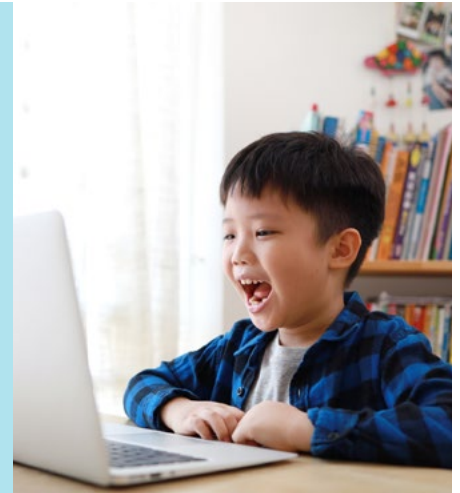# BLENDED LEARNING BASICS

With blended learning, teachers combine traditional teaching methods with digital tools to make learning more flexible and personalized. For example, a student could research a topic online, collaborate with others in the same online document and then present virtually to the class. Blended learning prepares students to thrive in a constantly evolving, technology-rich world. Although blended learning was used before the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic led to more of a focus on enhancing teaching with technology.

> *Blended learning is the combination of active, engaged learning online with active, engaged learning offline to provide students with more control over the time, place, pace, and path of their learning* **(Tucker, 2022)**.

Blended learning provides a simple way for students to take different paths toward a common destination. It can also free up teachers to become learning designers, mentors, facilitators, tutors, evaluators, and counselors to reach each student in ways never before possible (Horn & Staker, 2014).

Digital enhancements to instruction can include internet tools, such as Google Docs for document creation, Google Slides for group presentation collaboration, Edmodo for social networking, broad access to internet devices, supplemental activities from digital textbooks, or online lesson playlists of activities. However, the technology does not deliver the content and instruction (Horn & Staker, 2012).

"Effective teachers will find that blended learning applies many of the same best practices of teaching in a more student-centered setting" (Anthony, 2019).

Blended learning can help increase student engagement by providing a variety of learning experiences that are both online and in-person, which can make learning more interesting and relevant to students (Graham, 2013).

Learners of any age are more successful when families and educators partner together. Here are some ways families can support their learners.

REQUEST SUPPORT.

Teachers are encouraging students to learn advanced technologies to support learning. Schools have technology specialists and support staff who can help families learn about that technology too. Ask your child's teachers to provide information about educational software they use and who is available to answer questions about technology. Or, ask your school administrator for collaborative sessions with other families to talk about how to stay informed with technology updates.

BE AN ADVOCATE.

Transitions to blended learning may be challenging for students. Students who may be used to sitting in traditional rows may now find themselves in a classroom with stations to move through during class. Some students may need additional support with transitioning to classroom structures where they have more choices about how they experience learning. As your student makes this transition, it may be helpful to talk to their teacher about which skills you can support at home.

PROVIDE STRUCTURE.

Some blended-learning models may have lessons for students to complete at home. Dedicate a set time for students to engage in online lessons. Observe and ask your child about how they are using technology, what programs they are using, and what they are creating or communicating through the use of technology.

SET LIMITS.

Even in a blended-learning setting students still need time away from the screen for activities that engage them through playing and exploring. Make sure your student knows their screen time limitations. A predictable and consistent environment makes children feel safe and supported.

Additional Resources:

- RTI's Blended-Learning Toolkit: https://bit.ly/RTI-Blended-Learning
- Blended Learning Rethink Education Videos: Rethink Education:
  Blended Learning Impacting NC Schools and Rethink Education Technical Assistance Partnership with RTI International

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