Blended Learning:
New Approaches to Teaching

Instructor: Jim Hutchinson

Overview

1. What is Blended Learning?
2. What constitutes good technology integration?
3. What ideas can you develop?

What is Blended Learning

- Usually refers to the use of distance and face-to-face learning.
- More common in higher education than K-12.
- Attempts to take the best from both worlds to create a “better” learning environment.

Blended Learning in K-12

- We will redefine this a bit to mean any type of learning activity that uses both face-to-face and self-guided, technology based aspects.

What It's Not

- Simply creating documents, spreadsheets, brochures, or presentations.
- Conducting online research for a project.
- Accessing web sites with educational activities.
- Any activity that uses technology to replace something that could be done without technology.

Well Then, What Is It?

- Blended learning is a conscious effort to create learning experiences that are discussed and developed collaboratively and interpersonally and use technology tools to expand and extend the experience in a way that would otherwise not be possible.

Some General Ideas

- Online discussions to augment class
  - Blackboard, WebCT, MOODLE.
- Using wikis, blogs, online forums, Google Docs and other online tools to collaborate between students or with others in the world.
  - Publishing to an authentic audience
- Using computers to simulate experiments or models in a way that better shows what is happening.
- Collect and analyze data in the field.

Recapping

- Our goal is to move away from using technology as a digital replacement for analog activities.
- The challenge is to design lessons and units that use technology to expand opportunities in ways that would not otherwise be possible
- Collaboration should be an integral element.
- Most human production is collaborative, learning should be too.

Activity

- Discuss the implications.
- Brainstorm some ideas.
- What sort of tools would you use?
- Do you have access to them?
- What are the obstacles?
- Share your discussions with the class.

Expanding Your Tech Capability

- Use lots of free software
  - http://www.cybersource.com.au/about/education_FOSS_catalog.pdf
- Tap into web 2.0 tools
  - blogs (wordpress.com), wikis (moinmoin.wikiwikiweb.de), etc.
- Build online course components
  - MOODLE

MOODLE

- Is a course management system
- Similar to Blackboard or WebCT
- Is free (but is usually set up locally)
- Is very flexible
- Reach more students
- Allows for 24/7 learning opportunities

Give It a Whirl

- http://moodle.org/
- http://www.letsdomath.com/moodle/

Discover Web 2.0

- Put power in your students' hands
- They become the creators of their own content
- They connect with people of similar interest
- Encourages collaboration
- And guess what? They are already doing this without us
- See Will Richardson and Alan November for more info

Web 2.0 Sites

- Content creation
  - http://www.wikispaces.com/
  - http://wordpress.com/
- Example
  - https://wiki.ubuntu.com/Lessons
- Some others
  - http://www.flickr.com/ (photos)
  - http://www.writing.com/ (creative writing)

The “Standard Lab” Dilemma

- Labs are usually equipped with only office productivity software.
- If all you can do is create documents then that is all students will do.
- Being innovative often requires different software which can be expensive.
- But options exist…

Free Software

- Computer labs are not very useful without software
- The web is good, but not the only tool
- Software applications open up options
- Because of cost, most schools are not getting their money's worth out of their technology
- Free software can help increase a lab's usefulness and allow for more labs by reducing costs

The FOSS Revolution

- There are easily over 100,000 examples of Free and Open Source Software.
- Software is available for Windows, Mac and Linux operating systems.
- It can usually be downloaded and installed anywhere, anytime, on any number of computers without cost or restrictive licenses.

Information Literacy

- WebQuests are a really good tool for designing collaborative learning.
- However, most often, they are designed in such a way as to limit true collaboration.
  - Students end up working alone.
  - Searching the web, rather than assimilating knowledge, becomes the primary activitity
  - Students are not challenged to evaluate web content but given pre-selected sites (which is sometimes appropriate).

WebQuests

- WebQuests are a really good tool for designing collaborative learning.
- However, most often, they are designed in such a way as to limit true collaboration.
  - Students end up working alone.
  - Searching the web, rather than assimilating knowledge, becomes the primary activity
  - Students are not challenged to evaluate web content but are given pre-selected sites (which is sometimes appropriate).

Recapping

- Our goal is to move away from using technology as a digital replacement for analog activities.
- The challenge is to design lessons and units that use technology to expand opportunities in ways that would not otherwise be possible
- Collaboration should be an integral element.
  - Most human production is collaborative, learning should be too.
- Do not forget that we are looking at *Blended Learning* – so don’t leave out non-tech aspects.

Keeping Informed

- To stay informed you will need to remain aware of new developments
- Subscribe or encourage your school to subscribe to popular and informative magazines/journals
  - PC World, Mac World, Linux Format
- Join an tech organization
  - ISTE
  - AECT