

HOW BLENDED LEARNING EMPOWERED THIS TEACHER

TO CREATE HER DREAM CLASSROOM AND INSPIRE RETHINK EDUCATION TEACHERS

When Dr. Catlin Tucker first became a teacher, she dreamed of her classroom being a place where students were excited to be there, engaged, sharing and all learning together. Yet, her reality as a first-year teacher was a little different than what she had first imagined.

Dr. Tucker, whose work has been used in the development of Rethink Education NC courses, is now an author, speaker and trainer, as well as a professor in the Masters in the Arts of Teaching Program at Pepperdine University.

Dr. Tucker recently talked about her experiences with [The Education Empowered Podcast](#), hosted by the Office of Virtual Support at NCDPI and Rethink Education NC. In the episode, she shares what she's learned with the Rethink Education community and **uses her experiences to inspire North Carolina educators about the power of blended learning.**



"All of a sudden, I was creating the classroom I had dreamed about! My kids were hovered around a shared device, having conversations they were interested [in], they were asking questions and they were engaging with each other and taking risks," remembers Dr. Tucker.



"I think [the blended learning teaching model is] one of the greatest benefits for the student, and how we can transform [education] from just measuring content acquisition or knowledge, to some of those other skills that we're looking for out of our students."

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Dr. Tucker took the leap to create an in-classroom laboratory with station rotations that empowered students to combine in-person learning with online learning.

"When it came to leading active, engaged learning for students both on- and offline together, "[blended learning] opened the floodgates for me in terms of the possibilities."

That shift didn't happen overnight. After feeling like she could do more to engage her students, she took the leap to create an **in-classroom laboratory with station rotations that empowered students to combine in-person learning with online learning.** Dr. Tucker had to be vulnerable with her students and share that this model of learning was new for everyone – herself included.

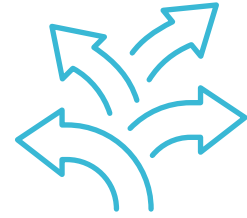
As Dr. Tucker describes it, "If the teacher is taking a risk, if the teacher is saying, 'This is a new strategy, this is a new model. This is a new tech tool, we're gonna try it out today, and we'll see how it goes. If it totally flops, we're going to come together to chat about it because what we are is a learning community.'"

Dr. Tucker says that the blended learning model allowed her students to move at different paces and start learning at whatever level they needed.

“When I talk about the benefits of blended learning generally... We have this **opportunity to give students agency in every single lesson**, allowing them to make key decisions about their learning so they can start to identify which of these pathways is going to work for me as a learner that allows them to start to remove barriers that might make it hard for them to reach that firm goal,” shares Dr. Tucker. “It can also do **wonderful things for their motivation over time**, when they have autonomy and they have agency.”

This approach to teaching **encourages teachers like those in Rethink Education’s training cohorts to act as what she describes as “the lead learner in the room,”** modeling what it looks like to actively explore and take risks. Dr. Tucker says this approach has a profound impact on students, who she says “are so much more likely to take a risk” that can fuel their learning.

Today, you can find teachers across North Carolina who have benefited from Rethink Education resources and are exploring teaching methods like the station rotation models Dr. Tucker first used to engage her students. **Dr. Tucker’s work has ultimately helped shape Rethink Education’s emphasis on developing innovative educational leaders** who are focused on finding dynamic solutions to support, engage and help all students thrive at their own pace.



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FIND OUT 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:

- Educators can [learn more about Rethink Education programs online at dpi.nc.gov](#).
- [Episode 4.1 of The Education Empowered Podcast](#), hosted by the Office of Virtual Support at NCDPI and Rethink Education NC.
- Reach out to rethink@ncpublicschools.gov with questions.

