**What is Blended Learning?**

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A blended learning approach combines face to face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach. In the past, digital materials have served in a supplementary role, helping to support face to face instruction.

For example, a blended approach to a traditional, face to face course might mean that the class meets fewer times per week instead of the usual five-session format. Learning activities that otherwise would have taken place during classroom time can be moved online.

**Why Blend?**

The goal of a blended approach is to join the best aspects of both face to face and online instruction. Classroom time can be used to engage students in advanced interactive experiences or practicals.  Meanwhile, the online portion of the course can provide students with multimedia-rich content at any time of day, anywhere the student has internet access, from home, the library, computer labs, the coffee shop, or any Wi-fi hot spot. This allows for an increase in scheduling flexibility for students.

In addition to flexibility and convenience for students, according to research shared at the ALN Conference Workshop on Blended Learning & Higher Education November 17, 2005, there is early evidence that a blended instructional approach can result in learning outcome gains and increased enrollment retention [(http://www.uic.edu/depts/oee/blended/workshop/bibliography.pdf](http://www.uic.edu/depts/oee/blended/workshop/bibliography.pdf)).

Blended learning is on the rise in higher education and now in high schools environments. 93% of higher ed instructors and admin say they are using blended learning strategies somewhere in their institution. 7 in 10 expect more than 40% of their schools’ courses to be blended by 2013 [(Bonk, C. J. & Graham, C. R. (Eds.). (in press).](http://weblearning.psu.edu/blended-learning-initiative/references) The growth in blended learning environments for high schools is expected to expand exponentially.

**How to Blend?**

There are no rules in place to prescribe what the ideal blend might be (Bonk reference). The term “blended” encompasses a broad continuum, and can include any integration of face to face and online instructional content. The blend of face to face and online materials will vary depending on the content, the needs of the students, and the preferences of the instructor.

**Considerations**

Creating high-quality blended instruction can present considerable challenges. Foremost is the need for resources to create the online materials to be used in the courses. Materials development is a time and labor intensive process, just as it is in any instructional medium. In addition, blended instruction is likely to be a new concept to many students and faculty