

# COMPREHENSIVE DISTRICT-WIDE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION TRANSFORMS LEARNING

Rethink Education badged facilitators help grow educators' knowledge about blended learning across school districts.

As the former Chief of Technology and Chief Academic Officer at Beaufort County Schools, Andrea Lilley nurtured blended learning adoption across the school community of 21,000 students. At the foundation of the Beaufort County Schools' approach was a district-wide implementation plan that considered every level of personnel.

One key aspect of the district's plan included encouraging educators to participate in the Rethink Education Facilitator Badge professional development program. An initiative of the Office of Virtual Instruction Support Services at NCDPI, Rethink Education trains educators on blended learning models so they can use what they learned in their own classrooms—and train their peers.

"We started small. We offered an additional stipend on top of the stipend offered by the state. We grew our number of Rethink Education badged facilitators and then the number of people who were trained by them," says Andrea, who also earned a Rethink Education Facilitator Badge.

Rethink Education badged facilitators have created 486% growth in districtwide blended learning implementations. According to a recent survey, 60 participants support districtwide blended learning implementations at 41 districts and charter schools.<sup>1</sup>

"Our teachers are volunteering for this. They feel that they're ready to start the program and we support them along the way," says Andrea.



## SEEING BLENDED LEARNING IN ACTION

One of the most popular training approaches are walkthroughs where educators visit other teachers' classrooms to see what blended learning looks like in action.

"It's the best professional development you can provide a teacher, hands down," says Andrea. "We've established a culture of trust that folks feel comfortable having other teachers and administrators come into the room."

These walkthroughs are also great for engaging principals, district staff and leadership.

"Teachers don't realize just how much we learn from them when we go into their classrooms," says Andrea. "We come out of those walkthroughs and we discuss kind of what they've seen, what they need to look for and what the change in that environment looks like."



**The district and school principal work together to arrange substitute teachers to cover for educators participating in walkthroughs.**

## STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning classrooms look and feel different. Instead of learning in rows of desks, students often work together in small groups, move around the room and talk with the teacher one-on-one, creating a hive of activity.

“The kids are doing 345 different things, but they’re all engaged. They’re all on task,” says Andrea. “Blended learning models encourage students to collaborate and think. It’s all because of how the teacher designed the lesson differently.”

Beaufort County Schools has also grown a content repository of lessons where teachers can pull a lesson that somebody else has created and use that within their classroom, saving them valuable preparation and planning time.

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### Rethink Educator badged facilitators say the benefits of using blended learning are:

- Increasing engagement through student ownership of path, place, and pacing
- Supporting small group, individualized instruction
- Enabling differentiation
- Using it in media centers to increase the use of multimedia tools and student engagement<sup>2</sup>

## ENGAGING SCHOOL LEADERS AND PARENTS



To ensure all members of the district community are engaged and informed about blended learning, Beaufort County Schools runs an Instructional Technology Academy and a Principal Academy. Principals, administrators, instructors and the Technology department can learn not just about how to use technology in the classroom, but build coaching skills as well.

Because blended learning can be a big change for parents and caregivers as well, the district also set up a Family Academy.

“Parents need background knowledge of what the blended learning classroom looks like now. One-to-one does not mean that their child is on the computer all day long. It’s used purposefully in the classroom and beneficial for students in so many ways,” says Andrea.

Andrea Lilley recently joined Martin County Schools as Chief Officer of Academics and Student Affairs, where she’ll continue supporting blended learning adoption.

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## MORE ABOUT RETHINK EDUCATION

Rethink Education partners with districts and schools across the state to create a resilient future for North Carolina school communities where all K-8 students have access to seamless, effective blended and virtual learning.

To help meet the needs of all students, whether they are learning in-person, at one of North Carolina's virtual academies or in a blended learning environment, Rethink Education provides educator training that goes above and beyond the average professional development. These professional learning programs not only impart best practices for using the statewide blended learning models, but enable the educators to train their peers on how to use blended learning.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Visit [dpi.nc.gov](https://dpi.nc.gov) to learn more about Rethink Education programs.
- Explore the Rethink Education 2023 Sustainability Survey results: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/rethink-education-2023-sustainability-survey-results-february-2023/download?attachment>
- Reach out to [rethink@ncpublicschools.gov](mailto:rethink@ncpublicschools.gov) with questions.



<sup>1,2</sup> From the 2023 Rethink Education Sustainability Survey, a survey of educators who became badged facilitators



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