

## Implementing the Blended Learning Station Rotation Model in SDP: Best Practices from Two Schools

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Blended learning is defined as students receiving instruction in part from a teacher and in part from an online delivery of content where students have some control over time, path, or place. Staff from the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) visited two schools implementing Blended Learning Station Rotation models in their classrooms in the spring of 2018. We observed classrooms and spoke with principals, teachers, and students to incorporate their perspectives on what strategies and approaches were in place that helped blended learning work well in their school. Based on the observations and interviews, ORE and the Office of Educational Technology (EdTech) put together this list of best practices as a resource for other schools implementing a blended learning approach. For more details about SDP's blended learning approach and previous evaluation reports, see our [project page](#).

### **Best Practice 1: School Leaders Share Responsibility for Decision-making and Implementation**

*1a. Provide opportunities for teachers to be involved in the decision-making around blended learning.*


- For example, the principal at one school engaged teachers in a book study of the book *Blended*. The teachers read and discussed the book and how it related to their experiences. Using the information from the book, teachers agreed that the station rotation model was the best fit for their school.
- Another option is to allow teachers to vote/provide input about which vendors/programs they think will work best for the school, especially if teachers have experience using multiple vendors/programs.

#### **Roadmap for this Document:**


There are five main best practices, two geared towards

school leaders  and three

towards teachers .

 School Leaders Share Responsibility for Decision-making and Implementation

 School Leaders Have a Long-term and Comprehensive Plan for Training Staff

 Teachers Establish Routines and Procedures at the School and Classroom Levels

 Teachers Set up Classrooms to Support Blended Learning

 Teachers Use Blended Learning to Enrich Student Learning

- Including teachers in decision-making builds buy-in and engagement.

*1b. Identify a school-level blended learning lead.*

- This individual can liaise with vendors, take the lead on pulling/analyzing student usage data reports, and support individual teachers in implementing blended learning. This frees up those responsibilities from the principal.
- Designating a lead for blended learning communicates to staff the priority of implementing blended learning and provides a central resource/support for teachers.

*1c. Create school-level routines and procedures but still allow for teacher autonomy.*

- School leaders should encourage and facilitate collaboration so that teachers can have continuity across grades and classrooms. This makes it easier across years; students will enter the next grade already knowing some of the routines and procedures.
- Set guidelines for teachers, but be willing to give them autonomy as well. Each teacher will need to find what works best for him or her, so blended learning may look different from classroom to classroom.

*1d. Start with some pilot classrooms and then expand.*

- Identify a group of teachers who can pilot blended learning in their classrooms.
- These teachers can then support other teachers when scaling-up.



## **Best Practice 2: School Leaders Implement a Long-term and Comprehensive Plan for Training Staff**

*2a. Ensure all teachers are trained on both the blended learning station rotation model and the vendor program.*

- Principals should plan to provide training to teachers continuously, both throughout the school year and from year to year, especially training for new teachers.
- Training should include how to use the program from a teacher role, how to use the program as a student (so teachers can model for students), and how to pull data/look at reports within the program.
- Principals should make use of resources and support provided by the vendors. Establish a relationship with a contact person who can answer teachers' questions about the program and its functionalities.
- Training teachers ensures both they and students can use the vendor programs to their fullest and can facilitate teachers using data to inform instruction.

*2b. Be prepared to train staff generally on how to use technology, especially for those who may not be as tech-savvy.*

- Make use of the Technology Integration Specialist assigned to your school. They can support teachers with Google Apps for Education, Chromebooks, and more.



## Best Practice 3: Teachers Establish Routines and Procedures at the Classroom Level

3a. *Set expectations for students at the beginning of the year...*

- Teachers should model how to use the computers and how to use the program for students at the beginning of the year (this requires the teachers to be comfortable with the program first).
- Create a system for younger students to help them log into vendor programs (and remember things like email addresses, usernames, and passwords). One teacher mentioned having login information on index cards by the computers that students could easily reference.

3b. *...and the beginning of every class.*

- Post the activities and expectations for each station where students can see it. Consider making a chart like this [cheat sheet](#).
- Assign students responsibility, such as getting the necessary materials to each station.



## Best Practice 4: Teachers Set up Classrooms to Support Blended Learning

4a. *Decide on the number and content of stations.*

- Many teachers start with only two stations, then introduce more as they and their students get more comfortable with a station rotation model. Some teachers who were already doing stations before adding blended learning may be able to have four to six stations instead.
- A two-station model can have one group of students receiving direct instruction from the teacher and one group on the vendor program. Additional stations would add in different types of independent student work.
- The number of stations may also vary based on the classroom space, the type of furniture (i.e., desks or tables), and the number of Chromebooks or other materials.
- The number of stations can vary based on the subject matter and/or content being covered.
- Stations can be defined by the physical location of students **or** the activity they are working on. For example, students doing the same activity, such as independent reading, could be doing so at their desks rather than sitting together. Students could also be sitting together but working on different independent activities.
- Have rotation schedule and student groups clearly posted in the classroom.

4b. *Consider whether students or materials will move between stations at transitions.*

- Some teachers have students move between stations (a more traditional model). This introduces movement into the student's day but can potentially be loud and/or disruptive.
- Some teachers decide instead to have materials move between stations (students pass the materials to each other).
- Some factors to consider for the physical set up:
  - During ELA, is there one space for guided reading?

- Do students need to see the board? In which stations?
- Are there enough materials and/or Chromebooks so each station can have their own set?
- Are any students using desktops?
- Is it important for students to be in assigned seats?
- Teachers recommend having the students using the computers sit so that the teacher can see their screens. This helps keep students on task.
- Teachers should also plan to be flexible and may need some trial and error to find what works for them.



## Best Practice 5: Teachers Use Blended Learning to Enrich Student Learning

### 5a. Create student groups intentionally.

- The teacher-led station should have students grouped together based on a particular skill that they need support with, reading level, or a need for reteaching/intensive instruction.
- The composition of the groups should fluctuate throughout the year based on student needs and progress data, from the vendor program or otherwise.
- Groups can also consider student dynamics (which students work well together or may need to be separated).

### 5b. Hold students accountable for their learning.

- Assign students a grade for their work/participation in the program. Make this intention clear at the beginning to keep students on task and to make sure they take it seriously.
- Set clear usage expectations for students, so they know, for example, how many lessons to complete per week or month.
- Encourage students to keep track of their own lesson completion, scores, or pass rates so that they take responsibility for their progress. Check out this [example](#) template from Baldi MS.
- For math programs, require students to use scratch paper or show their work in a notebook. This helps keep students accountable for progress and the teacher can review the work to look for potential areas for re-teaching.
- Review class-level data with students regularly to celebrate their progress.
- Some programs allow features to be disabled. If there is something that is distracting to students (such as a built-in game), disable it and allow it only as a reward for students completing a certain number of lessons/activities.

Do you have a tip to share about how blended learning works best in your setting? Email us at [research@philasd.org](mailto:research@philasd.org)!