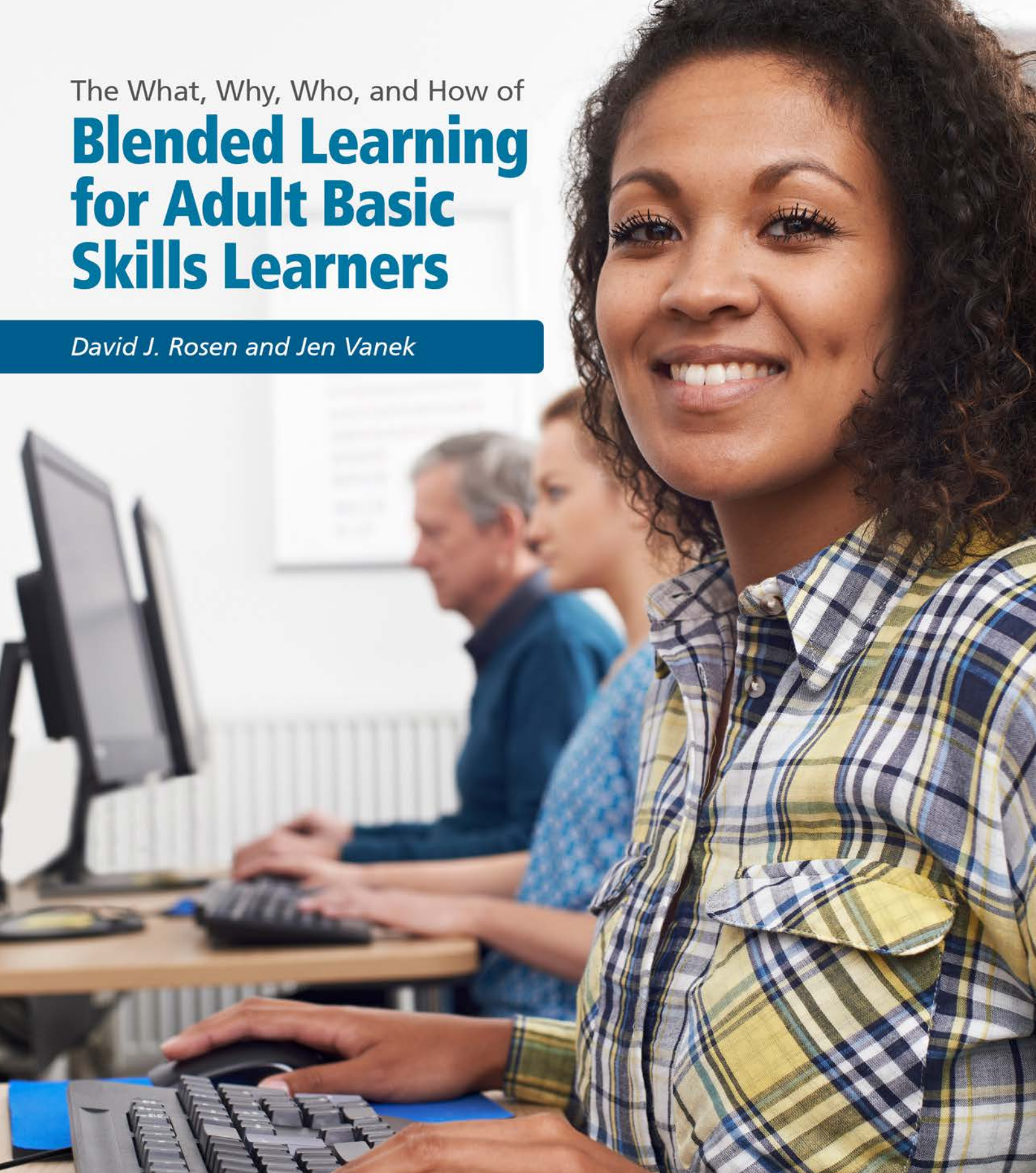The What, Why, Who, and How of

Blended Learning for Adult Basic Skills Learners

David J. Rosen and Jen Vanek

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About the Authors

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David J. Rosen was executive director of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute at the University of Massachusetts in Boston from 1986 to 2003. Since then, as an independent consultant, he has been the moderator of two U.S. Department of Education-sponsored LINCS communities of practice: the Integrating Technology group and the Program Management group. As an associate of the **EdTech Center @ World Education**, he has been the internal evaluator of the English Now! Learning Circles program developed by the center and funded by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. In addition, he has been an advisor to the English Now! national scale-up, also funded by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. Dr. Rosen is the co-author, with Dr. Jen Vanek, of "Technology for Innovation and Change in Adult Basic Skills Education," a chapter in *Turning Points: Recent Trends in Adult Basic Literacy, Numeracy, and Language Education.* (Jossey-Bass Publisher, Fall 2017.) For several years, Dr. Rosen was the author of the COABE Journal's technology column, and is now the author of the *Technology Solutions* column in **Adult Literacy Education: The International Journal of Literacy, Language, and Numeracy**.

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Contents

1   Introduction

Blended learning combines in-person and online instruction in order to extend learning outside of face-to-face classes or tutorials, differentiate instruction, or offer alternatives to reach unserved learners. This guide is for teachers, tutors, and administrators of programs and schools[1] who provide adult basic skills education and who are hoping to initiate or improve blended learning for their students, including English for immigrants (ESL, ESOL, or ELL), adult literacy, adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and transition to higher education.

You can use this guide to deepen your knowledge about:

- the difference between hybrid learning, which joins an online curriculum with a traditional face-to-face class or tutorial, and blended learning, which integrates classroom lessons and online lessons into one cohesive structure

- how blended learning can meet the challenges of what and who is taught

- why adult basic skills programs have chosen to use blended learning

- how to get started

- how to meet some of the challenges faced in implementing blended learning

You will see concrete examples showing how to blend face-to-face instruction with relevant online learning resources in order to personalize or extend learning outside of classes or tutorials and improve learning outcomes. Whether you are a beginner in blended learning, you want to further develop or improve your practice, or you are a blended learning expert, you will find worthwhile information and resources here for your classes, tutorials, or program.

[1] Throughout this guide, "program" refers to an adult basic skills program or an adult school.

2 **What is blended learning?**

Blended learning is an instructional approach that has a face-to-face class or tutorial integrated with online learning in which students have some "control over time, place, path, and/or pace" (Blended Learning Definitions. (2019).[2]

It is not distance education, which is entirely, or almost entirely, online learning. The key difference between blended and *hybrid* learning, which also has both a face-to-face and an online learning component, is that in blended learning the face-to-face and online components are *integrated* (Murphy et al., 2017).[3] They may be integrated in a variety of ways, but the goal is to have the two components reinforce each other. For example, English language teachers, who often struggle to balance individualized instruction with opportunities for interactive language practice, can use carefully chosen online resources and apps to reinforce the face-to-face curriculum. Learners can have ample opportunity for language practice in their limited class time and then work online to study the specific grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary that they need.

An extension of learning beyond the classroom or personalization to meet specific language learning needs is especially important if learners live and work in a community where English is not widely spoken. Knowing that most of your students have smartphones,[4] you might rely on apps for the out-of-class/online instruction. There are many apps available now for adult ESL students, so learners can access opportunities for regular practice tailored to their interests and developmental needs and, consequently, make greater English language gains.

Done well, blended learning can extend learning time outside of classes or tutorials, enable you to differentiate instruction, or point learners toward out-of-class use of digital devices to strengthen digital skills they need in daily life. Using a blended learning approach can help a teacher add depth beyond what is available through either strictly online or in-person instructional approaches. What blended learning looks like in any given teaching and learning context depends on the goals of the adult education program and the curriculum or instruction challenge(s) that you, and your program, intend to meet.

[2] Blended learning definitions. (2019). Clayton Christensen Institute https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/.
[3] Murphy, R., Bienkowski, M., Bhanot, R., Wang, S., Wetzel, House, A., Leones, T., & Van Brunt, J. (2017). Evaluating digital learning for adult basic literacy and numeracy. https://www.sri.com/publication/evaluating-digital-learning-for-adult-basic-literacy-and-numeracy/
[4] *Mobile fact sheet*. (2019). Pew Research Center. https://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/

3 How can blended learning help with what and who is taught?

What is taught

Perhaps your program needs to find a way to enrich current classroom programming – boosting curriculum or course quality by integrating media-rich learning resources and/or making available new content that meets the needs of your diverse group of learners. These are core instructional challenges, that once addressed, can fill gaps in what your current students learn; meeting these challenges also ensures innovative high-quality instruction (Horn & Staker, 2017).[5] For example, a multilevel classroom teacher may want to offer differentiation. That is, provide students at different levels with a variety of activities or different lessons that vary according to the ability of each student.

Another teacher may want to integrate relevant employment or career-related content into an English language or ABE class. This content can extend learning to cover what is relevant and immediately useful outside of class. Extending learning in this way supports personalization, offering each student the most relevant content possible, as a way to help learners explore different work interest areas and careers while learning English or other basic skills.
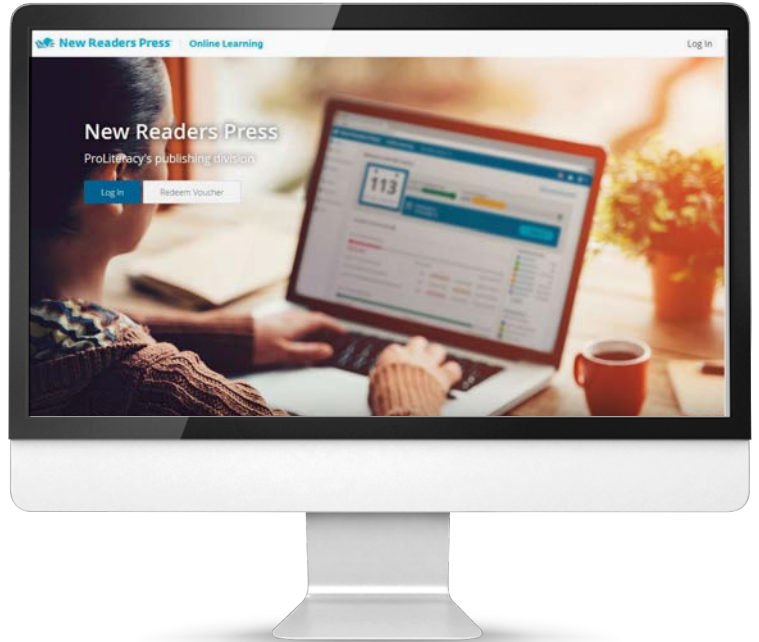
Such innovative uses of programs like **New Readers Press Online Learning** or other online resources, either inside or outside of a classroom or tutorial, can help programs better serve their learners. Carefully designed online learning activities can also help learners become self-directed, which is critical for developing a growth mindset,[6] for careers and work, for post-secondary education, and for lifelong learning of many kinds.

[5] Horn, M. B., & Staker, H. (2017). *The blended workbook: Learning to design the schools of our future*. John Wiley & Sons.
[6] A good definition of Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset concept will be found at https://www.edglossary.org/growth-mindset/

Who is taught

ABE programs may face limitations on the number and range of students programs can serve using current traditional classroom or distance learning structures.[7] For example, potential learners may be on waiting lists for classes that are full, they might be part of a community not yet served by your program, or they may not be able to attend all your program's in-person classes when they are offered, due to their changing work schedules or other limitations. Blended learning can support students who have limited time to come to class and don't have the digital literacy or self-study skills to work completely at a distance.

Blended learning provides learners not previously reached by a program with educational opportunities, because technology provides them logistical flexibility to enable a broader range of content, scheduling, and access to program offerings.

Keeping in mind these two types of challenges—the what and the who—can help you make decisions about what blended learning will look like and how a blended learning approach can improve your classes, tutorials, or program.

[7] Horn and Staker (2017) call this a "non-consumption" problem.

4 Why use a blended learning approach?

Programs might choose to use a blended learning approach for a variety of reasons, because blended learning:

- enables programs to provide educational opportunities to learners not previously reached

- has been shown to be more effective for adult basic skills learners than only face-to-face or only online learning

- extends learning outside of classes or tutorials so students can make progress more quickly

- provides a way for learners to review what was covered if they need reinforcement, or to "make up" missed classes

- supports flexible programming that helps learners persist

- makes homework more convenient and appealing

- creates opportunities for learners to build digital literacy and online learning skills

- affords easier, systematic monitoring of student progress
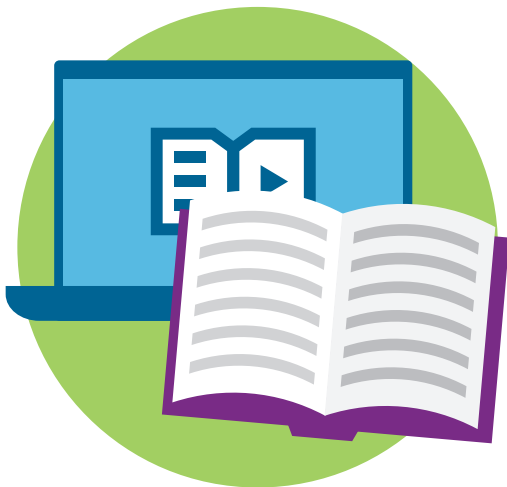
Blended learning affords flexible programming, which makes it possible to reach and serve adult learners who cannot attend regularly scheduled classes

Many programs offer classes that are scheduled for 6 to 20 hours per week because they have found that students who attend class regularly make good learning progress when offered more class hours. Some learners may avoid enrolling in such classes, however, because they know they can't commit to so much in-class attendance. Other learners sign up for traditional classes with the best intentions, but sometimes challenges intervene, and they can no longer come to class regularly; this might be because of a new job, a change in a work shift, new childcare or other family responsibilities, or other circumstances that make it difficult or impossible to continue to come to every class session.

Often these attendance issues are temporary, just for a few weeks or months. A blended approach, with one-to-three hours of face-to-face time once a week, and a significant number of online learning hours, can lower the barriers to enrollment for learners who know they can't commit to high attendance expectations. If they can view archived videos of classes or class-related curriculum materials this can provide an alternative to dropping out of a program. With easy and regular access to these online resources, students may be able to keep up until they can return to class, and can make good progress toward meeting their learning goals.

For example, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians is using Voxy as an alternative for learners who have to drop out because they have found work. This is a blended—not distance learning—model because learners still meet regularly with teachers, but less frequently than with a traditional course, which requires daily or weekly attendance.

Blended learning is more effective for adult basic skills learners than only face-to-face or only online learning

Data collected from 2009–2018 by the Texas Educating Adults Management System show that adult learners who engaged in hybrid learning, which may or may not have integrated online and face-to-face learning, but included both face-to-face and online learning, outperformed learners who only attended a traditional classroom and learners who received more than 50 percent of their contact hours at a distance. Details of the data are found in Appendix G. In the eight years for which data have been reported to date, the completion rate for hybrid learners ranged from 13–21 percent higher than face-to-face learners, with the average completion rate for hybrid learners being 17.5 percent higher.

Similar data were reported in Arizona. In 2013, Arizona embraced a blended learning initiative by providing free access to two comprehensive online curricula and offering rich professional development (PD) opportunities for the state's ABE teachers on the blended models described by the Clayton Christensen Institute. The goal was to have a blended learning program in every ABE program in the state. After just one year, the benefits were obvious. Level gains for the state's ABE learners who engaged in blended learning jumped from 6 percent above gains made by learners enrolled in traditional in-person classes in 2014 to 16 percent in 2015 (Vanek, Stubblefield, Nelson, & Lehane, 2018).[8]

A study of adult Portuguese-, Spanish-, Arabic-, Japanese-, and Chinese-speakers studying English language outside the U.S. suggested that learners who participated in synchronous language instruction or tutoring, along with an English language curriculum created by Voxy for self-study, were more engaged (used Voxy more) and increased their proficiency scores more than learners who only used Voxy for self-study.[9]

[8] Vanek, J., Stubblefield, J., Nelson, C., & Lehane, S. (2018, September). Blended learning: What does this instructional model look like in ABE? COABE. Phoenix, AZ.

[9] Jee, R., & O'Connor, G. (2014). Evaluating the impact of blended learning on performance and engagement of second language learners. *International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning (IJAC)*, *7*(3), 12–16. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2365/0eefe91a598bec4f0a0a91ff9a278683d57d.pdf

Blended learning extends learning time-on-task so students can make progress more quickly

Working learners have limited time to attend in-person classes, but rapid progress is important for reaching college and career readiness performance levels needed for high school equivalency exams, post-secondary education, work, and careers. Blended learning can reduce the number of weeks needed to make good progress by increasing learners' time on learning tasks outside the classroom. This benefit can be seen in workplace basic skills education programs. For example, the National Immigration Forum's Skills and Opportunity for the New American Workforce initiative employs blended learning to provide English language instruction for immigrants working in retail stores in Houston, Miami, and New York City. In-person classes are held on site, at work, right before or after shifts to encourage participation. A Moodle website delivers useful resources that learners can access for help with key industry and store-specific terms and abbreviations.[10]

Blended learning enables learners to review what was covered in class if they need reinforcement, and enables learners who missed classes to catch up

Teachers can use a class website to coordinate both in-class and online instructional activities.

By doing so, they make it easy for learners to know where to find resources for review or to make up work. For example, a teacher can archive lessons on a web page after class using slides, digitized versions of handouts, or a video of the class taken with an inexpensive digital or smartphone camera. If the instructional materials are stored online, adult learners who could not attend the class can still benefit from them, as can students who attended the class and need to review the presentation or practice materials. A simple website built with a free or inexpensive tool, such as Weebly or Wix, works well for this.

The following picture shows a Weebly website, built by California Vocational ESL teacher Sharon Ram. She used the site to coordinate all course activities. (Johnston, Hart, Long, & Vanek, 2015, p. 31).[11]
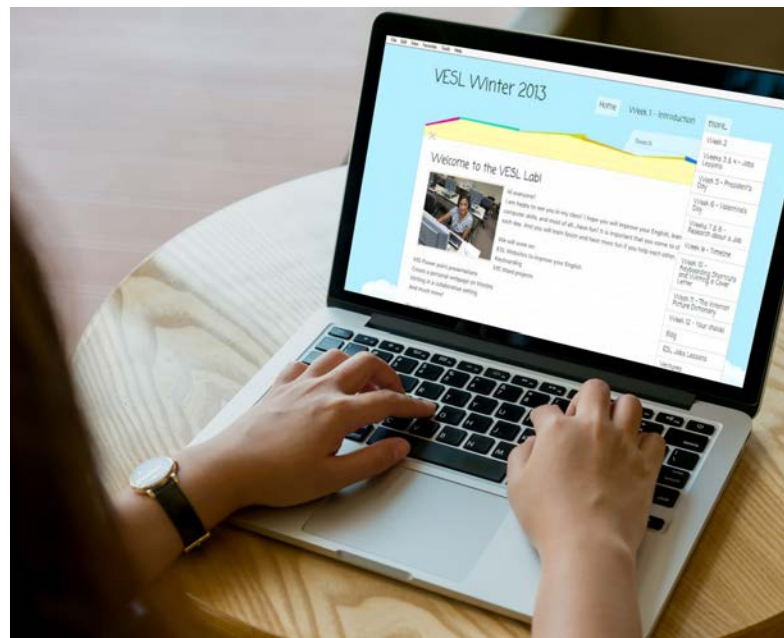
[10] National Immigration Forum e-learning strategy (n. d). EdTech Center @ World Education.
https://edtech.worlded.org/project/national-immigration-forum-e-learning-strategy/
[11] Johnston, J., Hart, S., Long, D., & Vanek, J. (2015). New models for distance classes in adult education. University of Michigan.
https://edtech.worlded.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NewModelsForAdultDistanceEd.pdf

Blended learning makes homework more convenient and appealing

It's convenient and easy to access

For learners with portable digital devices, such as smartphones, e-readers, tablets, or laptops, online homework can be accessed from one or from several devices. Students can complete short or longer learning tasks, for example while riding public transportation, waiting in a doctor's or dentist's office, or during downtime at work. This is especially useful if the online component is delivered through a mobile application. For example, in the field test of EdTech Center @ World Education's promising new learning technologies, learners used **Cell-Ed**, a mobile learning app that works on a smartphone or any mobile device with SMS text messaging, to support both English language development and the acquisition of vocabulary necessary for working as home health aides (HHAs). Learners made good use of the portability of mobile learning, sharing observations like: "I have it all the time in my hand," and "We have [a] teacher any time any place with us" (Vanek & Webber, 2019, p. 4).[12]
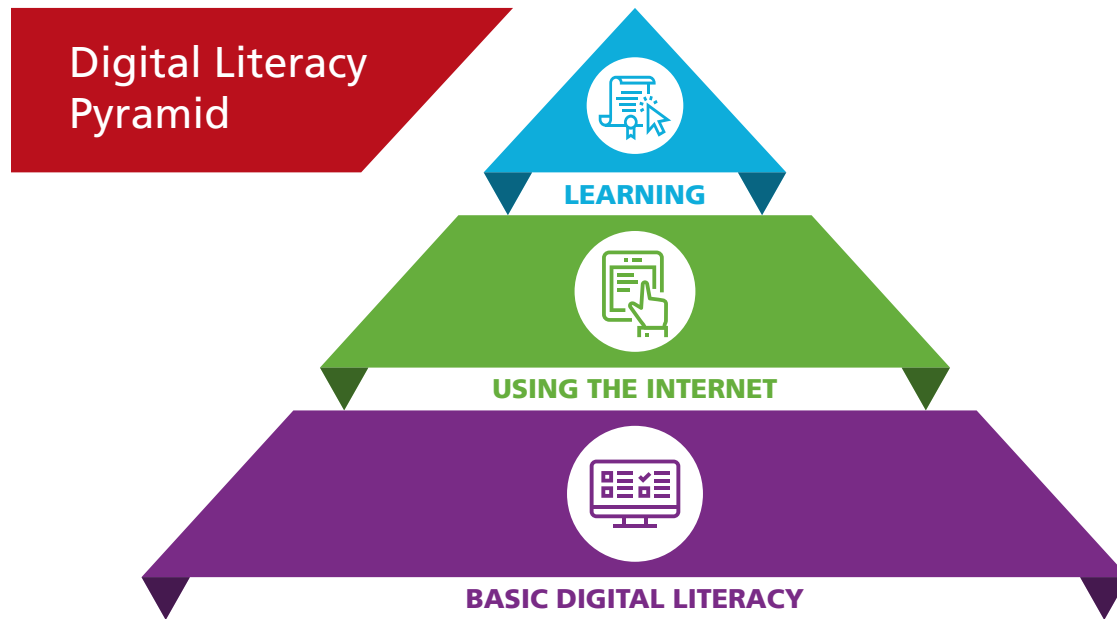

It's appealing

Some learners find that online assignments that offer instant feedback, short videos, opportunities to word process their answers, and other features are more appealing than traditional paper and pencil homework. Many learners find the graphics, videos, music, and learning games in online learning a more appealing way to learn. For example, teachers using Learning Upgrade have observed that the graphics, songs, and game-like activities in the app make it very appealing to learners with low literacy proficiency. Dr. Janet Wilson, ESL instructor and counselor at Tarrant County College and the Learning Opportunity Center in Arlington, TX, uses **Learning Upgrade** in a workplace ESL class at a Tyson Foods plant. She has noticed the benefit of music in the app, saying, "The music is a big plus! Some students don't appreciate the power of music to enhance memory, but I know that music is more effective than a modest amount of repetition—and most students don't do nearly enough repetition."

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[12] Vanek, J & Webber, A. (2019). *Field testing Cell-Ed: Mobile learning for all.* World Education. https://edtech.worlded.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Cell-Ed-Report-final-012319-2-1.pdf

Digital Literacy Pyramid

LEARNING

USING THE INTERNET

BASIC DIGITAL LITERACY

Blended learning creates opportunities for learners to build digital literacy and online learning skills, which support future learning

In ABE, post-secondary education, and workplace learning and training opportunities, learners are expected to already have, or to acquire, digital readiness skills, and digital problem solving.[13] In a 26-minute podcast (audio file) titled "Digital Equity: Exploring this Modern Civil Right," part of an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) podcast series called Upskill with Edtech, Chike Aguh, former CEO of EveryoneOn, describes digital literacy as a three-tiered pyramid. The first tier of the pyramid is very basic digital literacy, the basics of being a digital citizen. This includes turning on/off a computer or portable digital device, using digital tools such as word processing or spreadsheets, using a browser, and using email. The second tier of the pyramid is using the internet to increase the quality of one's life and acquire the digital skills of daily living. This includes using a desktop computer or mobile device to apply for a job, apply for public benefits, pay bills, etc. The top of the pyramid is learning—using the internet to increase one's skills, to "Increase one's own capacity to change one's life." This requires well-developed digital literacy skills such as getting an online certificate or credential that helps one to get a (better) job, or advance to a level of digital skills that can be transformative, particularly for low-income or under-served individuals.

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[13] An interesting discussion of this has taken place in the LINCS Integrating Technology group (2019).

4 | Why use a blended learning approach?

Many employers and post-secondary institutions already expect employees and students to do much of their training and education online. For example, Walmart Academies offers training online as well as in classes and in their stores, for its frontline service workers, covering both retail and soft skills. As part of this work, Walmart offers a video game called **Spark City** that simulates being a store department manager. Walmart Academies also has partnered with **Guild Education** to offer higher-level educational opportunities including for-credit college level classes.

Another example of blended workplace education includes an opt-in English language program offered by MaineHealth and the Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center (GPIWC). The program, the iEnglish Project, uses **Voxy** to support MaineHealth hospital staff whose native languages include French, Somali, Khmer, and Vietnamese. Voxy helps them improve their English language proficiency to the high-intermediate level, with a focus on health care-specific vocabulary. This improved language proficiency opens up new technical training opportunities and career pathways at MaineHealth. The staff make use of a computer lab, with hands-on support from GPIWC and MaineHealth workforce development staff. The University of Maryland is currently expanding an ELL incumbent worker training program along a similar model that leverages on-site lab time and digital curriculum by Voxy.

Programs must help learners develop the skills needed to study online, so that they are prepared to leverage educational opportunities offered by future employers and in post-secondary settings. These skills can be acquired in a blended learning environment where, if there is access to computers or portable digital devices, there is ample opportunity in a class or tutorial, and online, for scaffolded use of technologies. In addition to competence, learners can also acquire the comfort and confidence that are required for future online learning.
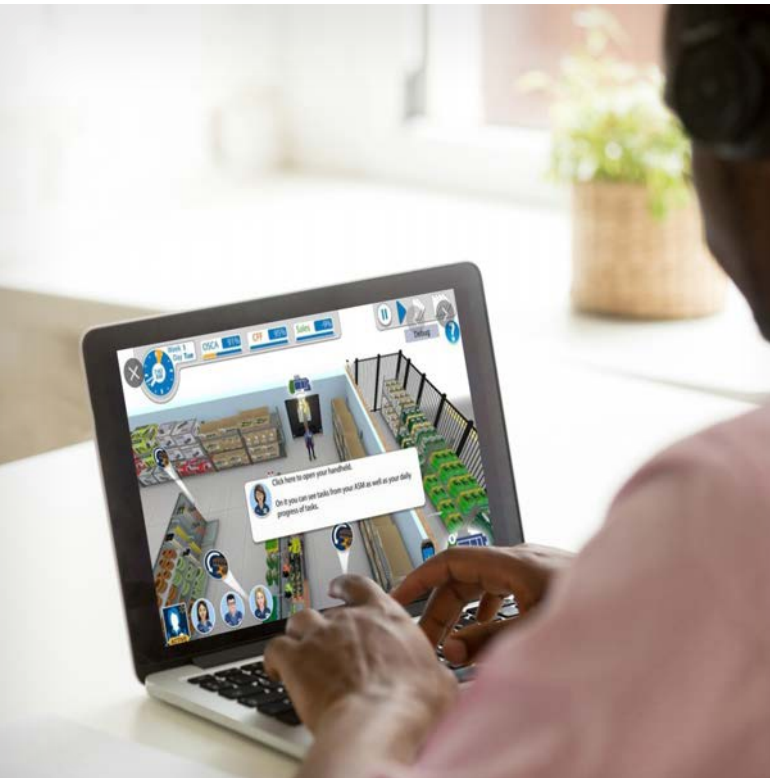
For example, field testing of Cell-Ed with frontline hospitality workers at the Seaport Hotel in Boston, MA, demonstrated that learners who became comfortable using mobile technology as part of a blended learning course showed an increase in persistence with the use of the app after the course ended.

> *... the learners who completed two-levels using Cell-Ed in the blended scenario were those who persisted in learning through the summer after classes ended. As of late December 2018, seven learners had studied in the last week, almost a year since having been introduced to Cell-Ed. This suggests that establishing a routine for independent learning while supported by a teacher in class may lead to continued learning after the class ends. (Vanek & Webber, 2019, p. 6)*

Blended learning is now common in the U.S. both as the "new normal" in higher education and in many sectors of the corporate world.[14] If adult basic skills programs want to fully prepare adult learners for college or careers, having a positive experience with blended learning could be an important part of that preparation.

Blended learning affords monitoring of student progress

Although there are many ways to track adult learner progress, using a learning management system (LMS) can make it easy to see progress reports, and/or online learner progress portfolios. An LMS also provides a quick way for a teacher to know which students have completed which assignments or learning assessments, and how each student has done. For example, Voxy's command center offers visibility into learner engagement and performance. Even when students use Voxy in offline mode, that usage syncs up with the platform when the user has access to Wi-Fi again.

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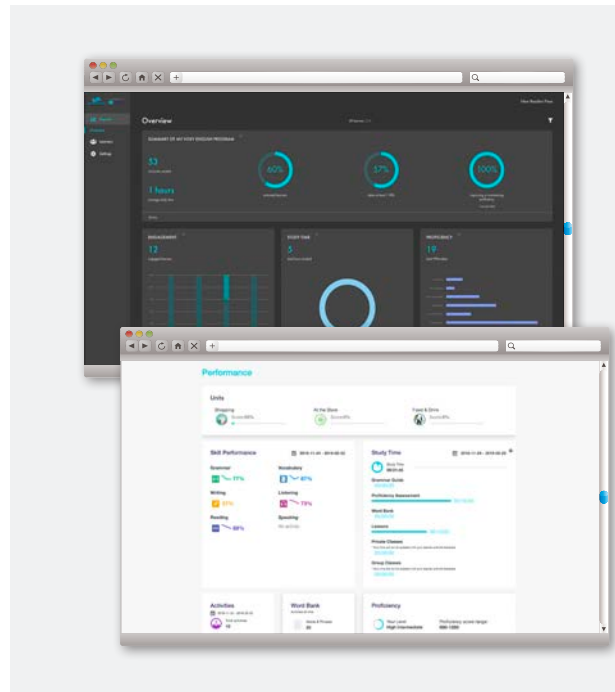
[14] Dziuban, C., Graham, C. R., Moskal, P. D., Norberg, A., & Sicilia, N. (2018). Blended learning: The new normal and emerging technologies. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education,* 15(1), 3. https://educationaltechnologyjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41239-017-0087-5

5 Getting started

Below are some steps to help you plan your blended learning approach. These are useful for programs that hope to shift from traditional in-person instruction or hybrid learning to blended learning. Many of these steps may also be useful for a program team re-visiting its blended learning approach to improve it. All these steps will be relevant to programs with classes; some may be useful for programs that offer one-on-one tutoring.

1 **Form a planning team.** Convene partners and relevant stakeholders who can help you. If you are a teacher or tutor, this might include a technology specialist in your program, other teachers or tutors who have experimented with a blended approach, or a program manager. If you manage a program, these might be PD leaders or other local program leaders, or it could be state-level staff who are responsible for blended or distance learning for your state. You'll also want to include the teachers who would implement blended learning in your program.

2 **Craft a vision for what you want to achieve.** A vision statement is a forward-thinking statement written in the present tense; it describes an imagined future. For example, "All teachers make effective use of relevant technologies and online learning resources in a blended approach that extends opportunities for and/or personalizes learning." Guidance on writing a vision statement can be found in Upskill with EdTech: Preparing Adult Learners for the Future of Work.[15] This publication provides a framework that maps out a process for technology adoption in support of ABE and workforce development.

3 **Adopt a problem-solving mindset as you discuss your vision with your planning team.** Your team can generate questions about instructional challenges that you're trying to meet with blended learning. Consider the following, for example: What instructional challenges do we face? Why and how do we think blended learning will help solve them? What are the purpose(s) and goal(s) for adding or improving blended learning? Will a blended learning approach be available for some or all of the classes or tutorials; for some or all of the students in our program? What instructional model will we use?

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[15] *UpSkill with edtech: Preparing adult learners for the future of work*. (2019). ISTE. https://skillrise.org/framework

4 **Decide what content areas and levels to cover in the online learning component.** Before buying an online product, first decide who you will teach and what you want to teach them. Consider which of your students would gain from a blended approach and what content is approachable for them in an online format. Your motivation for adopting a blended learning approach will likely inform your thinking here. If you need online resources that support proficiency with job skills or work-related vocabulary, then you need to find or make something that is accessible for your learners, that can be accessed on devices they have, is pitched at an appropriate reading level, or is designed to best support their persistence.

5 **Decide how you'll deliver this content.** If your program has state funding, find out if your state adult education agency can provide you with free access to a particular online curriculum, or offer you a number of approved curricula that you may choose from. Find out if your state funder requires that you use a particular curriculum. Also find out if your program's organization or agency might be able to provide you with access to an online curriculum. Decide where you want your online content to fall on the "Use a Turnkey Product" vs "Design It Yourself" curriculum continuum below.
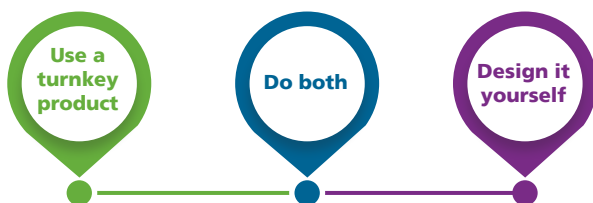
The **SkillRise technology adoption framework** nicely sums up your options:

> *After you have identified learner-worker needs and defined a solution enabled by technology to meet them, it's time to procure and/or implement your solution. You have three options for how to approach this: 1) find an existing product that has almost everything you need and make it work; 2) find an existing product you can augment, modify, or combine with others to get closer to ideal; or 3) build your own. (SkillRise Framework, 2019, p. 28)*

If you locate your class, program, or school on the right side of the continuum, consider using an LMS to house the content you find or create. You can find a list of both proprietary and free learning management systems, for example, Blendspace, Canvas, Brightspace, Edmodo, Google Classroom, Schoology, and others in a document called **Examples of Online Learning Environments (platforms) and Free or Inexpensive Online Resources for Blended Learning for Adults**. It includes the following sections: Content Management Systems (CMS), both proprietary (commercial) and free; Learning Management Systems (LMS), also both proprietary and free; Free or Inexpensive Online File Storage Systems; Free or Inexpensive Websites You Can Create; and Free or Open Education Resources (OERs) for Adult Learners. Each section has a list of examples with web addresses.

Use a turnkey product — Do both — Design it yourself

Another resource for locating quality digital resources is the **Tools Repository** provided by Workforce EdTech, a collaboration of the EdTech Center @ World Education, ISTE, Jobs For the Future Labs, and other organizations. The repository links to useful technologies and provides an evaluation rubric to help you understand whether or not a technology will be useful for your work.

6 **Decide what technologies you will use.** Does your state, or sponsoring institution or agency provide access to a proprietary online curriculum on its own platform or CMS? Do you need to obtain or purchase an LMS to house your found or created content, or do you plan to use one you already have? Do you want a feature in your LMS or CMS that reports learning progress by student and by class and, if so, what information would you like it to report? Is there hardware that you need to obtain, for example desktop or laptop computers, a printer, headsets, a multimedia projector, an electronic whiteboard, or wireless internet access for a computer lab or for your classroom? Do you need a set of laptop computers or Chromebooks available in your classroom?

7 **Document your thinking and answers to questions; make sure your partners and stakeholders have been involved in the discussion.** If you plan a program-wide solution, circulate the document to your colleagues to collect additional questions and to clarify and refine answers.
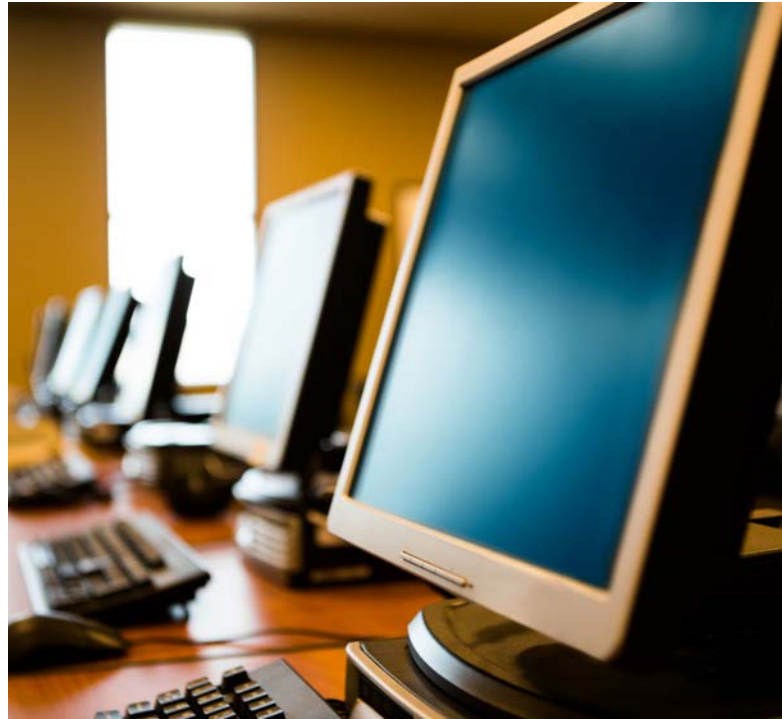
8 **Consider how you will pay for the addition or expansion of a blended learning approach.** For example, will you use federal or state public funding? Will you seek charitable foundation funding? Is your program part of a larger initiative that provides funding for innovative curriculum, such as the **English Innovations** project of One America, or another innovative blended learning project?[16]

If you are looking to add new online courses or curricula, consider buying licenses for a comprehensive curriculum.

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[16] Wrigley, Heide S. (2017). English Innovations: Learning English with digital literacy and community engagement. EdTech Center @ World Education Tech Tips Blog. https://edtech.worlded.org/english-innovations

There are several advantages to starting with an existing product that meets most, if not all, of your needs. First, it is often less expensive than building your own because it's quicker to implement and maintenance and upgrades are typically included in the purchase price. Also, you don't need as much technical expertise on your staff. Second, it frees up your program and services experts from the time-consuming burden of having to partner with your technical staff to define and build a product. Third, you would not have to hire as many—or perhaps even any—technical people. (SkillRise, 2019, p.28)

Although using a proprietary curriculum may at first seem more expensive than choosing a CMS or LMS in which you add your own content, consider the additional costs to create or curate resources for that CMS or LMS. Another factor to consider with the latter approach is the time for updating and maintaining a do-it-yourself curriculum.

9 **Start slowly, build from experience, and take an experimental approach.** It is best to identify a small subgroup of students and one or two teachers or tutors working in a program, and implement a pilot project to elicit and clarify issues and begin to understand what resources would be required for broader implementation.

Pilot activities are experimental in nature and allow an agency the opportunity to explore a new approach on a small scale. They leave room for trial and error and encourage people to move in new directions. Pilot activities are distinct from the more established programs offered by an agency; although if they succeed, they may become incorporated into the agency's regular course offerings (Vanek, Simpson, Johnston & Petty, 2018, p. 79)[17]

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[17] Vanek, J., Simpson, D., Johnston, J., & Petty, L. I. (2018). *IDEAL distance education and blended learning handbook* (6th ed.). World Education, Inc. https://edtech.worlded.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/IDEAL-Handbook-6th-Edition-8-16-18.pdf

10 **Be sure that everyone involved has ample professional development.** Preferably, professional development (PD) should align with characteristics of effective development, such as: being content-focused, requiring active learning and collaboration, being based on models or frameworks, providing highly involved coaches and ample support, requiring reflection and feedback, and extending over time (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017).[18]

The Arizona Department of Education, for example, has relied on solid PD as the foundation of a statewide effort to provide equitable access to blended learning in ABE programs across the state. Every program has received support in understanding the Clayton Christensen Institute models described below.

A blended PD approach to exploring blended learning would be very effective. An example of such an approach is **IDEAL 101**, an extended professional development opportunity provided by the **EdTech Center** @ World Education. IDEAL 101 helps teachers learn about blended learning effective practice, write an implementation plan, and then pilot the plan with a targeted group of students. The PD begins with an in-person or synchronous (video conference) kick-off and is sustained by periodic webinars. Individuals read and participate in discussions online, and small localized teams meet in person or work synchronously online to collaborate in completion of a weekly activity.

IDEAL Distance Education and Blended Learning Handbook

Jenifer Vanek, Destiny Simpson, Jerome Johnston, and Leslie I. Petty

Sixth Edition, Revised • August 2019

IDEAL Consortium
A Project of the EdTech Center @ World Education

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[18] Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development.* Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-prof-dev

6 What does blended learning look like?

Blended learning does not look the same everywhere. Your reasons for adopting blended learning will determine what shape your blended learning opportunities take. Two major reasons for adopting blended learning are to extend learning outside of face-to-face classes or tutorials and to differentiate it, or to offer program alternatives that help reach unserved learners. We provide suggestions for program or instructional structures that correspond to each. In this section we also provide examples of how programs are using blended learning that include online learning accessed by computers or portable digital devices such as smartphones.
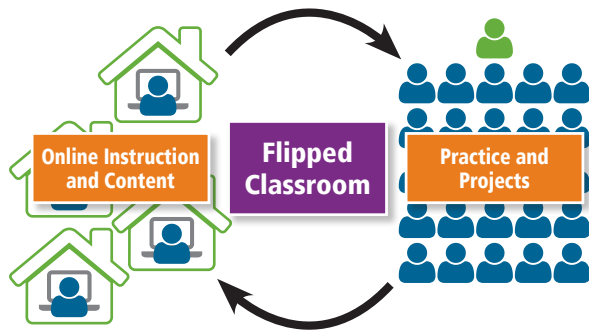
When blended learning is used to extend learning beyond the classroom or tutoring session

By using blended learning to extend learning opportunities, programs can integrate more and varied content into instruction and support learner-centered, collaborative, or hands-on projects during in-person class or tutorial meetings. With this approach, the learning extends beyond the classroom or tutoring session, making it possible to cover more content in fewer weeks or months. Flipped learning is a popular approach to blended learning. In this model, students complete core instructional activities online outside of a class or tutorial, and then attend an in-person class or meeting for tutor- or teacher-supported one-on-one or small group hands-on practice or collaborative project work. The work done online, before an in-person class or tutorial meeting, sets up what will be covered in-person—it is not homework assigned to follow up on in-class instruction (Clayton Christensen Institute, 2019).[19]

Blended learning to extend learning

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians[20] uses **Voxy** to extend learning with English language learners who are newcomers. Bryce Bayer, a trainer and curriculum development specialist there, integrates digital literacy and English language learning in her program with job search, workplace communication development, and career planning. The students use Voxy's "Foundations in Communications in the US." Because many of these newcomers have very limited prior computer experience, Bryce has adopted a blended approach that allows for use of Voxy in the classroom. Initial use in class has helped learners get acquainted with the tool so that they can work comfortably from home. Key to their success is that super-user learners help other learners both during and after class, using computers at the Welcoming Center.

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[19] Blended learning definitions. (2019). Clayton Christensen Institute. https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/.
[20] https://welcomingcenter.org/about/
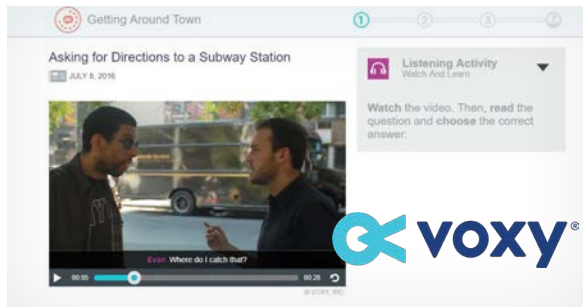
Engagement has varied among different learners, depending on their comfort with online learning. Bryce learned that some students needed more time using Voxy in class. She made class time for this by having students use Voxy at the beginning of class as other students trickled in, and by setting up her classroom to allow for small group work and independent learning, so that students could use Voxy when she was supporting individuals or small groups. For example, some students could be working on Voxy while others were crafting résumés or doing practice interviews for a job.

Extending learning with a flipped model

Another example of extending learning in ABE is found in the EdTech Center @ World Education's field test of Care Academy (CA), an online platform supporting career pathway development in the health care sector. The study followed a pilot of CA's curriculum supporting HHA certification. In the pilot, a flipped model made it possible for the incumbent workers to complete their HHA certification course in a fraction of the time that would have been required if all of the instruction had occurred without blending online and in-class instruction. (Vanek, 2019).[21]

Still another good example of a flipped classroom model is Washington State's **Integrated Digital English Acceleration (I-DEA)** ESL curriculum. In the I-DEA model. English language skills for immigrants are taught in tandem with college and career skills. Students quickly learn English and other skills relevant to their lives and careers. As in all flipped models, students complete online modules to learn, practice, and develop knowledge of concepts before coming to a class or tutorial. They then use in-person learning time to apply and practice what they've learned. In class, both instructors and peers guide and support acquiring skills.

Extending learning with a mobile app

As previously stated, most adult learners have a smart phone. Therefore, mobile apps are an easy way to extend learning beyond the classroom. Apps, like **Learning Upgrade**, operate on portable digital devices such as smartphones and tablets and often allow students to play games, watch videos, or answer practice questions to reinforce what they've learned in class. The following case study gives an in-depth look at the benefits of integrating a mobile app into a blended learning approach using the Learning Upgrade app and then examining the success programs that used it saw.
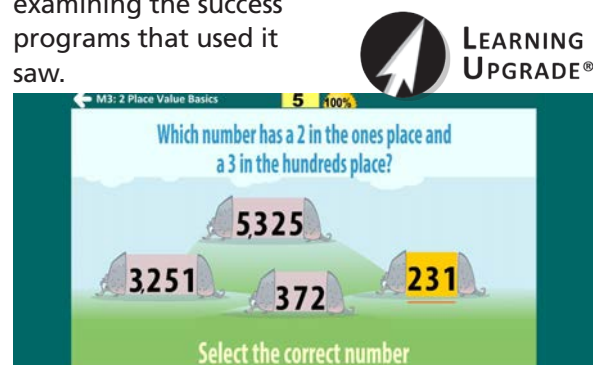
[21] Vanek, J. (2019). CareAcademy: Mobile learning to prepare adults for in-demand caregiver profession. EdTech Center @ World Education Tech Tips Blog. https://edtech.worlded.org/ttale-report/careacademy/
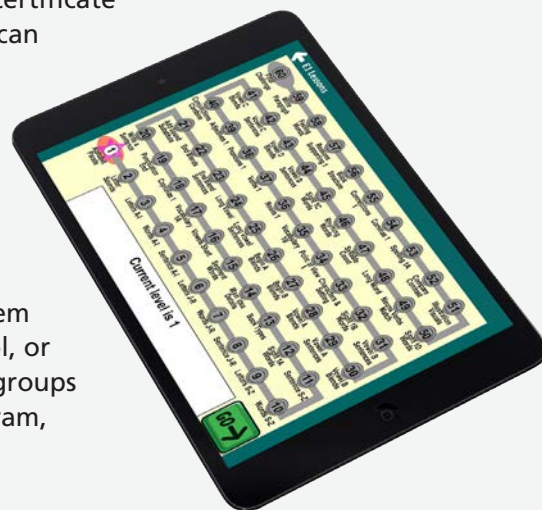
Case Study: Learning Upgrade

Learning Upgrade was a grand prize winner in the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, and Dollar General Literacy Foundation Adult Literacy XPRIZE competition. The app is also offered as a New Readers Press digital solution for adult literacy programs. It operates on both android and iOS (Apple) platforms, as well as on computer and Chromebook browsers. It has 1,000 lessons in ESL/ESOL (beginning through grade 5), ABE (reading comprehension and math through grade 8), algebra courses, and a course in math for high school equivalency test preparation.

Each Learning Upgrade course contains 60 lessons. Each lesson generally takes 10-15 minutes, allowing students to absorb small chunks of learning in each session. It includes two-to-three minutes of instruction, followed by an interactive game. Lessons use music, video, animation, and games. The combination of these media engages learners and is often fun. Also, when learners get a question wrong, they get immediate audio and visual feedback, and an explanation using voice, text, and animation.

The underlying instructional strategy is using repetition to reach mastery. To pass a lesson, learners need at least 75 percent correct. To get a bronze level certificate they need at least 75 percent on every one of 60 lessons. A silver certificate requires at least 90 percent on all the lessons. A gold certificate requires at least 95 percent correct. Learners can see a map of their progress.

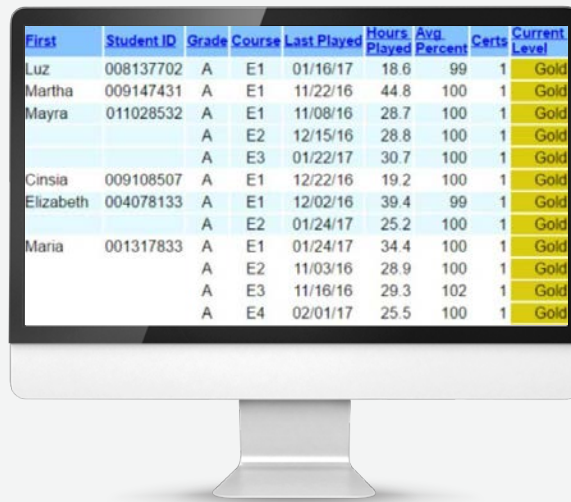A single Learning Upgrade login gets a learner access to any of the lessons, whether in English, math, high school equivalency preparation, digital literacy, or in another content area. Learning Upgrade also has a built-in learning management system through which a teacher or a program, school, or state administrator can track a learner's—or groups of learners'—progress at the instructor, program, school, district, or state level.

Case Study: Learning Upgrade (Continued)

Adult learners can use their self-paced courses with a tutor, in classrooms, in a computer lab, or on their own. As an addition to classroom instruction, the app can be used with hybrid or blended learning approaches. An adult learner may use it while waiting to be assigned a tutor, or in parallel with tutoring. In yet another approach, a tutor helps a learner download and get comfortable with the app, and then meets with the student from time to time about their progress.

First	Student ID	Grade	Course	Last Played	Hours Played	Avg Percent	Certs	Current Level
Luz	008137702	A	E1	01/16/17	18.6	99	1	Gold
Martha	009147431	A	E1	11/22/16	44.8	100	1	Gold
Mayra	011028532	A	E1	11/08/16	28.7	100	1	Gold
		A	E2	12/15/16	28.8	100	1	Gold
		A	E3	01/22/17	30.7	100	1	Gold
Cinsia	009108507	A	E1	12/22/16	19.2	100	1	Gold
Elizabeth	004078133	A	E1	12/02/16	39.4	99	1	Gold
		A	E2	01/24/17	25.2	100	1	Gold
Maria	001317833	A	E1	01/24/17	34.4	100	1	Gold
		A	E2	11/03/16	28.9	100	1	Gold
		A	E3	11/16/16	29.3	102	1	Gold
		A	E4	02/01/17	25.5	100	1	Gold

Learn Anytime Anywhere: Day, Night, Home, School

Start Time	End Time	Minutes	Score	Course	Lesson Name	Device
Jun 3 2019 10:34AM	Jun 3 2019 10:52AM	18	53	E1	19 End Punctuation	WIN
Jun 2 2019 11:11PM	Jun 2 2019 11:49PM	38	42	E1	18 Capitalize 1	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:58PM	Jun 2 2019 11:11PM	13	78	E1	17 Vocabulary 1A	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:51PM	Jun 2 2019 10:58PM	7	86	E1	16 Short Vowels	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:36PM	Jun 2 2019 10:51PM	15	77	E1	15 Segment Words Phonemic	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:54AM	Jun 2 2019 11:05AM	11	89	E1	14 Main Idea Details 1	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:50AM	Jun 2 2019 10:55AM	5	100	E1	13 Types of Books 1	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:44AM	Jun 2 2019 10:50AM	6	95	E1	12 Sight Words 1A	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:37AM	Jun 2 2019 10:44AM	7	100	E1	11 Sentences S to Z	AND
Jun 2 2019 10:32AM	Jun 2 2019 10:38AM	6	76	E1	10 Words S to Z CVC	AND
May 31 2019 11:31PM	Jun 1 2019 12:02AM	31	91	E1	1 Alphabet Parade	AND

800.998.8864 info@learningupgrade.com www.learningupgrade.com

LEARNING UPGRADE®

Learning Upgrade includes a management information system. Vinod Lobo, Learning Upgrade's founder and CEO describes—based on aggregate data that the app provides and from talking with users—a trend he sees as "binge learning." This involves adult learners replacing time spent on digital media such as streaming television, social media, and video games with time spent learning lesson after lesson at home. He says this often happens for parents after their children go to bed or on the weekend. The table illustrated above is based on a Learning Upgrade report of this pattern of adult learners doing lessons late at night.

Case Study: Learning Upgrade (Palm Beach County)

Two examples of programs where Learning Upgrade is currently being used

1 **School District of Palm Beach County, Florida**

Lisa Anderson is a specialist in the School District of Palm Beach County's Department of Adult and Community Education in Palm Springs, FL. The adult education program there offers learners ESOL, ABE, and high school equivalency preparation. The school district's large ESOL program serves thousands of students annually, including 200 learners at the literacy and pre-literacy levels who used **Learning Upgrade** in the past year. The adult learners are from a range of countries, including Haiti, Guatemala, Cuba, and Venezuela. Spanish or Haitian Creole is the first language of most learners, and many are not literate in their first language, having attended little or no school in their native country. Anderson explained that her program chose Learning Upgrade because it is easily accessible outside of class and it enables literacy level students to "dig deeper into material they have been exposed to in class, to get the practice needed for mastery." School sites began by piloting the app and, from the pilot, determined that it was a good fit for their literacy level students once learners became comfortable and competent in using a computer, which, at first, was a challenge. Anderson said, "Once they got into the lessons, which are very accessible, they flourished," and that "some enjoyed singing along to the music in the lessons." She said they loved the Learning Upgrade lessons.

Since the pilot ended, Learning Upgrade has been used at all the adult education sites in Palm Beach County, where ESOL Literacy is taught in some of the following ways:

- **Supplemental Instruction:** Learning Upgrade complements in-class lessons with out-of-class extended use. It is accessed from students' smartphones, although a few use electronic tablets. Students who are comfortable with and confident in their use of technology easily use it outside of class. Others may need help from a teacher, family member or friend to download the app to their smartphone, or to log on. Anderson has found that it helps to encourage students to practice at home, or elsewhere out of class, and to provide students with a simple login card that fits on a keychain to facilitate ease of access away from school.

Case Study: Learning Upgrade (Palm Beach County)

- **Self-Paced Practice:** Students progress through Learning Upgrade lessons at their own pace. Some students use it regularly, often in short bursts. Others do binge learning when, mostly late at night after getting home from work or after putting children to bed, they do many lessons at a time.

- **In-Class Lessons:** Teachers can display Learning Upgrade lessons on an electronic whiteboard in class to allow students to preview and prepare for new lessons, and to involve students in lessons they haven't done yet.

- **Math Literacy:** Students use Learning Upgrade not only for English language learning and reading, but also for math.

- **Data-Driven Instruction:** "When students have tutors, or are in pullout settings," Anderson said, "teachers are encouraged to look at the data on each student (provided by the Learning Upgrade student progress reporting feature.)" Anderson also reviews the data, and catches students who may need help to advance to the next level. When pointing out to teachers how to use the reports, she said, the data makes it easy to spot students who need help. Anderson said that when teachers use the reports they better realize how to group students and differentiate instruction in their classes.

- **Incentivized Learning:** Anderson mentioned that Learning Upgrade provides three levels of friendly competition: bronze, silver, and gold. Some students, she said, get to the silver or gold level of excellence. This competition helps them, she said, to get to a deeper level of mastery.

When asked about evidence of learning progress, Anderson said it was especially evident in students' engagement, and resulted in their increased confidence. She added that, "This tool gives us the best picture of ongoing progress than anything else we currently have available for students at the literacy level."

Case Study: Learning Upgrade (Queens)

2

Queens Public Library, New York

Fatma Ghailan, the assistant director of the Adult Learning Program at Queens Public Library in New York City, described their program as offering a very wide range of services to its over 5,000 students per year who live in the most diverse community in the U.S. She said that the library's education services for adults, among other services, include basic reading and writing for native-speaking English and ESOL learners–-beginner to advanced levels, workforce readiness skills, integrated English instruction, high school equivalency (TASC) test preparation, computer literacy, and some occupational training. There are six learning center sites, and, in addition to offering classes and learning circles, there is case management for students at every site. The program has full-time and part-time teachers, volunteers who facilitate learning circles, and graduate students who are getting a master of the arts in social work while doing a nine-month supervised internship. The library also offers other related programs such as services for new Americans, including ESOL, and a digital inclusion program.
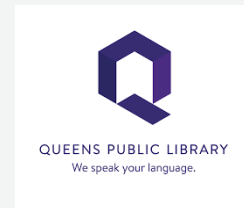
Despite the already large size of the Adult Learning Program, library staff looked for ways to serve more members of their community who needed adult basic education services. This led them to obtaining a range of online software, and participating in the Adult Literacy XPRIZE Communities Competition that provided learners with free use of prize-winning adult basic skills apps. The library chose Learning Upgrade, Ghailan said, because students found it easy to use. Students use **Learning Upgrade** to extend their learning beyond classes, as "homework," for a minimum of two hours a week. Time in class is also used to discuss Learning Upgrade lessons and, when needed, for help from the teacher. Learning Upgrade supplements what students do in class. It also allows the Adult Learning Program to serve adults who couldn't commit to coming to class at least eight hours per week, who work long shifts, or who have responsibilities as parents that make it difficult for them to regularly attend classes.

Case Study: Learning Upgrade (Queens)

The Queens Library Adult Learning Program approach to blended learning is experimental. It has a few pilots, each using a different software program or app. In addition to Learning Upgrade, for example, it uses Voxy, Burlington English, and Essential Education's TASC Academy. Each of these apps or online products has a built-in LMS, but none perfectly aligns with the curriculum for its 8-10 hour per week classes. By the end of the pilot projects it hopes to have good data to decide which app or online education product is best suited to which education service, at which level, for which students. For example, Ghailan has seen that for ESOL learners, Learning Upgrade provides much-needed language practice needed for fluency.

The case managers for the program have access to app and online curricula licenses. When they meet with a new student, they recommend one of these, and provide the onboarding help needed to access it from a smartphone or tablet. The Adult Learning Program has loaded Learning Upgrade on 120 electronic tablets that teachers can lend to students.

Ghailan said that learning circles—small groups that have a weekly or twice-weekly face-to-face meeting combined with an assigned online app or other online education software—are led by trained volunteer facilitators who, in some cases, may be students who have completed an Adult Learning Program class. Learning circles are used for intensive math tutoring for high school equivalency test preparation, using TASC Academy software, and for lower level ABE students, using Learning Upgrade.[22]

[22] Learning Upgrade soon will add: GED reading, science, and social studies; ESL—all six NRS levels, and Digital literacy. (See https://www.newreaderspress.com/learning-upgrade) For levels of content see https://www.newreaderspress.com/filebin/pdf/LearningUpgrade/2019-04_LU-PlacementChart.pdf)
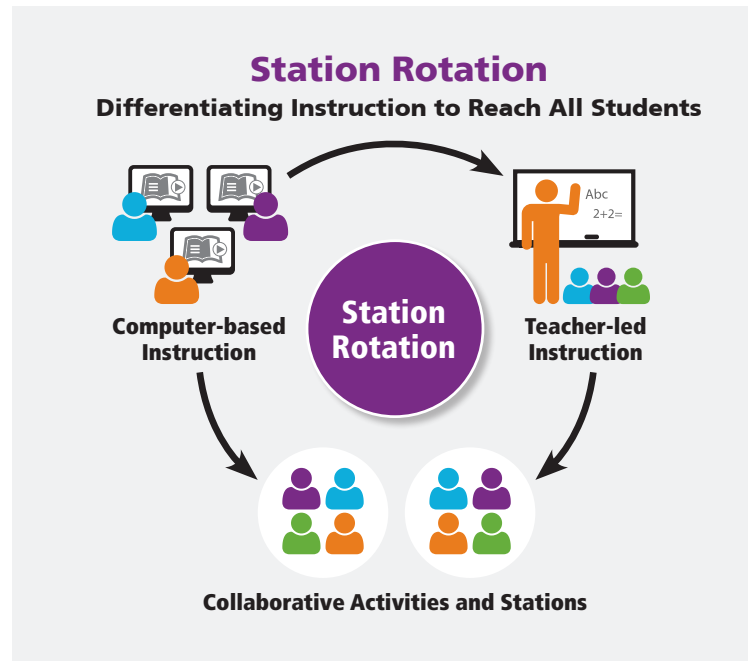
When blended learning is used to differentiate learning or personalize content

Adding opportunities for online learning can help provide content and instruction to students who may find themselves in the same cohort but who have different learning needs. This approach moves the classroom teacher into a facilitating role, ensuring that different students' needs are met with relevant instruction, resources, and activities.

A station rotation model is a great way to support differentiation; it employs both in-class and out-of-class online learning, with the majority of the instruction happening in class (**Clayton Christensen Institute, 2019**). Differentiation occurs as students rotate to different stations in their classroom or within their classroom plus a computer lab. An example of this is Northern Shenandoah Valley Adult Education in Virginia that has employed a station rotation model for a workplace ESL class held at an assembly facility. It has used Voxy online learning as a way for different learners to explore topic areas of interest, take lessons on the topics, and then return to class for peer- or small-group discussion and sharing.

When blended learning is used to offer program alternatives to reach unserved learners

At times, programs need to completely reimagine possible instructional approaches in order to reach new learners. Blended learning for this purpose can be structured with a variety of approaches.

Station Rotation
Differentiating Instruction to Reach All Students

Computer-based Instruction → Station Rotation → Teacher-led Instruction → Collaborative Activities and Stations

Peer-supported blended learning

A solid example of this model is the **Learning Circles** offered by the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI). As part of World Education's **English Now! Initiative**, RIFLI has used learning circles to facilitate peer learning for English language learners and learners on ABE program waitlists. The learning circles combine using an online course or app with a face-to-face group session once a week that is facilitated by a volunteer or English language teacher. Learners also hone their digital literacy skills as they start using online programs and mobile apps, develop their confidence, and learn strategies for how to be successful in more formal English language classes. Learners who participate in RIFLI's learning circles are moved to the front of wait lists for in-person classes. More examples will be found in the English Now! scale-up project, described in **Appendix D**.

Online independent learning, supported by some in-person instruction

Blended learning models that are mostly online provide maximum flexibility to learners who have access to internet and computers, and the skills to use this technology, but have limited capacity to attend frequent and regular classes. Such learning could be structured as an **A La Carte model**, in which students take an online course in addition to an in-person course. Ideally, the same teacher should monitor learning progress for each instructional mode (alternatively, a small team of teachers can collaborate to support a group of learners), but not all students need to do the same online work. This model is ideal for working learners who cannot spare time for taking multiple classes in person, have home computer and internet access, and have the qualities (e.g., skills and motivation) required for sustained independent learning.

One example of this model is a workplace ESL class held at the Minneapolis International Airport and taught by an outreach teacher from the Hubbs Center/St. Paul ABE in Minnesota. The in-class meeting is only two hours each week, although the students need much more instructional time to progress. In class, the teacher focuses on the language critical to success in work at the airport, including essential grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and spoken English to support customer service work and engagement with the public. Online, learners choose a course or curriculum that aligns with their needs, and helps them spend more hours a week learning English. In this multilevel class, the learners with the lowest English literacy proficiency chose **Learning Upgrade**.

Higher level learners chose **Read Theory**. In this example, students were motivated by the incentive of a free refurbished laptop if they completed 75 hours of online learning in one month.

School

Online Teacher

Learning Lab

Home
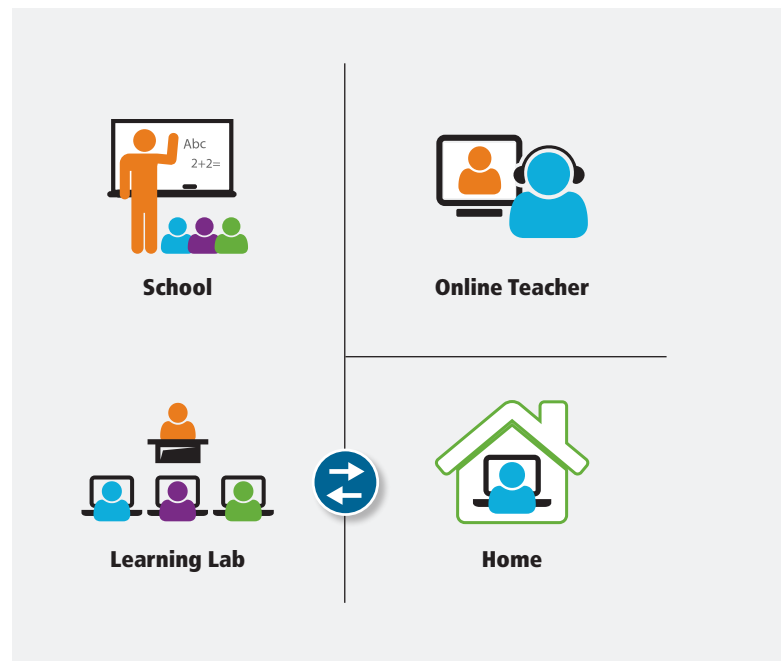
7 What online resources work with blended learning?

After you identify the reason for offering blended learning and choose the approach that best addresses the challenges you hope to meet by using blended learning, then you need to make a decision about what online resources you will use and how you will use them. This section guides you, as a teacher or tutor, as you either consider how to use a digital resource that you already have, or search for new online learning resources, and then figure out how they fit into your whole instructional design. Earlier, we described a continuum of strategies for using online learning resources that at one end uses a proprietary online curriculum or course, and at the other end uses all teacher-selected or teacher-made free or OER online resources; in the middle of the continuum are programs or classes that do a bit of both. You'll likely make decisions about what to use as you consider both courses and curricula. A curriculum, as we use the term here, includes a wide range of subjects or levels. A course, on the other hand, is one subject, usually at one level.

Use a primary online proprietary (commercial) curriculum with face-to-face classes or tutorials

Among many others, examples of online proprietary curricula or courses include: Voxy and New Readers Press Online Learning courses that include Pre-HSE, GED®, and HiSET® test prep.

Use an online basic skills/ English language learning app

Examples include the apps developed for the Adult Literacy XPRIZE, such as Learning Upgrade. (See a list of the Adult Literacy XPRIZE finalist apps in **Appendix C**.) Integrating an app into face-to-face curriculum may pose some challenges for teachers or tutors. You will need to understand the breadth of content included in the app so that you can sync the instruction there with what you do face-to-face. If you are considering an app for your blended learning, before you recommend it to your learners, you should consider whether the developer can provide you with a copy of the app curriculum and, if so, review how well it aligns with your face-to-face curriculum.
(See "Aligning an online curriculum with your face-to-face curriculum" in **Appendix E**.)

Track learning progress when using an online course or curriculum, one or more learning apps, and a face-to-face course or curriculum

Many online curricula have built-in learning management systems that allow you to easily track individual learning progress and can help inform the face-to-face instruction you provide. While having more than one curriculum or course may offer your students the best range of learning opportunities, it may make keeping track of learners' progress and curriculum alignment more difficult because you have more to track.

One solution is to track progress primarily, or only, through one of the curricula—your anchor or core curriculum—that includes all the learning objectives and related assessments your students need.

Create original or find suitable open education resource (OER)-based online courses, lesson plans, or other resources that complement a successful face-to-face curriculum already in use

OERs are free instructional resources that have been created and shared, usually online. Authors of OERs might be teachers, educational organizations, or even commercial publishers. Here are examples of some good OER resources:

- **CrowdED Learning Skill Directory**. This online website includes OERs as well as proprietary curricula, courses, and other learning resources for adults.

- **OER Commons**. With over 2,000 adult education resources, you can simultaneously search by education level, for example "adult education," and subject, as well as by several other descriptors, e.g. material type, media format, language, etc.

- **Skills Commons**. A free and open library of workforce training materials searchable by industry, it includes open courseware and showcases of model curriculum and resources.

- **Curriki**. This is a large, free, and OER online library of resources, across most subject areas, designed for K-12 and post-secondary education, but with some resources suitable for adult basic skills education.

- **HippoCampus**. This includes free education resources for middle school through college.

Fitting these online resources into classroom instruction should be approached thoughtfully. A good place to start is by considering what you want students to learn (i.e., the goals of your class and program and/or standards required in your state). This is the "what" of teaching. Then, look to the online resources that will help you meet the instructional challenges that led you to blended learning in the first place (e.g., the need to offer online resources to provide more flexibility in educational opportunities).

No matter what online instructional resource(s) you use, learners need a clear understanding of both how to access specific resources and how these resources are connected to their learning goals and to in-class instruction. One proven strategy is to organize links and instructions for using resources on a web page or website that can easily be accessed by adult learners (like the example of Sharon Ram's Weebly site shown on page 10). In any case, programs need to redefine what they consider curriculum, which needs to cover both what is taught online and what is taught in-person.

8 What are some common challenges in implementing blended learning?

Implementing a new blended learning model is not simple. Having talked with hundreds of teachers and observing use of just as many online tools, we have noticed some strategies that might help you face common challenges.

Challenge: Not enough learners have access to Wi-Fi outside of the program

Even when learners have internet access at home, there may be limitations to their ability to access media-rich learning because they might be smart-phone dependent or, if they don't have Wi-Fi, may lack large data plans on their smartphones; however, there are solutions for this problem.

Low-Cost Broadband Internet Access

EveryoneOn.org offers discounted internet access and lower-cost computers and hotspots to income-eligible adults and families. Income is determined, for example, by food stamps and free or discounted school lunch eligibility. Not all services are available in every state, but internet accessibility through EveryoneOn may be as inexpensive as $10-$12 per month.

Public Internet Access

Public libraries offer free internet access on their public desktop computers, and sometimes also on library laptops. Where internet access is generally limited to a half hour at a time, a learner who has a letter from an adult basic skills teacher on program stationary may be given an exception to do online homework for a longer period of time.

In many communities there are now free internet access hotspots; many merchants such as Starbucks, McDonalds, and others offer customers free Wi-Fi access. Students who have a smartphone, tablet, or laptop may be able to work at one of these venues to do at least some online learning assignments.

Onsite program computer labs can offer a place where learners can access online learning resources. A lab can have the added benefit of making tutor support available for learners who lack some digital literacy skills. Labs are currently in use in a wide range of settings. For example, an online Voxy curriculum is available for workplace ESL in a lab at the Chobani yogurt company in New Berlin, NY. Both the Welcoming Center in Philadelphia and the Queens Public Library in New York City offer class lab time and flexible lab access hours.

Loaned Technology Devices

Some programs and public libraries lend hotspots to learners. For example, a blended learning program offered at American Job Centers in northern Michigan lends Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots so that program participants extend their learning at home. Libraries also lend hotspots or laptops to library card holders; examples of successful lending programs include New York City; St. Paul, Minnesota; San Mateo California County Public Library; and Boston, and Worcester Massachusetts public libraries.

Challenge: Teachers who are new to blended learning often don't think they know how to effectively integrate online content with classroom content

It is a challenge to ensure that learning objectives of instructional content are strongly aligned with the goals of a course, that they are not just add-ons. Other challenges include selecting a curriculum or learning activities that fit learners' levels and learning preferences, and finding tools and technologies that work best for a particular teaching and learning context. Suggestions for meeting this challenge include the following:

- **Use a set of standards as the organizing structure of a blended learning approach.** You could start by checking out the CrowdED Learning Skill Directory online. It identifies online curriculum, courses, lessons, or other online learning resources that align to College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards

- **Use assigned online work as a way to know what to focus on during in-person meetings.** For example, assign online language learning lessons covering vocabulary or grammar to be completed before class, and then build on them with iterative dialogs and collaboration activities that draw upon them during class. You can view learner work ahead of class, using the online work as a formative assessment strategy, and then develop classroom activities in response to learner needs demonstrated in the online activities.

- **Choose the best instructional activities and technologies to teach the content you have chosen.**[23] For example, if teaching conversation skills is part of your curriculum, leave those activities to in-class time and use Kahoot or Quizlet for online vocabulary-building activities. In this way, the classroom or tutorial activity time focuses on an authentic use of spoken English.

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[23] The Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework is a model that teachers can use to guide selection of appropriate technology resources to support employing relevant pedagogy (instructional strategy) for teaching particular content. www.tpack.org

Challenge: Teachers would like to have an online course or curriculum specifically designed for the kinds and levels of adult learners they teach[24]

If you are new to using blended learning you would likely prefer to rely on one integrated curriculum that provides both in-person and online content. You might find that such products do not cover the needs of everyone in your classroom. One way to think about addressing this challenge is to lean on one primary online curriculum and then supplement it with OER or other resources housed in an LMS or CMS. Teachers can experiment with different products to see what works. Some possible solutions are listed in **Examples of Online Learning Environments (platforms) and Free or Inexpensive Online Resources for Blended Learning for Adults** referred to earlier.

Challenge: Program funding may not be adequate to purchase an online proprietary curriculum

Although easing into blended learning might be best supported by using a comprehensive curriculum, programs might not be able to afford one; however, there are free options and creative ways to meet this challenge. Solutions include the following:

- More online curricula and online courses are listed **here**, or may be found in an online search for OER Commons.

- Pursue funding from local charitable or community foundations, or from national charitable foundations, to purchase online curricula or courses.

- Form partnerships with local public libraries or other nonprofits that have a budget to purchase a proprietary curriculum for their patrons or clients. They may make it available to students in the program and, in some cases, may provide space for the program to offer a class in the library.[25]

- If you are a ProLiteracy member you can apply for small grants to support this work from ProLiteracy's Mobile Learning Fund, intended for digital curriculum, or the National Book Fund that supports print curriculum.[26]

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9 Conclusion

Adult basic skills programs are increasingly using blended learning to extend or differentiate learning, or to offer program alternatives that help reach unserved learners. In your efforts to move ahead with this innovative approach to teaching, keep these key points in mind:

> **A blended learning approach will enable students to increase learning time and progress faster.**

- Adopting a blended learning approach should begin with the desire to meet an instructional challenge, such as the need to offer more flexible program options to meet learners' needs, to support the delivery of more instructional content, or to differentiate instruction.

- Although hybrid learning is adding a free or proprietary online curriculum to a traditional face-to-face class or tutorial, true blended learning also integrates these two modes of instruction into one holistic instructional approach.

- Achieving a successful blended learning program requires a plan, one that includes input from teachers or tutors, administrators, and perhaps learners.

- Developing a blended learning approach will benefit from using an experimental mindset. Your initial efforts should be considered pilots. Starting small and learning from mistakes will save time and resources down the road.

Finally, there are ways to get additional help and connect with other teachers and administrators who are implementing blended learning. **The IDEAL Consortium**, a project of the EdTech Center @ World Education, provides professional development, technical support, and many free resources for teachers and programs getting started with blended learning. The **LINCS Integrating Technology and Learning Group**, an online community of practice, with current and archived asynchronous discussions, can provide peer and expert guidance on blended learning. LINCS also offers reviewed resources, and online courses. Supported by the U.S. Department of Education, all LINCS services are free to the user. Finally, it is now common for the publishers of online curricula to offer training, and or communities of practice, about how to effectively use their online curriculum products. Whatever you do, don't do it alone. Reach out to your colleagues or your state's professional development leaders, or use some of the resources listed here. Good luck!

10 Appendices

Appendix A: Acronyms Used in This Guide

ABE: Adult Basic Education

ASE: Adult Secondary Education

CA: Care Academy

CCR: College and Career Readiness content standards

CEO: Chief Executive Officer

CMS: Content Management System

ELL: English Language Learner

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages

GPIWC: Great Portland Immigrant Welcome Center

HHA: Home Health Aide

I-DEA: Washington State's Integrated Digital English Acceleration (ESL Curriculum)

IDEAL: Project IDEAL, Innovating Distance Education in Adult Learning, formerly at the University of Michigan, now the IDEAL Consortium at World Education

iOS: Internet Operating System (used by Apple portable digital devices)

ISTE: International Society of Technical Education

JFF: Jobs for the Future

LINCS: Literacy Information and Communications System, sponsored by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education of the U.S. Department of Education

LMS: Learning Management System

OER: Open Education Resource

P2PU: Peer to Peer University

PC: Personal Computer

PD: Professional Development

RIFLI: Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative of the Providence, Rhode Island Public Library

TASC: Test Assessing Secondary Completion™, one of the national high school equivalency tests

Appendix B: Research-Based Strategies

The **Clayton Christensen Institute** is a nonprofit think tank founded on the theory of solving social issues through disruptive innovation. Much of what is known about blended learning in the K12 and post-secondary settings comes from its research.

Consult the organization's blended learning website for definitions and frameworks. The site also includes links to research reports and videos. **The Blended Learning Universe** is a practitioner-friendly website that can walk you through every step of researching, designing, and then implementing blended learning.

Appendix C: Adult Literacy XPRIZE Finalist and Semi-Finalist Apps

The eight Adult Literacy XPRIZE semi-finalist apps are listed with a brief description of each, primarily from the Adult Literacy XPRIZE website, and where you can find the app.

Alphabet Literacy

Alphabet Literacy is an app "that allows users to explore multimedia content for improving their literacy skills. Users can interact with articles, songs, videos, and more within the app." The app is available on Google Play.

AmritaCREATE

AmritaCREATE is a "personalized learning app along with engaging, culturally appropriate e-content linked to life skills." It is available on Google Play.

AutoCognita

AutoCognita "applies the constructivist learning approach to engage learners through action. Low-literacy adults effectively acquire basic literacy, numeracy and life skills through a comprehensive curriculum and sound pedagogy." Here's the AutoCognita Website. The app, Tap Tap Read, is available on Google Play.

Cell-Ed

Cell-Ed is a text messaging app that runs on feature phones as well as smartphones. Originally designed for adult ESL/ESOL learners, it is now also for basic literacy learners. It's available on Google Play.

Xenos Isle

Xenos Isle is "an evidence-based mobile learning game that combines a virtual world, scaffolded missions, and single and multiplayer gameplay to rapidly increase adult learners' English language and literacy skills for increased civic engagement and enhancing career pathways. Xenos Isle is platform and operating system agnostic, making it available on phones and tablets as well as on computers. Mobile delivery and 24/7 access on any device makes it easier for learners to use—at work, at home, and even during their commute. Being digital, Xenos is cost-effective and scalable, and can readily be customized for industry-specific content." Xenos Isle is available on Google Play. It may also be available at the App store (apple).

Learning Upgrade

"With the Learning Upgrade app, adults can make reading breakthroughs on their own phones. The engaging lessons filled with songs, video, and games move adults step-by-step from the fundamentals to advanced comprehension. Learning happens everywhere: on the bus, during breaks at work, or while waiting for a child at school. Adults earn five certificates as they progress through 300 sequenced lessons. The program prepares adults for success at work, earning a diploma, or taking more advanced classes." The app is available on Google Play (Android) and in the App Store (Apple).

Lyriko

Lyriko is "a music game designed to build language skills while exploring song lyrics." The app is available on Google Play and possibly in the App store.

People For Words
Codex: Lost Words of Atlantis

Codex: Lost Words of Atlantis by **People For Words** is "a mobile adventure game for Android devices. It helps low-literate adults improve their English reading skills. Based on an archeological adventure storyline, the initial gameplay revolves around crafting phonemes, onset-rime patterns, and sight words to "decode" a mysterious language from a lost civilization." Codex: Lost Words of Atlantas is available on Google Play.

Appendix D: English Now! Project and Learning Circles Information

English Now! Learning Circles, a learning circle scale-up project sponsored by World Education and funded by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, focuses on fostering peer learning for English language learners (ELLs). This innovative project provides access to English learning for over 250 ELLs through low-cost learning circles that combine learning using an online course or mobile app with a face-to-face group session once a week facilitated by a teacher or volunteer. The participating programs serve learners in diverse contexts. They include two union-based programs, four programs within community colleges, one adult public charter school, and three community-based programs located in seven states (CA, IL, NY, PA, MD, TX, and VA) and District of Columbia. Learners enjoy the self-paced nature of online learning and also really appreciate having an opportunity to practice English with peers.

Here's what three learner participants had to say about their experiences in English Now! learning circles:

> *"This is different from other classes. It's a mix of learning English and technology. And because of the technology, I can also learn at home."*

> *"I need English skills and computer skills to get a good job. Here I learn both!"*

> *"More classes like this should be open to students who can't make it to the registration deadline or regular classes."*

For more information, contact the World Education, Inc. project director, Priyanka Sharma at priyanka_sharma@worlded.org.

The following online discussions and blog articles about learning circles may be helpful:

- LINCS discussion about Learning Circles
  https://community.lincs.ed.gov/discussion/learn-here-about-learning-circles

- LINCS Discussion about Adult Literacy XPRIZE Apps
  https://community.lincs.ed.gov/discussion/adult-literacy-xprize-apps-discussion

- App to Speed Learning Circles in Public Libraries
  https://davidjrosen.wordpress.com/2018/09/20/app-to-speed-learning-circles-in-public-libraries/

- App-to-Speed Learning Circles in Adult ESOL Programs
  https://edtech.worlded.org/app-to-speed-learning-circles-in-adult-esol-programs/

- App-to-Speed Learning Circles for ABE Learners
  https://proliteracy.org/blogs/article/426

- Engaging Adult Learners on Waiting Lists Using Learning Circles
  https://thewell.worlded.org/engaging-adult-learners-on-waiting-lists-using-learning-circles/

- English Now! Learning Circles
  https://edtech.worlded.org/project/english-now-learning-circles/

- Learning Circles Address Wait Lists for English Classes
  https://thewell.worlded.org/learning-circles-address-wait-lists-for-english-classes/

In addition, the group that created and supports learning circles in the U.S. and internationally, Peer-to-Peer University provides a free online course for those who are new to offering learning circles. (P2PU) http://www.p2pu.org

Appendix E: Aligning an Online Curriculum With Face-to-Face Curriculum Components

How online and face-to-face curricula may be similar or different:

- there may not be lessons, exercises, or resources in the online curriculum for every part of the face-to-face curriculum, and vice versa,

- the online curriculum may focus on one of the following areas more than the face-to-face curriculum, and vice versa:

  - learning objectives/intended outcomes

  - introduction of a new topic

  - presentation or direct instruction

  - modeling of skills

  - practice of skills

  - application of knowledge or skills

  - formative or summative assessment

  - enrichment or extension of learning

Questions to Consider as you Look at the Two Components Side-by-Side:

- What is emphasized in the online curriculum and what is emphasized in the face-to-face curriculum? Is there overlap? If so, is that a strength, or is it unnecessary?

- What is best taught and learned online? Best learned face-to-face? Or does this vary greatly depending on the learner so that for a class it needs to be included in both online and face-to-face curricula

- Are there any overall learning objectives that need to be changed, added to, refined?

- Are there any learning objectives that are not assessed well or at all?

- Are there any learning objectives for which the instruction is not clear? Not at the right level?

- If one of your program goals is to provide an online curriculum that enables learners who miss (a) class(es) to keep up, is the online curriculum effective in doing that?

- Are there parts of the online curriculum that do not fit your learning objectives, or learners' needs; if so, is there a way to remove them or to only assign the parts that do fit the learning objectives?

Appendix F: New Readers Press Online Products

- **News for You Online** provides seven weekly news stories along with audio and interactive activities.

- New Readers Press Online Learning offers **Pre-HSE**, and **GED® test prep**, and **HiSET® test prep**, and **TASC test prep** courses.

- **Leamos™ (Let's Read)** is a pre-ESL course that teaches non-literate Spanish-speaking adults to read and write.

- **Learning Upgrade** is a fun and engaging way to build English, math, and digital literacy skills.

- **Voxy** is an innovative digital solution to help build English language skills through personalized instruction using real media.

Appendix G: Texas TEAMS Annual Data Comparing Completion Rates for Hybrid[27], Distance, and Traditional Classroom Learners

- In 2009-2010, 66% of hybrid learners completed at least on[e] level, compared to 53% each for distance and traditional classroom learners.

- In 2010-2011, 76% of hybrid learners had level completions, compared to 60% each for distance and traditional learners.

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[27] A hybrid adult learner, as defined in Texas, is a participant in a traditional class who is also using a distance learning curriculum out of class. Blended learning is a subset of hybrid when the instructor intentionally aligns the in-class and out-of-class activities. Texas has both types of programs. Source, email communication from Dr Glenda Rose.

- In 2011-2012, hybrid learners still had the highest percentage of completion (73%), but distance learners outperformed traditional classroom learners for the first time (60% for traditional classroom learners; 66% for primarily online learners).

- In 2014-2015 hybrid learners still had the highest percentage of completion (71%) compared with distance learners at 66%, and face-to-face learners at 50%

- In 2015-2016 63% of hybrid learners, 53% of distance learners and only 42% of face-to-face learners completed.

- In 2016-2017 61% of hybrid, 57% of distance, and 40% of face-to-face learners completed.

- In 2017-2018 57% of hybrid learners, 47% of distance learners, and 37% of face-to-face learners completed.

- In 2018-2019 41% of hybrid learners, 35% of distance learners, and 26% of face-to-face learners completed.

Sources: A post by Glenda Lynn Rose to the LINCS ELL Community of Practice on December 16, 2014 https://community.lincs.ed.gov/comment/9097#comment-9097 and Rose, Glenda L., Wang, C., Sainz, Z and Joshi, S. "Technology Use and Integration in Adult Education and Literacy Classrooms Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning, Texas A&M University" 2019. Copy provided by author, Dr. Glenda Lynn Rose.

Appendix H: Hybrid and Blended Learning Tools Used by Adult Basic Skills Programs

In a Spring 2019 ProLiteracy blended learning survey, respondents were asked, "What kinds of technology (online communication tools, instructional technology, content creation, shell platforms, browsers, and other tools) do teachers/tutors use in their practice?"

Below is an edited list of many of the tools and resources the 98 survey participants say they used. They are listed by category: learning management systems, formative assessment tools, social media and communications tools, advanced subject learning, and miscellaneous software and apps to support Instruction. Some are proprietary (commercial) and some are free. Note: apps are available from Google Play or the Apple App Store, or both.

Learning management systems:

Blackboard
https://www.blackboard.com

Canvas
https://www.instructure.com/canvas

D2L
https://www.d2l.com/products

Google Classroom
https://classroom.google.com

Moodle Platform
https://moodle.org

Schoology
https://www.schoology.com

Formative Assessment Tools

Kahoot
https://kahoot.com

Poll Everywhere
https://www.polleverywhere.com

Quizlet
https://quizlet.com

Quizzizz
https://quizizz.com

Social Media and Communications Tools

Facebook

Advanced Subject Learning

edX
https://www.edx.org

GALE Courses
https://www.gale.com/c/gale-courses

Miscellaneous Software and Apps to Support Instruction

Google For Education
https://edu.google.com

Google Images
https://images.google.com

Google Suite
https://gsuite.google.com

Google Translate
https://translate.google.com

Hootsuite
https://hootsuite.com

Office 365 Education
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office

Padlet
https://padlet.com

Remind
https://www.remind.com

Skype
https://www.skype.com/en

TED Talks
https://www.ted.com/talks

Zoom
https://zoom.us